

“Repurposing Content for Multichannel Publishing”

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Thumbnail:

After this session, attendees will have strategies for handling and producing documents for in a multichannel publishing environment. Understand how multichannel publishing works and how to repurpose and reuse all kinds of content. This includes leveraging authored content as well as engineering data and stylesheet elements. Audience members will be able to develop guidelines for reducing content and the effort for managing it.

Abstract:

It all comes down to managing and reusing source. Recycling content (chapters, graphics, etc.) is not new. What is new here is the common set of back-end structure in XML form and the fact that more than one set of tools — including small, mission critical custom tools — are explicitly focused on the specific needs of a given project.

Reusing and repurposing content is all about improving efficiency: automating, accelerating, and merging applications, systems, and processes. In a multichannel publishing environment, it is critical that content development — source development — and its management are as efficient as possible.

At it's base, we're talking about reusing authored source content chunks. This means modular writing, link management, and metadata to control variable content within a book, across books, across releases or product lines, or across audiences. Multichannel publishing adds yet another dimension to the content.

Stylesheets are one method for controlling multichannel publishing. They can operate on data contained within the source content or provided by external information. Stylesheet authoring and design can benefit from the same modular writing strategies used for content development. Stylesheets can also be modularized, improving maintenance across publishing channels.

What happens when you decide to include the data leveraged from engineering and business systems? How do you maintain the same strategies with generated content? Should you even try? Content can be generated directly from software source code (API library files, man pages, error messages), business systems (bug databases, project management systems, legal), and engineering data files (CAD data, diagnostics). But how can this data be efficiently integrated into a multichannel environment?

How do you determine guidelines for content reuse in all these situations? It comes down to the intersection content reuse and effort reduction. CAN you do it? Maybe. Do you WANT to? That depends a lot on who is answering the question and why they're motivated to do it at all (or unmotivated, sometimes). SHOULD you? That's the hard one. It always comes down to cost versus benefit. This presentation will focus on the point where these intersect.

This presentation will serve people already working in documentation and single-sourcing environments the tools to determine the answers to these question — "what gets done?" and "how far to go?" up front. For people in engineering and project management, it will help them understand what benefits their organizations can gain through efficiencies gained at the places that their systems intersect the others. Together, understanding repurposing and reusing content in can save people a lot of wasted effort, time, and money because it eliminates the problem of "invisible assumptions."

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