



Publishing and document management:
using strategic content management
to drive returns

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What can you expect from this whitepaper?

Many organisations and businesses in the manufacturing sector see product information and associated content as a necessary evil; an unavoidable addition to their real job of creating amazing products. A complex and stressful way for them to lose time and money; in other words, a loss maker.

This whitepaper shows you a different way of doing things. Find out how you can change how you look at things and **turn what looks like a loss maker into a benefit.**

Are you a financial decision maker **with limited publishing knowledge?**

A technical writer?

Or perhaps **you're responsible for content and have years of experience** under your belt?

Whatever your role, don't worry. The material may look rather technical to start with, but the practical examples in the whitepaper will explain everything so that you can **keep up, even if you're a complete beginner.**

Once you've read the whitepaper, you'll be fully briefed on:

- how structured content management works
- the financial benefits and the ROI of a Component Content Management System (CCMS)
- the advantages for your daily operations in terms of publishing and document management.

Not just a challenge

If you operate in the manufacturing sector, then you'll be well aware that there is no shortage of challenges, from recruiting good staff and making smart use of new trends to keeping one step ahead of competitors and expanding your commercial organisation, to name just a few.

But do you ever ask yourself this question?

“What’s a fast way to share information about my products and services with existing and prospective users?”

If you're familiar with the issue, then you're probably already nodding in agreement and you'll understand that it's a question that's just as important as the challenges we listed above.

If this is something that hasn't really come across your radar yet, then just think about this: you may need up to 5 different types of information carriers for one single product, often with overlapping content. These include:

- a technical manual
- a memo for your sales team
- a data sheet for maintenance technicians
- ...

And each one in 5, 10 or possibly more languages.

And the greatest source of frustration is that this **complex information flow** often happens at the end of the production process, right before the product launch. The worst possible time to make content-related errors.

Guaranteed to be stressful – but it doesn't have to be like this.

Flip your perspective and use your content strategically

These days, we've moved on from the time of having the same product for everyone; just imagine everyone who wants to buy a car choosing the same model in the same basic white.

Market demand is for more and more **product versions**; in theory, this is good news as it creates the potential for more profit, especially if you can sell your products in more markets.

But the flip side to this trend towards personalisation is that **every product version requires a content version**. To put it simply, the manual for product version 1 will always be slightly different to the one for product version 2, so using the same content for everyone is a thing of the past. The number of communication channels has also increased significantly in recent years.

The multitude of variants, versions, channels, etc. mean that managing your product information – whether you use it internally externally – is only going to become more complex and expensive. The solution is to manage those flows proactively, at all levels of your business.

Ensuring that you use the content seamlessly through the business turns it into a strategic tool.

Although your technical content may have been a burden, a loss maker or a bottleneck in the past, you can now leverage it to **increase returns, improve risk management and accelerate decision-making processes**.

Like the sound of that? Then keep reading.

PART 1: Issues: avoiding bottlenecks

The past without strategic technical content	The present with strategic technical content
Ad hoc content management	▶ Strategic content management
Duplicating data separately each time	▶ Reusing data from one central source
Inconsistent and excess data	▶ Single source
Bottleneck for information	▶ Rapid flow of information
Risk of errors	▶ Structured risk management
Long-winded publishing process	▶ Automated publishing process

Are you still on your island?

Many businesses often keep their technical content – such as product information – spread out in separate silos, each of which creates and manages the content differently, in line with their individual needs and tools. This creates **little islands where everyone does what they want**. Such a shame.

That makes interoperability impossible, so providing the right information for each product and each service is a challenging task. That information is **unlikely to be up-to-date and/or accurate** and the associated verification processes will be cumbersome and repetitive.

Like many other businesses, you may have developed processes and methods over the years so you can cope with the increased demand for technical content. Although many of those systems will have taken a lot of effort and knowledge to establish, they can **no longer handle the current tsunami of technical content**. Much of the content simply never leaves its silo.

If you are a business leader or the person responsible for the content, how do you deal with that?

By **taking a proactive approach and addressing the content bottleneck before it becomes an actual bottleneck**.

That is what strategic content management is all about.

Strategic content management: bring on the content tsunami

Just to let you know that this bit will get technical 😊

Strategic content management can be divided into two parts.

- ▶ An **organisation model and process** intended to create a standardised approach and effective interoperability. And the great thing is that this model is particularly successful in practice.
- ▶ Choosing the right **technology** that meets your business's needs, now and in the future. That technology is called a Component Content Management System (or CCMS). See our explanation of how a CCMS is structured on the next page.

These are all complicated terms, but they will make how you work a lot easier.

And best of all, **it won't involve creating yet another role or adding another layer of complexity.** Quite the opposite, in fact.

Strategic content management is an integrated system that allows you to efficiently create, manage and share technical content throughout your organisation.

As a result, the right content reaches the right people at the right time: your prospects, customers, technicians, trainers, sales staff and so on ... They can then seamlessly integrate that information into their role of user, editor etc.

2 basic concepts

Strategic content management is underpinned by 2 basic concepts.

1. **Modularity:** each content component is only created once and all applications and documents refer to the same source. Centralised management makes it much simpler to verify the content and applications over time. Amending the source automatically amends all the texts and documents that are linked to the source.

The most significant result is that the **quality** of the content improves significantly and you prevent errors.

2. **Separation of structure, content and layout.**

This allows the same content to be used in different formats and for different purposes. You automate most of the processes involved in creating and publishing content.

The most valuable result is a significant **time saving.**

What is a CCMS?

A Component Content Management System (CCMS) manages the content at a granular (i.e. component) level instead of at document level.

Each component represents one single item, concept or asset; for example:

- images
- tables
- product descriptions
- procedures

In this context, publications (documents, websites, etc.) are a collection of components that are brought together in a structure and with a layout for the required application and intended audience.

A CCMS lets you handle the complexity that typically comes with large quantities of technical content that is published:

- in multiple languages
- for multiple product versions
- in multiple formats
- where multiple versions must be made available at the same time
- and where decentralised teams are responsible for creating, approving, managing, publishing etc. the content.

CCMS systems are generally compatible with the standards that apply to technical content: ANSI Z535.6, DITA, XML etc. This ensures that users retain their autonomy in relation to suppliers and the formats used.

There are 3 parts to a CCMS:

1. Developing and gathering content

Input can come from a range of sources:

- in-house technical writers
- input from suppliers
- CAD/CAM, PIM etc.

The interfaces make it easy for you to input information, either manually or automated.

2. Managing content

This is the core of the CCMS. Data is stored in components and each unit of information is only created once. Content management involves several functions:

- workflows relating to management and approval
- managing variants
- managing versions
- structuring metadata relating to the version, variant, function, typology, medium, language, etc.
- managing media items (images, videos, etc.)
- quality management and compliance
- translations, etc.

3. Making content available

Automating the layout and publishing will deliver significant time savings. This means that you publish the content in a range of formats:

- print
- online help
- website, portals
- e-learning, etc.

Using strategic content management delivers 4 specific benefits

1. Rapid time to market

The increased diversity in product ranges and the reduced periods between successive releases make creating and distributing content more challenging. Research shows that most businesses generate more than 60% of their turnover from newly launched products and services. Businesses that can launch their new products quickly and efficiently can generate **higher returns. Wouldn't it be a shame if product information stopped you from achieving this?**

From accuracy, compliance and translation to the layout and publishing, a lot of stakeholders are involved and this can absorb a lot of your energy. Interoperability, reuse and automation will ensure that all this runs efficiently.

2. Streamlined processes

Strategic content management means defining the various roles in more detail and giving each stakeholder the tools to play their part, all within an integrated system with its workflows and central database. From change management and variance management to translation, everything becomes more streamlined. Some of the processes can be **automated** as we have metadata about workflows and publishing based on rules and standing instructions.

3. Conformity

Content is separate from presentation, which makes it **easier to replace and to manage**. Although compliance plays a significant role in management, you can also integrate it into the workflows.

4. Quality control

Thorough standardisation of content, links, visuals, structure, language structure and terminology allows you to apply quality control processes to each of these elements.

The quality of the published content remains consistent and you no longer have to start from scratch again if documents require corrections and/or amendments.

In a nutshell: separating content, structure and layout

If you are personally involved in issues such as documentation and editing, then you have probably already come across the topic of separating content, structure and layout. But what does separating “content” and “structure” actually mean? Is it complicated? And – most importantly – **why should you do it and how will it benefit your business?**

How many plates can you keep spinning at the same time?

Enough of the theory; let’s look at an everyday practical example from documentation and processing.

Imagine that you need to create a **manual**.

The “traditional” approach often means:

- Preparing your content in a text editor, adding photos and then saving it as a file.
- While you are working on the content, you create a structure in that file for your running text, with headers, subdivisions, captions, special tips, notes in table form and so on.
- You also format your content in that file: making headers slightly larger and giving them section numbers, italicising captions, etc.

Great stuff. You’ve finished the manual. Now you want to take some of the information from the manual and reuse it elsewhere; on **your website**, for example, in the service section of your homepage.

But your website uses a different font to the manual. And you need a different colour for the headings. And you don’t want them numbered.

You also want to keep the information from the caption, but you only want it to be visible when you hover your mouse over the image.

Last but not least, you’re also planning a **brochure**

for the next trade fair. This will mainly contain hints and tips and you want to use large pictures and a coherent colour scheme, to make the content striking and truly eye-catching.

All in all, this involves:

- creating 3 documents (or more)
- 3 lots of inputting text and images, or copying and pasting them
- and then putting it all together 3 times and reformatting it to suit each intended use.

What happens if something unfortunately changes? A tiny mistake, maybe, or an update a little while later.

First you have to locate all the documents again, open them and then edit the required section in each document.

If you want to make umbrella changes to the design and layout of all your documents, that also means manually changing each individual document. You might decide to print all your manuals in colour in the future, for example, so the headers need to be in your corporate colours.

The more publications and formats that are involved, the more **time-consuming** it becomes to maintain all your different information products and the greater the risk of mistakes creeping in.

Little by little, it starts to feel like a magic show where you have to keep lots of plates spinning at the same time. Good luck with that!

We haven’t simply made this example up and you are not the only one trying to pull this off! A recent study shows that 40% of industrial businesses in the DACH region (Germany, Austria and Switzerland) publish their content **in at least 3 different media and 72% in an amazing 5 or even more languages**¹.

¹ Effizientes Informationsmanagement durch komponentenbasierte Content-Management-Systeme, Tekom, 2019

40% of the businesses publish their content in at least 3 different media.
72% in even more than 5 languages.

The solution: separate the different strands

You're aware that the procedure we described above involves a huge effort because the content in the various formats is inextricably linked to their creation and to their specific document structure. There's nothing for it – you'll have to start editing everything from scratch all over again ...

The solution is obvious: **you need to break this link between content and form.**

Step 1: Structure

Define the **structure** separately. This means you decide the structure and potential elements of a document type – section, body text, image element, caption, note element – but not what these elements will look like in the actual document or the text that they will contain.

Step 2: Content

Determine the **content** separately. In other words, the specific information or data that you use to “fill” the structural elements – such as text, images, video, etc. are saved as modules. Again, you don't decide at this stage how you want this content to look.

Step 3: Layout

Determine the **layout** separately as well; in other words, the information about the appearance of the content in the structural elements. Examples include dual columns, bold, light blue, in Arial font, and so on.

The role of XML

Although this separation may look rather complex initially, an XML processing system means implementing it is easy. XML is a markup language that provides a common format for creating and storing individual pieces of information separately from each other.

You can choose from various XML processing systems. One of the best-known is SCHEMA ST4, which allows you to split, manage and reunite information conveniently and individually.

Using it will definitely take your documentation to a whole new level.

What is SCHEMA ST4?

SCHEMA ST4 is standard software that was developed as a secure and efficient way for businesses to create, organise and publish complex documents, especially technical documentation for engineering, electronics and context-sensitive online help for software. Using SCHEMA ST4 gives customers complete control. As well as the most important writing functions, ST4 also offers tools for quality assurance, as well as for version and variant management. This ensures output is consistent, which can only benefit the customer experience.

There's a reason why some people call SCHEMA ST4 “the Mercedes-Benz of component content management systems”²

² <https://techwhirl.com/review-schema-st4-mercedes-benz-of-component-content-management-systems/>

The simplicity of single-source publishing: one for all – and all from one!

Although you reunite the structure, content and layout in your actual publications, keeping the basic information separate makes life **much easier further down the line**.

1. If you store content in modular form and separately from the actual document structure, you can use each content module in different publications and even different media:
 - in the manual
 - in a second manual for a product variant
 - in a brochure
 - on your homepage
 - in an app
 - ...

We call this approach single-source publishing: **lots of different publications that draw on just one source**.

2. This also means that you can define **different structures for the same content**, so you can use a line of text that is a subsection in a general manual, for example, as the title of the full document in a specialised brochure or product information sheet.
3. As you only store the content in one central location, you **only have to implement changes and updates in one content module**. All the publications that refer to that content are **automatically edited**. That's very handy!
4. The single-source principle also makes it easier to provide translations, as you again only have to **translate the modular content once**. Then you can simply use the translated material in different places and different structures.
5. We've already said that you also determine the layout separately. As a result, you can use them **seamlessly in a range of publications**; from extra variants and new products to current events and many more. Once you've created

the layout, you simply link it to each new publication.

6. The traditional method of manually creating specific elements – such as images – is both time-consuming and difficult. With the single-source method, in contrast, once you have created one independent image, **all your images are then processed automatically and consistently**.
7. If you want to adapt the layout to match your branding or you're planning to update the look of your information products, then you can implement these changes **quickly**, even if they affect a lot of different publications. All you have to do is update the separate layout and the individual publications will automatically update in a flash.

Are we speaking your language?

An attractive financial picture

Reduce costs by almost half

Using a structure approach to technical content will deliver significant savings. SCHEMA has extrapolated the following data from experience with its own clients:

Function	Share of the costs	Saving via CCMS	TOTAL SAVINGS	Reasons for saving
Research	25 %	-20 %	-5 %	Central management Easier communication
Writing	20 %	-20 %	-4 %	Reuse Style guide and terminology
Compiling	10 %	-50 %	-5 %	More automation Easier change management
Translation	20 %	-50 %	-10 %	Convenient interface Content is media-neutral
Publishing	25 %	-80 %	-20 %	Automated process Layout updates only required in templates
TOTAL	100 %		-44 %!	

An average ROI of 2 years

The question, of course, is how fast you can achieve these savings. That is why Lexitech has conducted a further and more extensive analysis of the above costs. The results of this analysis showed an average return on investment of **2 years**, with no noteworthy standard deviation.

This does not account for other benefits such as a **faster time to market**, or the opportunity to add new functions at a negligible cost (video, for example, or a remote CMS).

Although these benefits are often significant, putting a figure on them seems to be more difficult. There are 2 reasons for this:

- the benefits vary greatly from business to business, and
- they are felt in different departments to the ones that manage the technical content (production, marketing, foreign offices, etc.).

Separating content, structure and layout: 3 crucial advantages

1. You define the content and reuse it for all the required publishing formats.
2. You create layouts for all the required publications and reuse them over and over: for example, one layout for all manuals, one for all brochures, one for all web pages, and so on.
3. You can develop multiple document structures for each publication and use your content flexibly within these structures.

What does single-source publishing mean for your daily operations?

1. You have a much **clearer overview** of your information because you only create content once.
2. You have more **flexibility** when creating variants and new publications by retaining a professional and uniform document format.
3. You **need less time** to change or amend your content or layout.
4. You boost **satisfaction among your clients and partners** by working **faster** and significantly increasing quality.
5. And, did you know that single-source publishing means that you can **still use Microsoft Word as an editor** in SCHEMA ST4?

Do you have any other questions or would you like to find out more about how your business can take advantage of the specific opportunities of strategic content management and single-source publishing?

Contact us for:

- ▶ a demo or presentation
- ▶ a proposal and quotation tailored to your organisation



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