

From Struggle to Success Story

How one technical documentation team transformed themselves from over budget and over due to cost savers, time savers, and company front runners

Summary

The technical documentation team at Cybex International was struggling to meet deadlines and find more money in the budget. Using DITA and an established process, the team was able to transform themselves into a department that not only could meet deadlines and demonstrate cost savings—but also rapidly adapt to an expanding product line and lead the way for other departments in the midst of corporate change.



Challenges

In recent years, the fitness equipment industry has undergone huge technological advancements. Products are no longer just hardware, but include sophisticated software to collect and report data and integrate with a variety of apps. For 45 years, Cybex International has been one of the leading manufacturers of cardio and strength products. Cybex offers more than 160 products, which are sold in more than 90 countries, and in 2016, Cybex joined the Life Fitness family, which employs 3,000 workers worldwide. Life Fitness is a division of Brunswick Corporation.

For years, the tech docs team at Cybex had been using tools like InDesign and had been able to meet deadlines. However, as the product lines grew and became more complex—it became more and more challenging to produce and manage the documentation, add new languages, meet deadlines, and stay in budget. Two technical writers, Bob and Judy, began to search for a better way.

Solution

Research—Bob and Judy learned that many tech departments struggle with the same issues. They read about DITA but were still uncertain how it could work for them. In 2013, they attended the CMS DITA Conference where they sat in sessions and talked to vendors about tools and services, and they came away with a solution.

Buy-in—Next, Bob and Judy had to sell the solution to Cybex executives. Bob and Judy gave the project a name and created a presentation for the board. Though it was a daunting task to persuade the board to invest, the board was aware of the doc team struggles. Bob and Judy's presentation highlighted the benefits of DITA, savings in time and translation costs, increase in consistency and efficiency with content reuse, flexibility in output, and more.

Design and planning—With the support of Cybex, Bob and Judy engaged Data Conversion Laboratory (DCL). DCL reviewed their content, made recommendations, and converted the InDesign files to DITA XML.

Bluestream has solutions for all your content challenges.

- Complete, end-to-end, content management system
- Comfortably accommodates distributed work teams and collaborative workflows
- Agile, automated, responsive content delivery that readers can find and share
- Smart localization tools to help you manage and deliver translations to your global audiences
- Flexible, secure, supported, mature, and scalable system

(Solution cont'd)

In cleaning up the converted content, Bob and Judy learned more about DITA and their new tools and how they had underestimated the amount of reuse they could achieve!

Baseline implementation—Cybex decided on the XDocs CCMS from Bluestream, and this phase involved setting up the CCMS environment and publishing stylesheets, training, and testing.

Deployment—After a year of preparation, in the summer of 2014, they were ready to start editing and creating content in the new CCMS.

Quantification

The technical documentation team at Cybex International estimates that they saved about \$30k last year by eliminating the \$4.00 per page desktop publishing costs.

An earlier project was done with InDesign at a higher cost, and they estimate that, with DITA, they would have saved \$12k on that project.

A recent project had budgeted \$15k to translate documents into two languages. This was based on previous desktop publishing estimates. With DITA, they were able to deliver 11 languages for a total cost of \$3.5k and completed the task in 10 days.

Outcome

For the team—Bob describes using the new tools and methods like the scene in the Wizard of Oz movie, “where everything went from black and white to color.” The tech docs team now produces and manages content with relative ease. Adding a new product line with DITA and the XDocs CCMS now takes two weeks instead of eight. For translations, it used to take two weeks just to prepare and package files for the translation vendor, but now it takes less than 2 hours. Since 2014, Cybex has added three languages and 58 new products. Additionally, they now translate to 11 languages and with the recent acquisition by Life Fitness, they will be adding more.

For the customers—Cybex used to live in a PDF-only world, but with DITA and XDocs, it's as easy to output DITA content to HTML as PDF. Customers can view manuals online and customer service technicians can now view all the content they need on their phones or tablets. The topics are up-to-date and easy to find.

For the company—Customer Service manuals, error codes, schematics, and troubleshooting are all available online. Topics can be accessed through Salesforce. Cybex creates links to topics in the Salesforce articles, and these articles are also emailed to techs or attached to cases.

More—In addition to large increases in efficiency for the doc team, customers, and company, the tech docs department at Cybex was also able to transfer its success to other departments in the company. Software engineering is now also using DITA and storing their content in the XDocs CCMS and everything maps perfectly. Also, the Cybex team has been able to mentor other doc teams in the Life Fitness family, and all are now enjoying the new efficiency in producing and translating technical documentation.

To find out how Bluestream can solve your organization's content challenges, visit our website at www.bluestream.com or contact us at 1-604-669-4469.



Bluestream Fast Facts

Bluestream's flagship product is the XDocs Component Content Management System (CCMS), a standards-compliant single-sourcing solution that enables technical communicators to create, manage, dynamically publish, and store large volumes of both XML and non-XML content.

XDocs customers range from Fortune 100 organizations seeking complex cross-departmental DITA solutions to small businesses containing single author documentation teams.

Bluestream has been in business since 1997 and has customers in many verticals, among them software, oil and gas, health care, military, manufacturing, and finance.

Cybex chose XDocs because of its excellent features:

- *Economical*
- *User friendly*
- *Excellent customer service*
- *Ease of translation management*
- *Organization of content*
- *Improved structure*
- *Flexible licensing*

– Bob and Judy, Cybex team