HORIBA
Medical

Industry: Medical

Headquarters:
Montpellier, France

Size: More than 4,900 employees

Solution elements:

Tridion® Docs
Antenna House Formatter

Scaling documentation processes in the Life Sciences industry

HORIBA Medical, Europe's second largest provider of in vitro diagnostic systems and the world's fourth largest provider of hematology solutions undertook a strategic initiative to improve the management of its global documentation.

HORIBA Medical is the French subsidiary of The HORIBA Group, which consists of 43 subsidiaries in 22 countries and employs more than 4,900 people across the world. HORIBA Medical designs, develops and distributes in vitro diagnostic systems destined for biological analysis in medical laboratories. These automated analyzers address the needs of patients, doctors, private laboratories, clinics and university hospitals. HORIBA's expertise with in vitro diagnostics is one of the world's most respected in the domain of hematology and clinical chemistry.

With headquarters in Montpellier, France, HORIBA Medical relies on an international network that represents the company in more than 110 countries throughout the world, either directly through 12 local teams (Europe, United States, Brazil, India, China and Japan) or indirectly through nearly 100 distributors. HORIBA Medical produces 6,000 units per year and over 7,000 tons of reagents.

RWS

Challenges

- Rapid expansion

- An increasing number of product releases and customer options

- No easy method to share or reuse content

- No method to prevent content that had been previously validated from being reviewed again

- Large investment in desktop publishing costs for translation

"We realized we had to put a strategic plan in place. We could no longer live with the traditional methods of documentation and needed to have repeatable, scalable processes that would enable us to support the business growth."

Jean–Michel Guillot
Documentation Manager
Horiba Medical

Meeting the growth challenge

Since 1996, when HORIBA Medical joined the HORIBA Group, the company's sales have more than tripled. Due to the rapid growth, the documentation team faced an explosion of new work and expectations. With only seven writers dedicated to supporting more than 13,500 documents in fifteen languages, the company's growth presented a significant scaling challenge.

As a result of this growth, the company also expanded the range of instruments and number of options offered to customers. In addition to handling a higher volume of product documentation and variations, the documentation team had to increase the number of language variations it was delivering and managing

Furthermore, the documentation team had to support a wide range of publications that had similar or shared content including: user manuals, daily guides, contextual help embedded in analyzers, service manuals, reagent leaflets and material safety data sheets.

Like many global organizations where speed to market is critical, the documentation team did not always have full visibility into all of the priorities bearing down on them. They realized that by using traditional desktop authoring and publishing tools, they would increasingly face challenges keeping budgets under control and productivity high. In the existing process, authors could not share content without using the cut-and-paste method. The team also had no way to identify sections of content that had been previously reviewed or already translated. Furthermore, they began to worry that without a change in process they would see a degradation in the quality of their documentation. And that would reflect poorly on the department and the company.

Committing to a vision for the future

Desiring a process that could scale for the future, the documentation team set out to find a better process to manage the company's product information. After surveying trends in the industry, the team realized that moving to a topic-based writing model with XML had significant advantages over the more traditional book and document methodology. In particular, the team decided that DITA, the XML standard for technical information, could provide a framework to produce technical information more efficiently while also controlling and driving down costs and standardizing information.

By writing in structured topics, the team envisioned authoring in smaller units that could be easily repurposed across the team and product lines. This would solve a problem they had in the more traditional model where content sharing was not very easy. In addition, DITA XML would also allow the team to create automated publishing processes that could eliminate the cost of the manual desktop publishing (DTP) involved in localization. In the past, the documentation team was spending €750,000 on translation and 50% of that cost had been invested in desktop publishing. That entire cost could be eliminated by moving to DITA and automated publishing.

Selecting technology for managing structured content

With a vision defined, the team realized they needed a system and process to manage the thousands of topics that would be going through different versions in the source language, as well as delivered in 15 languages. Without a system that could track the relationship of all the topics and graphics to final deliverables, the move to structured content would quickly become unmanageable. Key to the team's vision was to have a system that could provide a common repository for shared content, ensure a lifecycle on the content, manage key metadata and provide for a strong translation and review process. In the very controlled regulatory environment for medical devices, oversight and audit tracking are critical to the process.

After surveying a number of systems in the market, the team selected Tridion Docs for its strong structured content management capabilities and out-of-the-box support for DITA.

"We found that SDL, with Tridion Docs' baseline and release management capabilities coupled with the system's outstanding handling of multilingual assets, provided the foundation for us to reach our ROI. The system was architected to handle high volumes of content in multiple languages and in parallel releases, which was precisely our business challenge."

Paul Coinaud
Documentation Architect
Horiba Medical

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Results

- Provided business agility and scalable documentation process

- Met organization's requirements for growth

- Provided method to easily write and share content

- Eliminated redundant review of already reviewed content

- Eliminated desktop publishing costs in translation

- Reduced translation spend by 50%

The move to structure

Once the solution and future was envisioned, the team put in place a plan to move the content to DITA XML. They first considered automating the conversion of legacy materials, but decided it would be more strategic to start writing structured content from scratch. This approach would give the team the opportunity to improve the content as they went, by standardizing the structures and applying the principles of minimalism to eliminate unnecessary content and inconsistencies. This transition was also the opportunity to reorganize the content into task-oriented manuals, eliminating the delivery of long linear books. Tridion Docs simplified the adoption of structured content by reducing the learning curve and empowering the authors to reach higher levels of reuse through the use of conditions and variables.

Achieving success

Since adopting this new system and process, the HORIBA Medical documentation team has succeeded in delivering on its vision. In two years, the team is generating five output formats and has created 4,500 objects in the source language. They now manage manuals and daily guides in hematology and clinical chemistry, reagent leaflets and accreditation files as well as contextual help.

Horiba Medical have been able to cut their translation budget in half, while increasing the amount of documentation being localized. At the same time, the quality of the documentation and information has been enhanced and there is more sharing of content across the writing team. Information is now written once, validated once and translated once. This results in documentation being updated more often at a much lower cost.

Implementation of Tridion Docs presented a great opportunity for the writing team to learn new skills and a new way of thinking and working. The deployment allowed the team to create more collaboration and sharing of knowledge and speed up the adoption of the new process.

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