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2020 DITA Satisfaction Report

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About the 2020 DITA Satisfaction Survey

The DITA Satisfaction Survey is a non-scientific, self-administered cross-sectional questionnaire primarily consisting of closed-ended multiple choice questions. Anecdotes, quotes, and other details presented in this report were collected using an online survey-building software using open-ended questions or gleaned from follow-up telephone interviews.

We asked respondents that use DITA to create technical documentation to identify what's working, what's not, and to tell us how satisfied they are with their current implementation.

We also collected feedback from technical documentation teams that say they are planning to adopt DITA in the future. We asked them about obstacles, if any, that prevented them from adopting DITA.

We did not collect data about respondents whose organizations do not plan to adopt DITA.

This report presents the high-level findings of our research and provides commentary and guidance from recognized DITA experts on how to avoid some of the challenges that negatively impact satisfaction.

The report also includes advertisements from sponsors and others that provide DITA-related products, services, educational information and events.

About the respondents

Survey respondents work on technical documentation teams with 45% identifying as **technical writers**, 25% as **management**, 11% as **information architects**, 9% **content strategists**, 2% **tool support personnel**, 2% **instructional designers**, and 1% as **information technologists**.

management roles 17% **documentation manager (or equivalent)** 4% **vice president** 2% **director**





Rob Hanna
Enterprise Information Architect



There's still work to do

Defining success with DITA

The DITA standard has transformed the technical communication industry by lowering the costs and complexities for organizations needing to find efficiencies and extend the usefulness of their content.

It's been 20 years since Michael Priestley, Don Day, and David Schell devised the first DITA structures within IBM with a view to modernizing their approach to technical authoring. Since that time, it has grown to see broad adoption within IBM where they are publishing more than 60 million pages in more than 40 different languages using DITA.

As a public standard since 2005, it has seen broad adoption in technical publication groups in many of the world's largest corporations. More and more we are seeing other groups outside of traditional technical publication roles take on DITA to fill the need for complex authoring and publishing requirements. In this report, more than half of the survey respondents reported that they were aware of other teams within their company exploring DITA adoption.

Despite DITA's many successes around the globe, DITA adopters have faced multiple challenges along the way. Moving from traditional document building to collaborative topic-based authoring represents a significant disruption for every organization taking on the DITA standard. Organizations that attempted to minimize the disruption by continuing with the same processes and accountability found that their approach led to significant rework or even abandonment of their effort. In fact, many of the problem areas reported in this survey point to lack of governance, leadership, and experienced staff to guide the team through difficult change-management issues.

Attempts to minimize the disruption by continuing with the same processes and accountability led to significant rework or even abandonment.

Survey in 2017, one data point is significantly different from the last report. More than three-quarters of the survey respondents indicated that they were satisfied with their DITA implementations. There is still much work to do to improve these numbers but after 20 years, it is nice to see that this important standard is continuing to grow in adoption and flourish in many organizations.

To better prepare for the transformation or to assist with salvaging a project that has headed off the rails, more than half of respondents indicated that they relied on the expertise of an outside consultant to ease the transition. These professionals can assist with many of the underlying issues including developing a comprehensive and actionable content strategy to help guide the long term development of a content management program.

While these challenges have persisted over the years since the last DITA Satisfaction



THE ROBOTS ARE COMING DO YOU SPEAK ROBOT?



Situation: We need to do more with content

- It isn't enough to deliver the right content to the right people at the right time. Your customers don't just need content anymore, they need answers. The move to artificial intelligence, chatbots, and conversational user-interfaces is changing how we create and deliver content.

25% 

of Google searches on Android in the U.S. are now done by voice.
(Gartner)

BY 2021 

most enterprises will consider chatbots to be the preeminent content platform surpassing both cloud and mobile.
(Gartner)

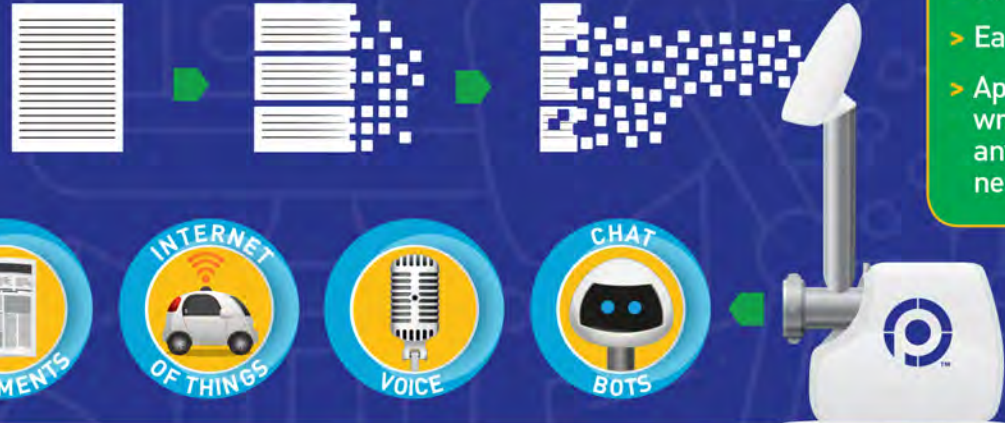
74% 

believe that technical communication professionals should write content for these emerging technologies.
(2018 Chatbot adoption survey)

Solution: Intelligent Microcontent

- This is the next step in the journey from documents and topic-based structured authoring to more precise, flexible, and consumable content components.

Intelligent, precise components feed smart machines



Microcontent is:

- > About one idea
- > Clearly labeled
- > Easy to scan, and
- > Appropriately written for intent anywhere it's needed.

Your words matter



The techniques you use to write and organize component-based content will have an even greater impact on the readiness and usability of your content in the future. Content needs to be precise and written for user intent.

Be Ready

Learn to write for both bots and humans. Lead your organization into the era of Information 4.0 with intelligent microcontent.



Make the move to intelligent microcontent. Contact us today.
www.precisioncontent.com

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About the contributors

We asked these DITA educators, trainers, software vendors, consultants and specialists, to provide advice and additional commentary alongside the survey results.

sponsors



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DITA satisfaction

How satisfied are current users?



The majority of technical documentation teams say they are satisfied with their DITA implementation

Just over three-quarters of technical communication departments that have adopted the Darwin Information Typing Architecture are satisfied with their current implementation. One in ten technical documentation shops that have adopted DITA report being dissatisfied with one or more aspects of their implementation. Common reasons for dissatisfaction are discussed later in this report, although many of the more commonly mentioned problems can be attributed to the absence of a coherent content strategy and a lack of governance. This report covers the challenges reported both by technical writers and technical publications managers.

satisfaction

76%

satisfied
with current DITA
implementation

10%

dissatisfied
with current DITA
implementation

14%

neither
satisfied nor
dissatisfied



The role of expertise



Regina Preciado
Senior Content Strategist

content rules™
the global content experts™

Hire an experienced guide to expedite the transition to DITA. You can leverage their lessons learned and avoid many of the pitfalls encountered by others.

An expert guide can:

- Facilitate the development of a content strategy that supports the organization well into the future.
- Work with your teams to develop or improve their skills in DITA, structured authoring, component content management, and content reuse
- Help solve challenges, such regulatory compliance or localization management

If you're unhappy with your DITA implementation, an expert guide can help you identify what to fix and how to fix it. Let a guide get you where you want to be!

48%
did not hire an
DITA expert
to guide project

Teams that hired an expert to guide DITA adoption report higher levels of satisfaction and fewer challenges

Of those teams that report being dissatisfied with their current DITA implementation, nearly half of them have something in common: They did not hire an outside expert to guide their efforts. External DITA experts are often sought after to direct and scope projects, evaluate the situation, analyze content, and build a formal content strategy that will be used to guide implementation and ensure the organization achieves declared business goals. Teams guided by an external expert report fewer complications and higher satisfaction rates.

“We thought that we could learn as we go, but in retrospect, we might not be in the situation we are now if we would have employed an experienced guide.”

— Maya (information architect, financial services firm)





Why DITA?

Benefits provided by DITA



respondents

89%
adopted
DITA

7%
plan to
adopt
DITA
in the future

Tech docs teams report operational efficiencies, new capabilities, and reduced costs with DITA

Benefits of using DITA

Technical documentation teams adopting DITA are often well-situated to efficiently produce content for multichannel delivery. These teams are capable of producing adaptive content experiences that support individual customer needs and behaviors, and that are accessible across multiple delivery channels.

Operational efficiencies, improvements in content delivery, content consistency, and cost savings from content reuse—including a substantial reduction in unnecessary translation expense—are among the substantial benefits technical documentation managers report.



Patrick Bosek
Co-Founder, Jorsek Inc.



Benefits provided by DITA

Cultivating capabilities before benefits

Benefits are great, but they're not tangible enough. Content consistency, multichannel publishing, and increased productivity are wonderful buzzwords, but what are these perceived benefits really doing for me? And what are they doing for our company that will make upper management care? This is why we need to shift our focus from benefits to capabilities. Framing our view this way will communicate what DITA is capable of, and subsequently, the problems it can solve.

Let's spend less time on a list of benefits and start striving to help our companies figure out how DITA solves its business problems. Building on our known benefits, we can focus on using DITA to develop valuable capabilities that can be tailored to meet the individual needs of the organizations we serve.

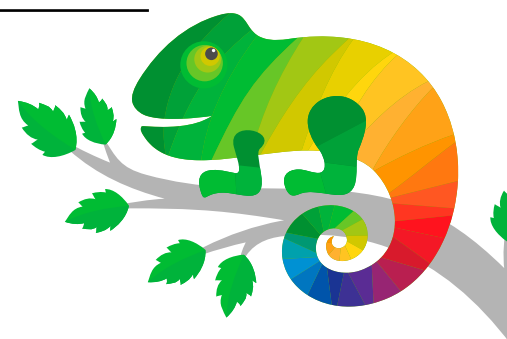
Benefits of using DITA

Technical documentation teams that have successfully adopted DITA report a variety of benefits. Here are a list of the most common advantages:

82%	Content consistency
68%	Multichannel publishing capabilities
53%	Content usability improvements
46%	Increased productivity through collaborative authoring
43%	Content personalization; experience customization
40%	Translation savings from repurposing translated text
27%	Machine-processable content
26%	Ability to produce machine-processable content

“DITA allows us to put our content to work. It provides us with content capabilities we could not otherwise provide our customers.”

— Diana (technical documentation team lead, consumer electronics company)



Why DITA? Personalizing Experiences

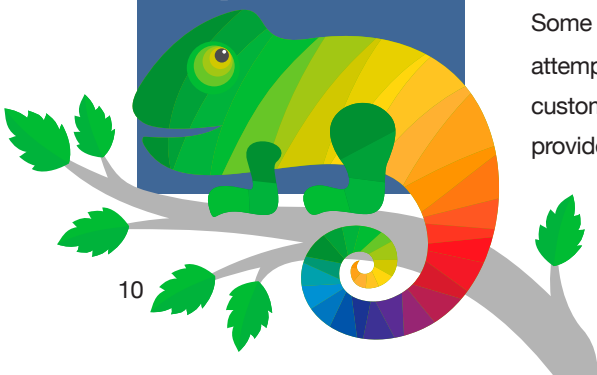


respondents
37%
are using
DITA to
personalize
and to
customize
technical
documentation
experiences

Tech docs teams are increasingly using DITA to help them deliver personalized experiences

Leveraging DITA to provide individualized content

One in three technical documentation teams that have adopted DITA report that they are leveraging DITA content to personalize technical documentation experiences to reduce the negative impacts of information overload and to help differentiate themselves from the competition. The level of personalization varies. Some organizations chose to implement basic personalization while others attempt to put in place more advanced personalization tactics (connecting customer data sources to their content delivery systems, for example) and provide functionality allowing users to customize their documentation experience.





Joe Gelb

President and
Head of Business Development



Getting it right

4 Rs of Personalization

Personalizing technical documentation experiences is a big challenge. Doing it right—and across multiple channels—isn't an insurmountable task, but to do it well, it helps to refer to a mental model called the 4 Rs of Personalization.

In short, you'll need to focus on providing the most **relevant** content for each person, **recognize** the individuals you are hoping to engage, **remember** the information they provide (or that you're able to glean from their interactions), and use that information to provide intelligent content **recommendations**. By basing your strategy on these four pillars, you can begin to deliver personalized content experiences at scale.

Ultimately, personalizing the experience is about delivering the content that's most relevant to each user. That means you'll want to consider strategies such as adapting your homepage, prioritizing topics, or boosting or hiding search results based on a person's role, product, version, or location. Spend some time thinking about all the ways you can surface, suppress, or augment information to personalize each user's experience.

relevance

First, you'll need to recognize individuals (like prospects, customers or employees) by associating them with a user profile. In addition to storing their name, contact details and photo, you might use profiles to capture data about **role** (job function), **permissions** (what content they should/shouldn't be able to access), **level of expertise**, company affiliation, location, language and device preferences, and account number. Associating content to user profile data allows you to recognize the needs of individual consumers and serve up content that meets those needs.

recognize

Personalization can begin once you start leveraging the information contained in user profiles and personal preferences (like areas of interest). You'll need to be able to remember things about the individuals you're trying to serve content to, which will then inform the recommendations you provide to meet their needs. As such, you should plan to keep a record of your customer's history, such as their browsing behavior, actions taken, and implied or explicit interests.

remember

Some organizations fail at personalization because they reach only for the low-hanging fruit, such as individuals' names and birthdays. Although welcoming someone by name and wishing them a happy birthday is rarely a bad idea, consumers don't find this type of personalization all that useful. Personalization is effective when it helps people understand ideas and achieve tasks more effectively. It should increase the utility and relevance of your content, for example, by providing users with content recommendations, new offerings, product announcements, cross-sell and up-sell opportunities, and tailored calls to action.

recommend

INCREASE THE IMPACT OF YOUR CONTENT

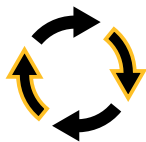
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CIDM is excited to announce Kristina Halvorson, CEO and founder of Brain Traffic, as a shared Keynote speaker.

*You can register for one or both conferences. Register by **February 15, 2020** to receive our lowest ticket price!*



Using DITA Management challenges



Finding, training, and governing staff, and measuring content performance are some of the biggest management challenges

48%

report difficulty finding right-fit employees

an equal number struggle to train staff

Management challenges

Teams that have adopted DITA face some challenges even under the best of circumstances. The most commonly reported management challenges are:

63%	Content strategy development difficulties
52%	Inability to accurately measure content performance
49%	Inability to collect actionable business data
48%	Finding the right people (staffing)
48%	Training of technical communication team members
47%	Difficulty finding staff with requisite experience
47%	Controlling naysayers and laggards (obstacles to success)
46%	Lack of content governance
39%	Inexperience selecting the right tools and technologies
24%	Lack of leadership



Mark Lewis
Content Engineer



Deciding what to measure and how Metrics that matter

Unless you want your DITA solution to get the axe, you must continually prove the value of your content and content solution. Or if you want to expand the content solution to other departments, you must similarly prove the value. You should be collecting and reporting on the metrics you used as part of your business case. See “Initial business case” in this report.

Business data is needed to prove content performance and value. Unfortunately, the survey states that 52% were unable to measure performance and 49% were unable to collect data.

How do you solve this challenge? If your content solution can be configured and customized, work with your vendor to determine the changes needed to collect the desired data. Typically, this is custom metadata that can be queried and displayed on a dashboard. If the solution cannot be customized, tell your vendor that you want a performance metrics feature added to the software.

Hey software vendors, this sounds like an opportunity to differentiate your product.

Preparing your staff for success

Team support is key

While some teams struggle to get DITA right, other organizations successfully transition to DITA their first time around with minimal difficulty.

What do the successful teams have in common? They took their people into account from the beginning. They understood that to get the most benefit from DITA, the team needed to think about content in an entirely new way.

If you’re planning on adopting DITA, here are five things you can do to prepare and support your staff:

- Hire a reputable expert to develop your content strategy (make sure they involve authors representing other content teams)
- Train authors to have a structured authoring mindset. (Hint: Start thinking about modular topics instead of long documents)
- Train authors in writing for reuse, including the importance of consistent terminology and following your content models
- Hire experienced contractors who can shoulder some of the workload while providing DITA expertise (and reassurance)
- Train staff on the new ecosystem and support them through the learning curve

It’s never too late to give your team the best shot at success.



Val Swisher
Global Content Strategist





Using DITA Common content challenges



Teams that report low levels of satisfaction are unable to enjoy the benefits of DITA because they suffer from these content challenges

41%
struggle with content reuse

29%
have difficulties formatting and publishing

Content challenges reported by managers

Tech docs teams that have adopted DITA may face a variety of challenges, even under the best of circumstances. Here are the most common content challenges:

41%	Inability to effectively repurpose and reuse content
29%	Inability to publish output as desired
29%	Inability to adequately control the formatting of DITA content
26%	Content delivery difficulties (multi-channel publishing)
19%	Difficulty creating DITA content
15%	Problems related to translating and localizing DITA content



Strategies or tactics?

Content standards enable multichannel reuse



Rob Hanna

Enterprise Information Architect



Content reuse is not a strategy: Reuse is not a strategy; it's a tactic. The strategy is to reduce duplication and overlap of content. Note that the strategy is not to eliminate duplication in your content since duplication of words and phrases is not only normal, it is expected. Organizations need to focus more on the strategy than on the tactic. As a tactic, content reuse is a powerful albeit complex contributor to the strategy.

Content reuse is a spectrum: To be successful, content reuse mechanisms must be deliberate and repeatable. There are many mechanisms to choose from including (a) content references, (b) key-based references, (c) conditional reuse, (d) cross-references, (e) topic-based reuse, (f) boilerplate reuse, and (g) copy and paste. Each of these mechanisms require best practices to ensure consistency.

Content standards promote better reuse: The three biggest barriers to reuse are **findability**, **usability**, and **granularity**. Authors need to know where and how to find content appropriate for reuse. This does not mean that all reusable content should be centrally stored—it should not. In fact, all content should be written with reuse in mind. When authors do find the content, they will not use it if the content is not written consistently. Nor will they use it if it is too much or too little information. Proper content standards help authors with consistency and chunking of content, and with better chunking and labeling comes better reusability of content.



Steve O'Sullivan
Solutions Architect



Overcoming content challenges

Role of content engineering

Why are some organizations not getting the benefits that DITA can provide? Respondents who reported being disappointed in their DITA implementation also said that they didn't have access to an expert to design their content strategy and to ensure the proper implementation of the resulting solution. They thought they'd just figure it out along the way. **This is not a good idea.**

The systems required to implement DITA are often complicated solutions requiring a **content engineering** approach. Specialized software is required to facilitate collaboration between authors, and to make possible content publishing and multichannel delivery. There are often interdependencies between these platforms for which you need to plan.

If you think you need to “fix” your existing DITA solution, first take a step back and make sure you have a clear understanding of the content problems that are preventing you from achieving your business goals. Which ones are not being solved? Then, ask your software vendor how they would address these content problems. They should give you expert advice on product features or configuration changes and customizations that could solve your problems.



Adopting DITA Obstacles to adoption



Many tech docs shops consider adopting DITA, but their efforts are often thwarted by these obstacles

83%

of respondents encountered obstacles to **DITA** adoption

Common obstacles to DITA adoption

Tech docs teams that have been unable to move to DITA share a variety of challenges that they claim prevent them from persuading management to support DITA adoption.

61%	Incoherent content strategy
50%	Cost of adoption (insufficient budget/resources)
41%	Inability to adequately prove return on investment (ROI)
38%	Technology and software selection and implementation

Overcoming obstacles to adoption

Start with content strategy

Most of the obstacles to DITA adoption can be avoided or mitigated by a well-designed, fully documented content strategy. Your strategy should:

- Identify your business objectives and describe what you need your content to do to support them (Your proof of ROI starts here!)
- Define content models, reuse guidelines, structured authoring guidelines, taxonomy, metadata, workflow, governance, and localization management
- Describe business and functional requirements for new toolsets and account for content engineering (to support automation and multichannel publishing) and systems integration (to ensure your new toolset functions exactly as you need it to)



Val Swisher
Global Content Strategist

content rules
the global content experts

The most successful teams also incorporate change management from the beginning, involving representative team members throughout the transition to DITA. They support content teams with training in structured authoring, strategic reuse, and the new toolset.

Selling DITA to executives

Initial business case



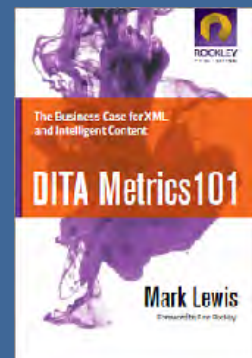
Mark Lewis
Content Engineer



In order to persuade an executive to buy a new content solution, you must prove the ROI and make the business case for DITA. If the value of your content is higher than the cost, there's a good chance you can convince the executive.

Be aware that what you consider valuable may not be valuable to the executive. Find out your organization's business goals. I've found that many documentation managers don't know these. Then, design your metrics to prove that your content and the abilities of the new content solution would address these goals.

The book "DITA Metrics 101" offers a methodology for designing these predictive metrics. On cost, don't assume that a DITA solution is expensive. If the solution you are considering must be configured and customized, present your content requirements and goals to software vendors. Ask for an estimate. They should work with you to prove the ROI of your solution. Or ask a vendor neutral consultant to help you design the solution and make the business case. You'll need these business case metrics in years ahead. For additional information see "Metrics that matter" in this report.

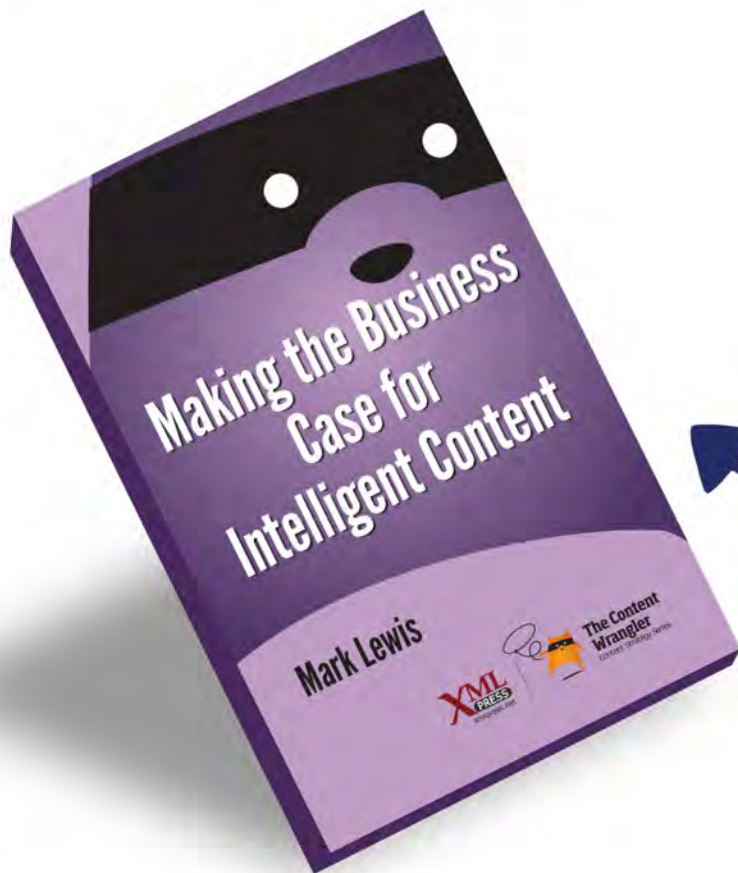




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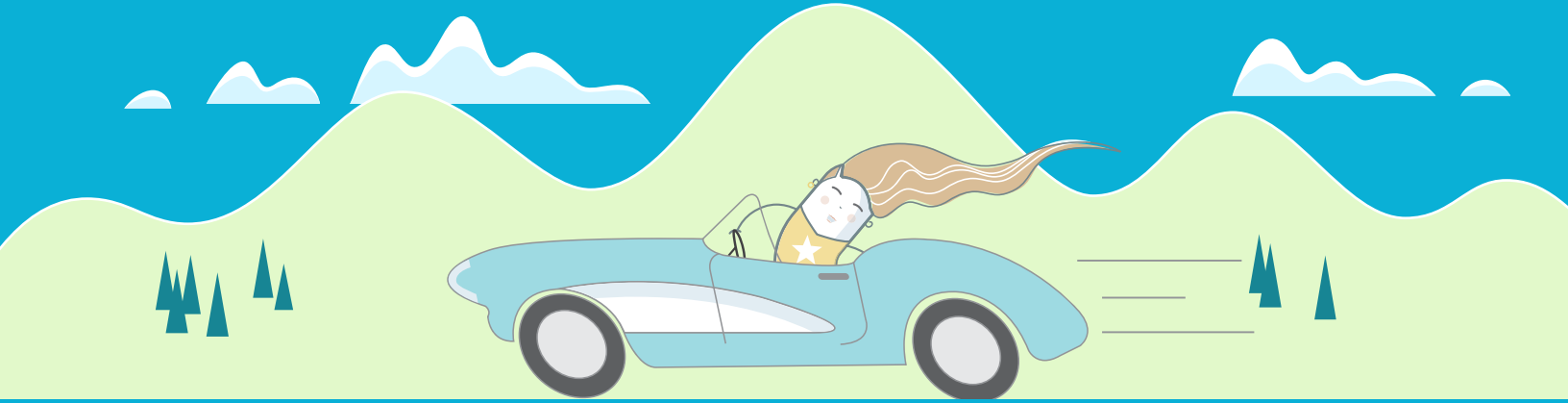
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By  JORSEK

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Expanding DITA adoption

Getting other teams on board



Once implemented by the technical documentation team, other teams consider DITA adoption

Departments into which DITA is likely to spread

Technical documentation teams that successfully move to DITA, and are able to demonstrate return on investment, report interest from other areas seeking to gain similar content capabilities. DITA is most likely to be considered in these departments outside of technical documentation:

56%
report interest in
DITA from other
departments

37%	Training and eLearning
22%	Marketing and sales
13%	Research and development
11%	Product development



Wouter Maagdenberg
Transformation Specialist

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Automating content production with DITA Generating how-to videos

DITA is promoted for all the obvious reasons: consistency, content reuse, and less expensive localization, maintenance, and publishing costs. The granular form of curating the content, its associated metadata, and separation of style and form also make DITA the ideal base for automating the creation of videos.

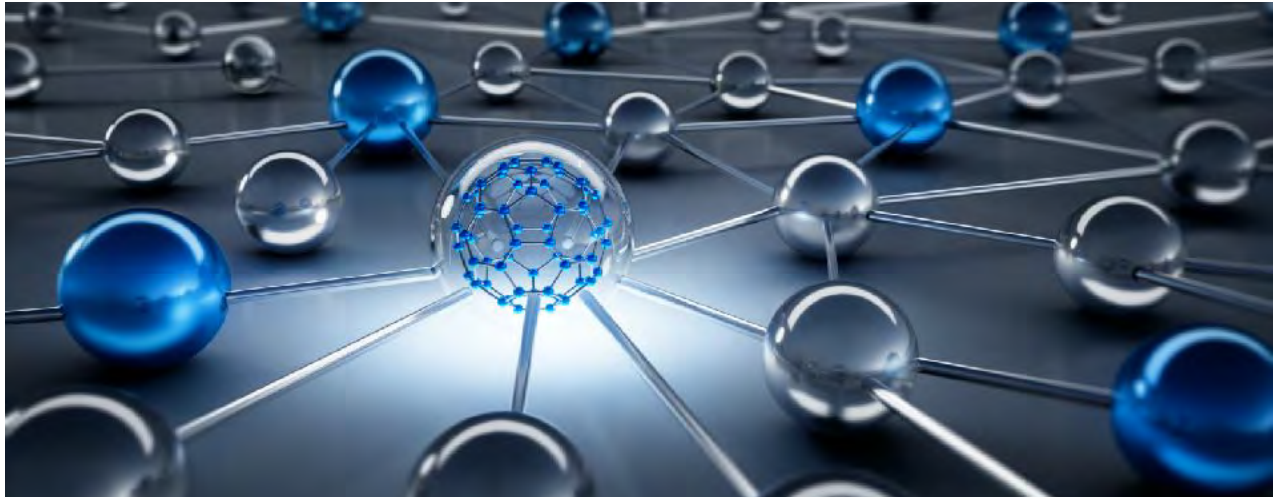
Many consumers today prefer viewing a how-to video over reading an instruction manual. They're visually focused and they frequently turn to online environments, including social media and video platforms, to find answers to their questions. Organizations unable to publish videos are non-existent to these millions of consumers.

From a training and instructional value standpoint, video also outperforms most written materials. It all comes down to how our brains work. Humans process audio and images much easier than text. In addition, listening to a voice-over while looking at matching images significantly enhances learning and retention.

It is no wonder that companies increasingly recognize the power of video instructions to stimulate learning and support, and to improve customer satisfaction.



Expanding DITA adoption Drivers for expanded use



Knowledge management and content-production optimization projects are top drivers for DITA adoption outside of tech comm

Why organizations consider expanding DITA outside of tech docs

Initiatives aimed at solving a variety of business challenges may consider adopting DITA to assist them in meeting their business goals. Some of the common drivers for expanding DITA adoption outside of the technical documentation team include knowledge management initiatives and projects aimed at either optimizing the efficient production of requests for quotes and/or the development of sales proposals. eLearning projects also are drivers for DITA adoption.

Adoption of DITA by teams other than technical documentation is rejected for a variety of reasons including: the belief that DITA is too challenging for non-expert content contributors to use without significant challenges, and because there is often little perceived overlap between content produced by various teams working inside the same organization.

**Patrick Bosek**

Co-Founder, Jorsek Inc.

easyDITA
By JORSEK

Moving beyond technical documentation

Expanding DITA adoption

With years of fine-tuning by the technical documentation industry, I've noticed the temptation to limit DITA use to teams that craft technical communication content. This exclusivity stifles the potential of DITA and limits its greatest benefits to a small subset of content use cases.

DITA is a practical solution for content teams in other departments outside of tech pubs because a standardized approach to organizing and structuring information isn't solely applicable to technical writing. Many of the advantages DITA provides technical documentation teams are equally valuable to other departments across the enterprise.

For example, *version control*. As an XML standard, DITA is exceptional at helping technical publication teams effectively manage version control and enforce content consistency across vast libraries of information. Content producers in the HR, legal, finance, product development, and customer success departments, and those who work crafting education and training content, can leverage the power of DITA to dramatically improve productivity and help them overcome numerous business challenges.

Expanding DITA adoption beyond technical communication teams extends the value proposition of DITA across the enterprise allowing organizations to gain substantial benefits—including the development of new capabilities—that were previously realized only by technical documentation departments.

DITA was *built* for tasks like that and not solely for technical documentation teams. Content structure and information organization aren't—and shouldn't be—limited to technical writing. DITA might've started there, but it's time we looked beyond technical publications and realized DITA's usefulness wherever content organization and structure are needed.

Two emerging fronts for DITA integration are Knowledge Management (KM) and Content Operations (Content Ops). Both of these areas harness DITA's capability to help businesses scale their knowledge and content libraries. Rather than stopping with technical communication teams, DITA offers value to knowledge and content across the business.

This is the future. Businesses create, organize, and distribute knowledge across the departments throughout their companies. For future-facing organizations, DITA is a formidable ally that's been largely sidelined outside of technical documentation teams.

Legal, HR, finance, and every other department that produces bodies of information all call for the systemic organization of their content. Regardless of whether your organization is a global multinational with offices around the world or just a much smaller firm with a few isolated departments attempting to collaborate on content production, DITA provides the structure and organizational power to make unity possible.

Once you put DITA to use outside of technical communication, you'll see just how much it's capable of.



Carlos Evia

Associate Professor of
Communication, Virginia Tech

LwDITA is not a replacement for DITA. It's primarily aimed at those that have yet to adopt DITA.

Expanding Adoption

Lightweight DITA

Lightweight DITA (LwDITA) is a simplified version of the Darwin Information Typing Architecture (DITA). In comparison to DITA 1.3, LwDITA has a smaller element type and attribute set, simpler content models, and a reduced feature set.

LwDITA also defines mappings between DITA XML, HTML5, and Markdown, which enables authoring, collaboration, and publishing across different markup languages and organizational silos. This means that LwDITA includes the following three initial “flavors” that authors can adopt based on their needs and expertise:

- **XDITA** — an XML format with a subset of DITA elements that can be used for validated authoring and complex publishing chains
- **HDITA** — an HTML5 format that can be used for either authoring or displaying content
- **MDITA** — a Markdown format with a subset of XDITA elements that can be used for maximizing input readability while maintaining structure in content.

Content creators do not need to use all three formats at the same time to adopt LwDITA. A marketing specialist can work in HTML5 and they could use LwDITA through HDITA. A subject matter expert can live in a Markdown workflow without XML or HTML tags and could use LwDITA to contribute occasionally to a content repository through MDITA. And a technical content expert can create LwDITA topics through XDITA. All three LwDITA formats are compatible with each other and with DITA XML. For a team of authors with diverse technical backgrounds and communication skills, the different formats of LwDITA allow collaboration and content exchange in a centralized solution.

LwDITA is not a replacement for DITA 1.3. Organizations and teams that are already using DITA are, of course, encouraged to explore LwDITA. However, LwDITA is primarily aimed at organizations and individuals that have not adopted DITA. If XML is not a tool used in your professional community (i.e., if you are not in technical communication) or if you are not familiar with information typing, you can rely on LwDITA as an introduction to structured authoring and content reuse.

LwDITA is currently being developed as a standard by a subcommittee of the DITA Technical Committee with the Organization for the Advancement of Structured Information Standards (OASIS). I co-chair the Lightweight DITA subcommittee with Michael Priestley (IBM Canada).

You can track our progress and, for a deeper dive on the proposed LwDITA standard, you can read my book, “Creating Intelligent Content with Lightweight DITA.”



Creating Intelligent Content with Lightweight DITA

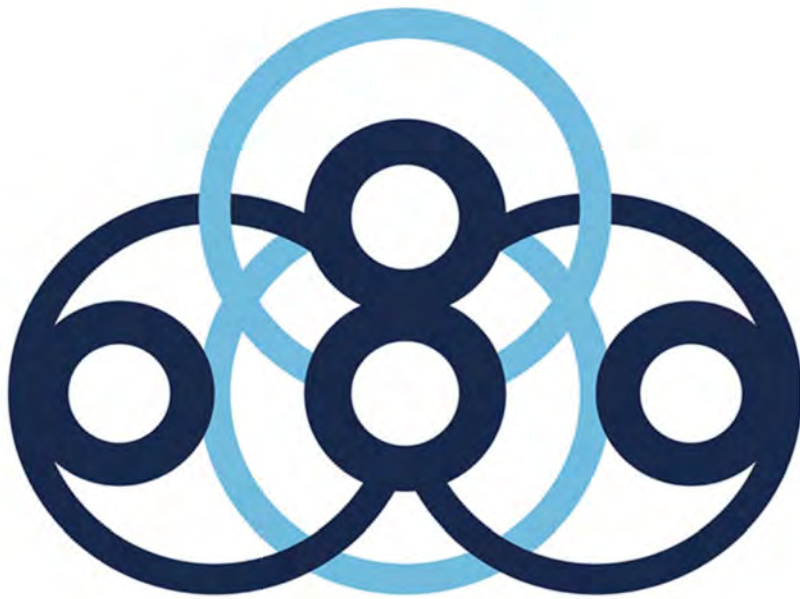
In this book, Dr. Carlos Evia, co-chair of the Lightweight DITA subcommittee at OASIS, introduces a proposed version of the DITA standard that reduces its dependence on complex Extensible Markup Language (XML) structures and simplifies its authoring experience.

This volume aims to reconcile discrepancies and similarities in methods for authoring content in industry and academia and does so by reporting on DITA's evolution through the lens of computational thinking, which has been connected in scholarship and media to initiatives for learning to code and programming.

Praise for the book

"This book serves as a strong contribution to both practitioner and scholarly literature in the field of technical communication. The book serves as a guide to help technical communicators adopt an in-development standard, it provides an accessible introduction to LwDITA, and it provides insider insights into LwDITA's development and pedagogical applications." Erin Kathleen Bahl in *Technical Communication Quarterly*.

"We see this bridging of industry and academy as a key issue this book is addressing and has done so successfully." Jason Tham and Dana Wilder in *Communication Design Quarterly*.



CREATING INTELLIGENT CONTENT WITH LIGHTWEIGHT DITA

Carlos Evia





Abandoning DITA Searching for an alternative



Difficult-to-use software products are the most common reason for talk of abandoning DITA

25%
are considering
abandoning
DITA

Top reasons for potentially abandoning DITA

One in four technical documentation teams that use DITA have discussed abandoning the standard in favor of a more appropriate alternative. Survey respondents said that talk of abandoning DITA was triggered by these and other problems:

42%	Counterintuitive software with outdated user interfaces
39%	Attractiveness of alternatives that appear easier to adopt/use
23%	Inaccessible to non-expert content contributors
11%	Distrust of software vendors
10%	Challenges making content reuse work as expected



Discouraging abandonment

Focus on author experience

This report presents the high-level findings of our research and provides commentary on how to avoid some of the challenges that negatively impact DITA satisfaction. Although we did not ask specific questions about everything we would have liked to, we did ask several open-ended questions that allowed respondents to share anecdotal comments about their DITA implementation with us.

It was only after scrutinizing the anecdotal comments that we discovered an issue that previously hadn't been on our radar screens — and that doesn't get as much attention as it likely should — **the author experience**.

Time and again, survey respondents passionately complained about the software tools their organizations have purchased for them to craft DITA content. The complaints focused primarily on the perceived difficulty of use and the amount of time and money technical communicators believe is being wasted attempting to overcome obstacles introduced by software tools they use to craft DITA content.

One respondent put it succinctly: “The tools foist upon us are outdated, poorly designed, and difficult to use. The user interfaces are horrible remnants of the past. It's clear that our vendor is more concerned with enabling functionality than on creating an appropriate author experience.”

Another respondent summed up the inconvenience this way: “It's a good thing we're not capable of measuring employee content-creation performance. If management could see how much time we waste attempting to work around obstacles introduced by DITA authoring tools, they'd ditch DITA in a matter of minutes.”

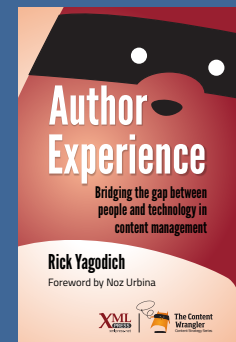
Content strategy expert, Rick Yagodich, says in his book “Author Experience: Bridging the Gap Between People and Technology in Content Management” (XML Press, 2014) it's the job of software makers to “remove the inconsistencies and cognitive hurdles that make it harder than necessary to work.” The problem, Yagodich writes, “is that authoring tool development is lopsided in favor of the recipient (the end-user) of the communication being produced. That needs to change.”

In future surveys, we'll dig deeper to understand (and report upon) the impact that poor authoring experiences may have on technical documentation teams that use DITA. We plan to add additional questions to our followup surveys about tool usage and to gauge what authors think of the experience provided by their software vendors.

The advice to software vendors is clear: Invest in improving the author experience. It matters.



Scott Abel
Content Strategist



Author Experience
Rick Yagodich

Books by – and for – technical communication pros

Intelligent Content: A Primer

Today, everything is marketing. All of the content we produce affects the customer experience. Therefore, all content is marketing and all content producers are marketers — even technical communicators.

Intelligent Content: A Primer introduces intelligent content: how it works, the benefits, the objectives, the challenges, and how to get started. Anyone who wants to understand intelligent content will get a clear introduction along with case studies and all the reference information you could ask for to make the case for intelligent content with your management.

Intelligent Content: A Primer is written by three leaders in content strategy and content marketing.

Ann Rockley is widely recognized as the mother of content strategy. Charles Cooper, co-author with Ann Rockley of *Managing Enterprise Content*, has been involved in creating and testing digital content for more than 20 years. And Scott Abel, known as The Content Wrangler, is an internationally recognized global content strategist. Together, they have created the definitive introduction to intelligent content.



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From <di^ta> to videos

- Easily create and maintain videos
- Mass produce videos & HTML5
- Keep videos in-sync and up-to-date
- Localize videos on-the-fly

Reuse DITA to create videos



Create and update videos with ease

Bring text-to-speech, illustrations to animation, and fragments to titles.

Publish videos based on localized DITA content

Reuse translations and reach out to audiences worldwide.

Single-source instructional and explainer videos

One voice: base how-to videos on your existing documentation, in-sync with PDF, print & HTML.

Grow audiences worldwide

Extent your reach via video, also on YouTube and social channels.

TXT  **MEDIA**

Technology to turn topics into instructional videos



November issue Tekom
'Technical Communication'
Text by Wouter Maagdenberg

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Content Rules combines content strategy, content optimization, and content development to maximize the effectiveness of your content and meet your business needs. We have proven strategies for delivering useful content on the right platform, to the right audience, at the right time — anywhere in the world.

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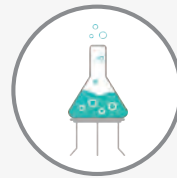
Content Strategy



Global Content Strategy



Content Transformation



Content Development



Content Optimization

Whether you're just starting to consider DITA or are ready to get more out of your existing DITA implementation, we can help you make the transition effectively and efficiently. [Make your next DITA project a success by talking with one of our experts today!](#)



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