

MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Are you experiencing resistance to change in the way your content is created and managed? You're not alone

I recently had a conversation with the manager of a language service provider (LSP) about a client of theirs. The client is a multinational company that makes extremely complex digital on-demand printers. As you might imagine, they generate a lot of documentation: product information, marketing collateral, repair manuals (both print and digital on-machine delivery), UI elements, etc. This very high volume creation of engineering-driven content makes managing multilingual translation and localization a complex and expensive task. However, this complexity, with its inherent potential for errors, and its high costs, could be mitigated to a large degree by the way their content is created, managed and published. But there is a problem.

Supporting sophisticated products with outdated tools is costly

In spite of an engineering culture and a high level of technological sophistication, this company still creates all its content in MS Word, an incredibly laborious and outdated manual process. There have been attempts over the years to implement a DITA Component Content Management System (CCMS) and they have even purchased systems, but every time the effort has been derailed. Why? Because of cultural roadblocks and the refusal to learn new skills, including learning to author content with structure. In other words, human nature is the roadblock. Is this common? As former Director of Marketing for a CCMS developer, I can tell you that it is one of the top objections anyone marketing these systems encounters. And it causes a lot of frustration for managers trying to innovate. So, how do you cope with it?

To get buy-in from the top you need to make a financial and time-to-market case

Let's look at the translation example, in part because the ROI of moving to a CCMS for translated content is so compelling. One of the first things that has to happen within a company or organization doing digital transformation is buy-in from the top management. Given that their reality is driven by numbers and shareholder satisfaction, making a financial case is the most likely path to getting support from the top. To be blunt, they can make it happen by making it mandatory.

One example of the massive savings that can be realized through digital transformation: ROI on Translation with a CCMS

Back to translation. LSP project managers and translators work in an application known as Translation Memory. The most common one is Trados Studio from SDL. These applications collect content for translation, parse it, and flag previously translated content to avoid duplication of effort. This content is sent to the translators who translate and return it for review, edits, and formatting back into the original format. In the example cited above this means putting it back into Word and then converting those text files into formatted content for various digital publishing schema. This is a very manual process that opens up endless issues with errors, omissions, and version control problems. Multiply this by dozens of languages and you can see what a beast this becomes.

An end to end technology workflow

Enter the DITA CCMS. The content (XML) is created and structured in a central repository by type and is tagged for search, system-wide updates, and for publishing to virtually any format. The CCMS interfaces directly with the Translation Memory, with content retaining its characteristics through the entire round trip— finishing with properly formatted and translated content publishable directly from the CCMS. No manual processes. Enormous savings in time, accuracy, and money. This is the case that needs to be made with management to drive your organization's digital transformation out of the 20th century and into the present, and to position it for the future (AI, chat bots, on-demand context-aware help, etc.).

Please note that this is only one of the ways adopting a modern content strategy can materially improve things. CCMSs improve accuracy, time to market, add new publishing options, enable enterprise-wide faceted search, and much more. They are truly transformative, *if they are adopted by your company culture.*

Strategies for overcoming roadblocks: Create internal champions and bring the team through the planning process with you

At Dakota, helping companies get through these cultural roadblocks is a significant part of our business. Designing information architecture and implementing systems will not be successful if people won't use them. That's why training your people at

primary skill (writing in this example) is done. So, it is important to include these users in the learning process as the digital transformation leadership themselves are learning. Let them see the process unfold and share the logic behind the choices. Inevitably someone will get interested and become that internal champion and begin positively influencing their peers (flag them for potential management if you see this happening!).

It's easy to overlook or underestimate these issues

There is no magic bullet for resolving cultural unwillingness to change. But ignoring the real challenge is always a mistake and it can be a very costly one on many levels. Your content is a major asset that requires a lot of effort to create and utilize. Letting human nature keep you from realizing its benefits, in an increasingly information driven world, is a mistake.

