

**To:** Charissa Abraham; Vice President of Software Development  
**From:** Autumn Hood; Junior writer, Technical Communication Department  
**Date:** 24 November 2014  
**Subject:** Proposal to adopt MadCap Flare to switch to single sourced documentation

Greetings, Ms. Abraham; my name is Autumn Hood, and I am a technical communicator at Tech Corp. This proposal describes the benefits of adopting single-sourcing as our documentation method and why we should use MadCap Flare to do it.

### **What are single sourcing and MadCap Flare?**

Single sourcing is a documentation method that begins with one centralized, all-encompassing *source* that contains all of an organization's content—all products, audiences, and outputs. To generate different media (such as online help, print user guides, mobile apps, and wikis) for different audiences (such as beginner users, advanced users, and software engineers), we would simply pull the content needed for each project from the single source.

The Flare program from MadCap allows technical communicators to create, update, and pull this content. Its drag and drop interface allows new users to pick up its key features quickly. Additionally, its conditional tags makes customizing documentation outputs more simplified and efficient.

### **What are the costs and challenges?**

MadCap offers various software and maintenance packages, with the most basic package starting at [\\$67/month](#). However, a change this big this can make even the most technologically apt skeptical. Thankfully, MadCap offers a [free 30 day trial for all their products](#), including Flare.

The switch will also have some interpersonal challenges, such as work reallocation during training, possible changes in role-definitions, and frustration at learning a new technology. However, we can apply training models recommended by researchers Clark and Andersen [1], as well as AT&T ex-Executive Director Neil Cobb [2]:

- Have a plan early on
- Over communicate within and outside of departments
- Do not rely solely on vendor tutorials

However, some of Flare's most basic and common functions are easy to pick if one desires to learn and has some patience, like with learning any new technology. I've included Appendix A to support this claim.

### **What is the return on investment?**

The switch will benefit Tech Corp in three main ways.

1. **Tech Corp will not have to pay employees to perform redundant tasks because we will not have to manually update or change content.** We currently have separate Word documents for each department, branch, output, and audience. So when we launch Version 8.11 of our app in February, we will need to change each instance of "Version 8.10" to "Version 8.11," as well as the

"Recently Updated" module. We will make these changes for our 18 branches, the app itself, the online help, the IT wiki, and the print help documentation.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average technical communicator makes \$31.49/hour [3]. If each of the edits reasonably takes 25 minutes, Tech Corp can expect to invest \$288.65 in updating documentation for Version 8.11. However, if Tech Corp adopts MadCap Flare, the updates would only cost approximately \$13.12. You can imagine the potential scope these changes can have when applied to all updates or additions each fiscal quarter or year. You can also view other positive ROI success stories [here](#).

Not only will Tech Corp not have pay people multiple times for performing redundant tasks, but technical communicators can more efficiently address other issues such as information architecture, design, content management, and usability/user experience with the time they would have spent manually entering duplicate information and worrying about details like formatting.

2. **The future of single sourcing promises extraordinary growth and customization.** As we grow to understand single sourcing technologies, we may be able to advance to higher levels of single sourcing, which become more customizable at each interval. For example, in Level 4 single sourcing, users who access our online help will only see the content that they need at that specific time just by logging in. If they log in later with different needs, they would see different content [4].
3. **Public view of our organization will improve.** Researcher Ginny Redish has found the following statistics to be true of poor documentation (1):
  - 34% of people have lost money or benefits due to poor documentation
  - 29% of people have simply given up using documentation
  - 30% of people stopped using a service or organization

Our documentation is already of high quality; yet with single sourcing, we would write "topics" in MadCap Flare. Thus, users will be even more easily able to navigate any outputs because the writers have chunked information into modules that are easily defined and make sense on their own [6].

Thank you for reading my proposal. If you have questions on the information I've presented here or would like to further discuss how we can successfully transition to single-sourcing with MadCap Flare, please contact me at [autumnhood@techcorp.com](mailto:autumnhood@techcorp.com) at your convenience.

## Appendix A: “Getting Started with MadCap Flare”

This appendix includes some screenshots of a rudimentary project I started with MadCap Flare. The project entailed transforming a Word Document into a Flare project and then creating two outputs: an Adobe PDF and an HTML page. This appendix is solely meant to serve illustrative purposes to indicate how easy using some of the basic features of MadCap Flare can be with the right mindset and some patience.

1. I created a document in Microsoft Word using the default styles (Figure 1).

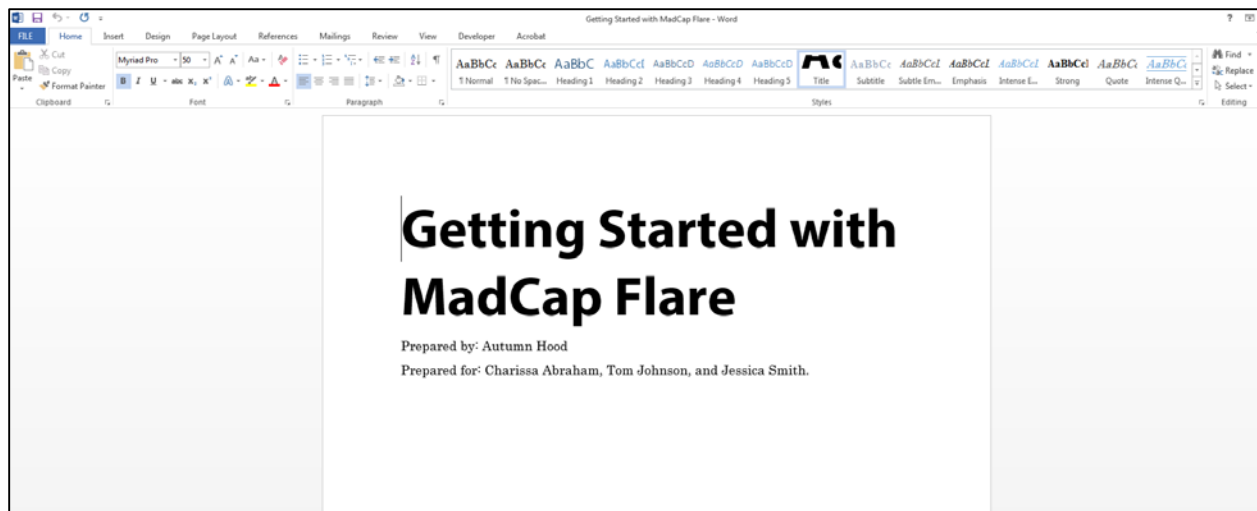


Figure 1: Word Document

2. I then uploaded that document into Flare (Figure 2) and transformed it into a Flare project file (Figure 3).

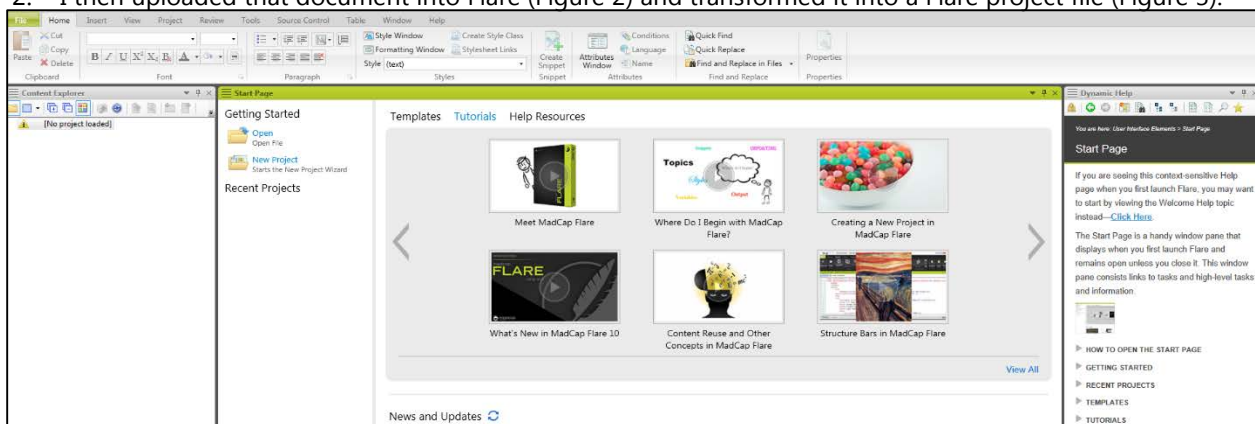


Figure 2: Flare default start page

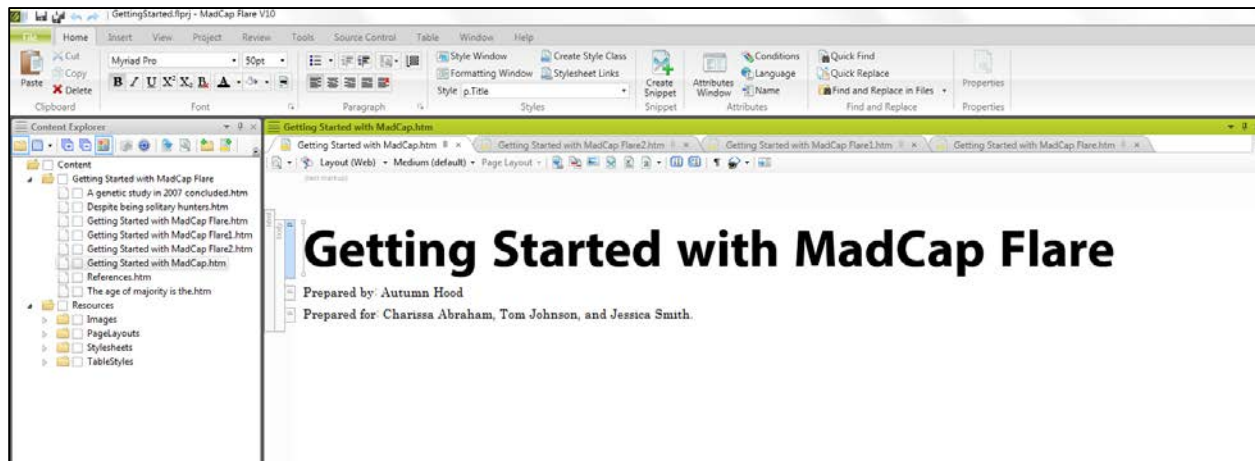


Figure 3: The Microsoft Word document has been transformed into a Flare Project. As you can see, Flare renders the styles that were already applied.

- I applied a conditional tag (Figure 3) to one of paragraphs on the page to include that content only in print format, not web format (Figure 4).

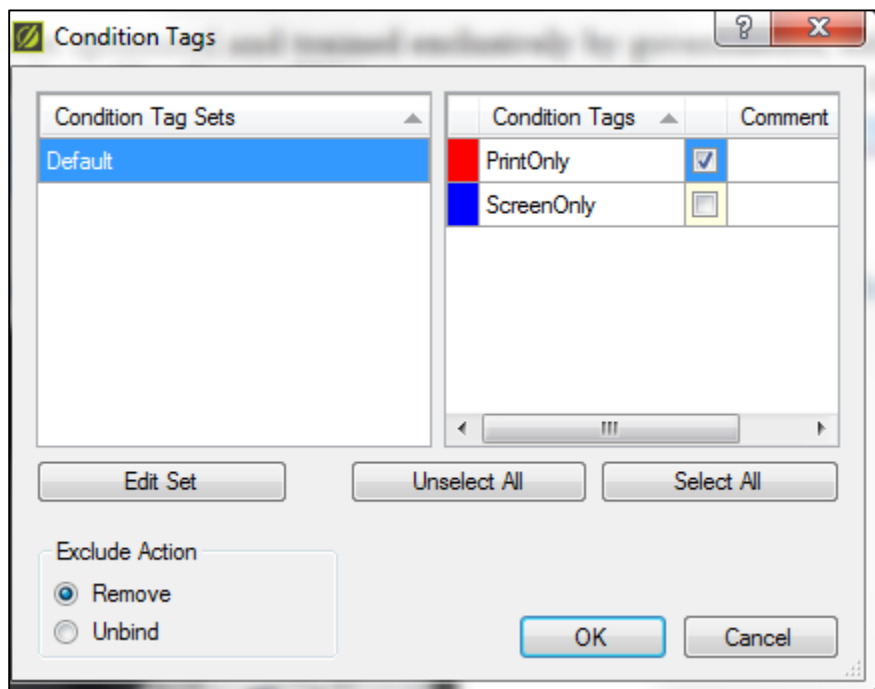


Figure 3: Flare's conditional tag options can be viewed by right-clicking any content.

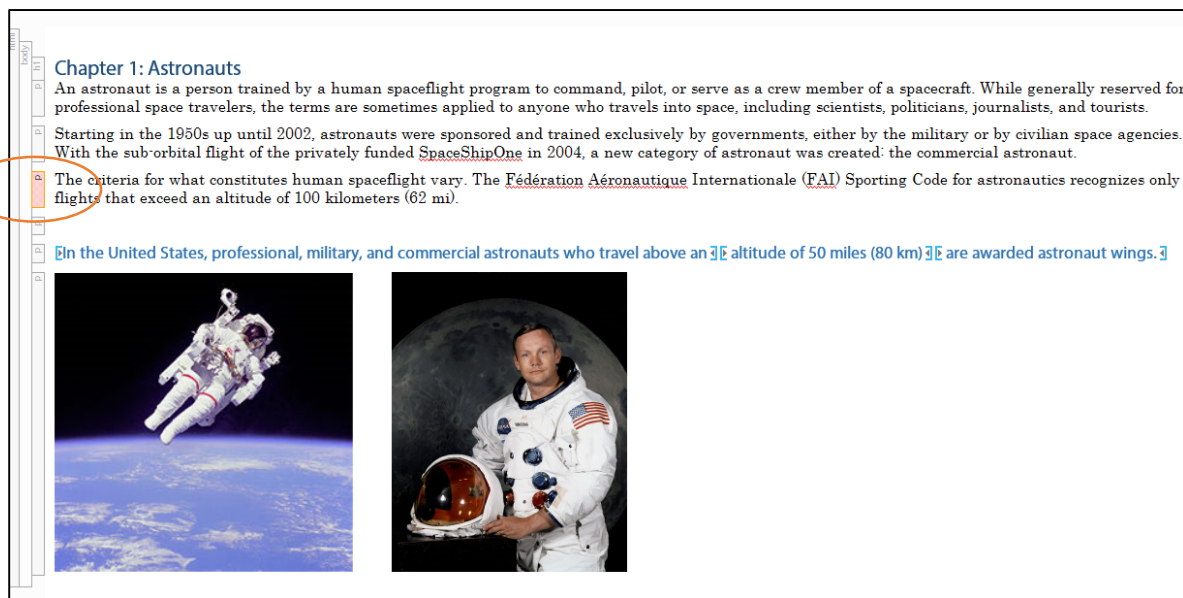


Figure 4: Conditional tags that tells MadCap to include the circled content to only be included in print renderings of the document.

- When Flare generates a PDF of this document, it will include the conditional tag (Figure 6). When Flare creates an HTML page, it will not include the conditional content (Figure 7).

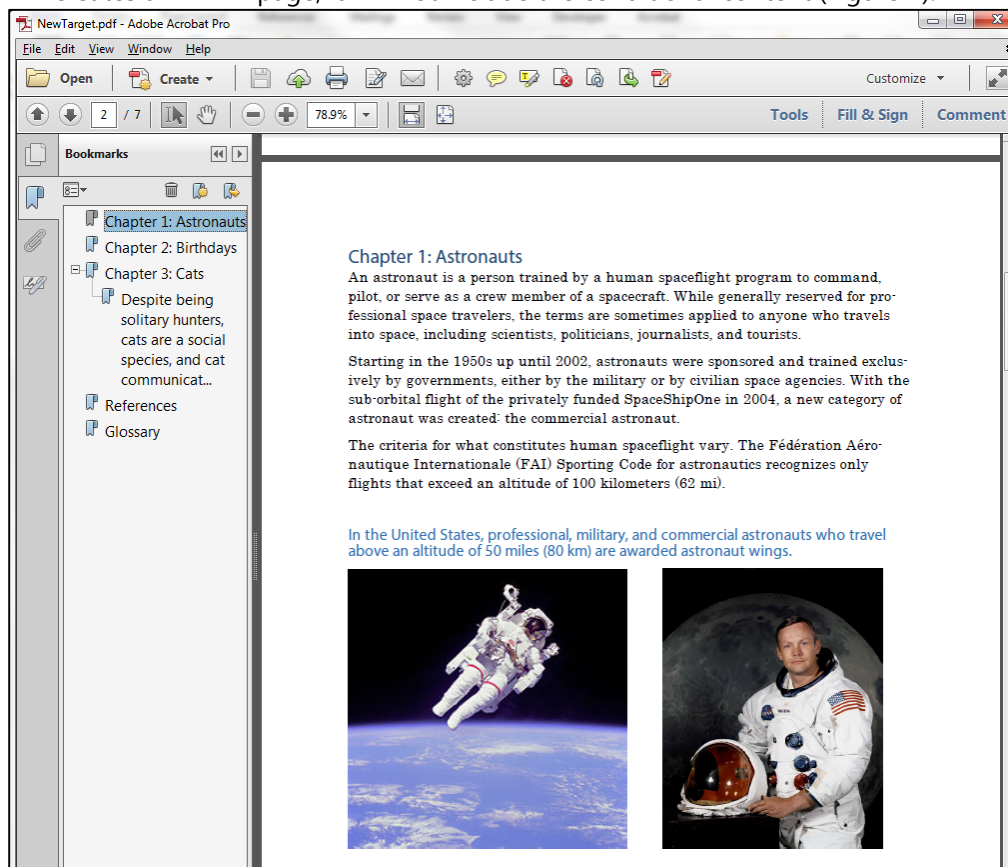


Figure 6: A PDF of the Flare Project

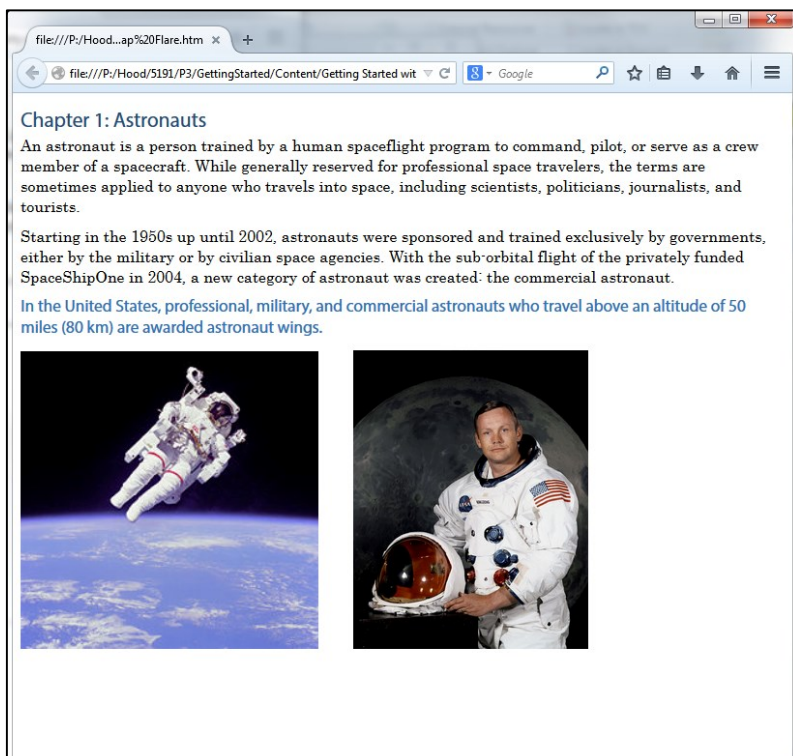


Figure 7: An HTML page of the Flare project

All of the styles (Figure 8), images (Figure 9), and content of the original Word document have been kept intact.

Getting Started with MadCap Flare.css				
Getting Started with MadCap Flare.css x Styles.css x Modern.css				
Stylesheet Editor   Advanced View   Add Class   Add Pseudo Class				
Show Paragraph Styles   Hide Inherited   Hide Properties   Medium: (d				
Name	Tag	Class	Pseudo Class	Preview
p	p			MadCap Soft
p.p_1	p	p_1		MadCap Soft
p.Subtitle	p	Subtitle		MadCap Sof
p.Title	p	Title		<b>Ma</b>
h1	h1			<b>MadCa</b>
h1.Heading1	h1	Heading1		MadCap Sc
h3	h3			<b>MadCap So</b>
h3.Heading3	h3	Heading3		MadCap Softw
h2	h2			<b>MadCap</b>

Figure 8: Styles remain the same from the Word document

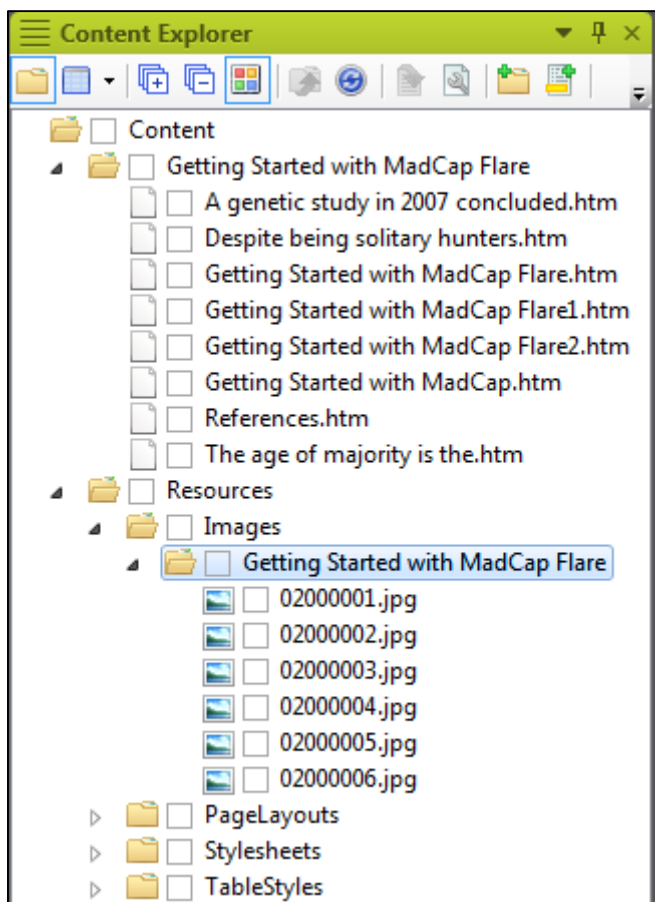


Figure 9: Images have been pulled from the document and stored as topics

This appendix has been a brief overview of some of the main functions of MadCap Flare. Learning these procedures and generating the outputs took roughly 1 hour. The only learning resources used were online help tutorials such as YouTube videos and MadCap published documentation.

If you have any questions or would like any source files, please do not hesitate to request them.

## Appendix B: References

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions about my resources.

- [1]. Clark, D. and Rebekka Anderson. (2005). Renegotiating with Technology: Training towards More Sustainable Technical Communication. *Technical Communication* 52 (2). 289-301.
- [2]. N. Cobb. Personal Communication. November 6, 2014.
- [3]. <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/media-and-communication/technical-writers.htm>
- [4]. Rockley, A. (2001, May). The Impact of Single Sourcing and Technology. *Technical Communication* 48 (2). 189-193.
- [5]. Redish, J. (1992). Understanding Readers. In C. Barnum & S. Carliner (Eds.), *Techniques for Technical Communicators*. Longman Publishing Group.
- [6]. Kostur, P. (2006, November 24). Whose Content Is It Anyway? An Argument for Modular Writing. Retrieved November 10, 2014, from [thecontentwrangler.com](http://thecontentwrangler.com).