

CASE STUDY



www.renault-trucks.com

CHALLENGE

To streamline the process of creating, updating and publishing vehicle service and user documentation in 14 languages, across various output formats including print, CD-ROM, and the Web.

SOLUTION

A seamlessly integrated, end-to-end, XML-powered content lifecycle management system, using XMetaL for content creation.

RESULT

- Reduced documentation cycle time by 53%, exceeding an anticipated target of 30%
- Decreased manual translation time from 2 months to 3 weeks
- Enhanced relationships with dealer service centers by providing real-time service updates through integrated information system
- Improved transparency and control over the document production process
- Increased writer morale by automating tedious formatting tasks

Renault Trucks

XMetaL-ISMR Solution Takes a Load Off the Documentation Team at Leading Truck Manufacturer

Simplicity.

For Renault Trucks, simplicity is synonymous with innovation, a cornerstone of the company's strategic mission. As a subsidiary of AB Volvo – one of Europe's most respected automotive brands – Renault Trucks' stated goal is to "simplify driving, transportation operations, and the work of its customers."

The pursuit of simplicity not only drives the company's external objectives, but the internal ones as well. To support this mandate, Renault Trucks began looking for ways to streamline its documentation process. Company leadership set out four key business requirements to guide the initiative:

- Reduce documentation cycle time
- Improve control and transparency of the document production process
- Expedite multilingual publishing
- Integrate internal data systems with dealer service procedures

To reach these goals, Renault Trucks turned to 4DConcept, a systems integrator specializing in the development, implementation, and optimization of enterprise content management (ECM) systems.

After reviewing Renault Trucks' processes, 4DConcept developed ISMR (Integration System Methods and Repairs), an end-to-end documentation production solution based on XML technology. With XMetaL® and ISMR, authors now create and update documentation for all of Renault Trucks' vehicles in multiple languages faster and easier than ever before.

Traversing Mountains of Content

Renault Trucks produces content – a lot of it. It's the result of selling more than 75,000 vehicles per year, ranging from light commercial to heavy-duty transports. And each model in Renault Trucks' eight vehicle lines requires a full complement of documentation in the form of user, service, diagnostic, and repair manuals. These manuals are published to print, CD-ROM, and the Web.

The task of creating new documentation for multiple formats and channels is daunting enough – keeping the existing content updated is another challenge entirely. Even the smallest component change triggers a chain reaction of documentation revisions. For example, one minor amendment to an engine repair procedure involves a minimum of four stakeholders, including an engineer, writer, editor, and a QA specialist. Repeat this process 14 times – the number of languages into which each procedure is translated – and the complexity of this challenge becomes evident.

Traveling the Rocky Road

With the previous system, documents were created and updated using Interleaf. The data, including text, images, tables and diagrams, resided in databases throughout the company. Collecting this information

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“Launches of new truck lines used to be labor intensive and documentation took a long time to push out to the field. With the XMetaL-ISMR system, this problem has all but disappeared and it is easier to keep pace as more trucks are produced.”

Christopher Tasset, Application Solution Manager,
Volvo Information Technology

into a useful form took enormous time and effort. “Assembling, routing, and editing content the old way was no longer an option if we wanted to meet the time-sensitive demands of multi-channel publishing,” said Christophe Tasset, Application Solution Manager in Volvo Information Technology.

Today, a single repair manual can be published on paper as well as on CD-ROM, the intranet, and the extranet – each requiring its own special layout and design. The technical writers, who had to do the reformatting, were spending too much time reworking documents for each output channel. “When we launch a new vehicle, documentation has to keep pace,” said Tasset. “Our technical authors were getting frustrated with all the reformatting work.”

Adding to this problem was a lack of transparency into the document production process. Managers had no insight into where workflow bottlenecks were and how they occurred. “Because our process was paper-driven, it was difficult to pinpoint human or systematic problems,” said Tasset, who was commissioned to find a solution with the help of 4DConcept.

Why XMetaL?

Mathieu Huck, project lead at 4DConcept, said Renault Trucks chose XMetaL because it was superior to alternative solutions in three key areas: ease of integration with the content management system, interface usability, and configuration simplicity for specific authoring environments. “As a systems integrator, we looked at several other solutions, but they just couldn’t stand up to XMetaL’s simplicity, flexibility, and extensive APIs” said Huck. He was also impressed by the technical expertise and innovation shown by JustSystems. “XMetaL Reviewer is one of the more ingenious tools we’ve seen in a long time. The workflow benefits it offers are truly remarkable.”

Paving the Way to Success

Once designed, 4DConcept deployed the new XMetaL-ISMR system in Renault Trucks’ technical documentation department. What was once a slow, labor-intensive process, became a rapid, automated publishing system.

The new system works like a smoothly-tuned engine: First, authors compose discrete blocks of text using XMetaL Author. Next, these text fragments are grouped into coherent topic categories, which in turn are automatically pulled into finished documents. Not only does this process promote a single-source workflow to multiple output formats, it enables authors to efficiently reuse content for different audiences and deliverables. “With the new system we can easily update and reuse content modules from the single source in all of the repair guides we create wherever that information is relevant,” said Tasset. Once collected, a publishing engine transforms the information into appropriate formats for print, Web or DVD.

For translation, the XMetaL-ISMR system uses an Import/Export module which allows documents to be localized into 14 different languages, some of which use non-Latin alphabets. Authoring and translation occurs in parallel, a big improvement over waiting until a manual is complete, dramatically reducing the time it takes to produce documents in different languages. “What used to take us two months to do can now be done in three weeks,” said Tasset.

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Delivering the Cargo

The new documentation system has delivered on all four of its business requirements.

First, by using a single end-to-end system, Renault Trucks has been able to shorten the time spent on certain steps in the process by up to 80% and cut its documentation production cycle in half. Writers now focus on improving the quality of their content, instead of formatting it, resulting in higher document quality and faster updates.

Second, to address the issue of transparency and control, the system incorporates a management module to track and measure work progress. With these tools, Renault Trucks can do better resource planning for future projects.

Third, translations previously consumed days or weeks of the technical writer's time. Thanks to the import/export features of the new system, translations now take just a few minutes – enabling authors to continue working on their core activity – creating content.

And finally, integration of Renault Trucks' internal data systems with the dealer's 'shop floor' has radically improved the delivery and effectiveness of customer service. For example, today when a truck comes into a service center, a technician can look at the error codes of the engine's internal computer, and find out not only how to resolve an issue, but also whether the engine is under warranty and how much Renault Trucks will reimburse the dealer for the work. Having this information available online and integrated with maintenance documentation is a huge competitive differentiator for Renault Trucks and its partners.

"The system has been very good for Renault Trucks' image among dealers," said Tasset. "Customer service has vastly improved, as these dealers are now tied directly into our information network."

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About JustSystems

JustSystems is a leading global software provider with three decades of successful innovation in office productivity, information management, and consumer and enterprise software. With over 2,500 customers worldwide, the company is continuing a global expansion strategy based on its xfy enterprise software, XMetaL content lifecycle solutions, and its pioneering work in enabling XBRL financial reporting technologies. JustSystems is one of the 2008 KMWorld 100 Companies that Matter in Knowledge Management, a 2008 EContent 100 member, and was recognized on the 2008 KMWorld Trend-Setting Product list for XMetaL. Major strategic partnerships include IBM, Oracle and EMC.

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