#### Results (continued)

#### Reduced turnaround times

- Conversion is immediate
- 638 page document took just minutes to process
- Operated under direct user control, according to individual deadlines

#### Reduced costs

- Conversion costs were much lower than outsourcing alternatives
- Pay-as-you-use pricing model, able to purchase 'conversion credits' as required

# **Lessons Learned**



- Use of pre- and post-conversion checklists are a must
- Use of a tracking spreadsheet is very helpful too, especially when multiple teams are converting
- A walkthrough with writers who will do the pre-conversion preparation and post-conversion cleanup is very helpful
- Realize that no conversion is perfect and cleanup will be required so you have to determine what needs to be fixed in the rules, and what can be left for postconversion cleanup. Communicate and set this expectation with the writers. Emphasize the DITA learning opportunity this provides.
- No matter how standard you think your pre-conversion documents are, you'll find they aren't!
- Make sure you have a structure in place for storing pre-conversion files, files returned from the vendor, in-progress cleanup, and final storage after cleanup. It's easy to get the versions mixed up!
- XML is plain text, so if you need to make changes to many files, you can use a batch text editor in postconversion cleanup

#### Gotchas (and suggested remedies)

#### Non-standard use of FrameMaker formats.

For example, a bold font applied to regular text to make it look like a heading instead of using a heading tag. Try to catch this through very close analysis of your documents before submitting to Migrate. If you find it after submitting, you can tweak the rules. Because of Migrate's flexibility, you can make these tweaks on a per-book basis, or for an entire rule set.

Pre-conversion documents are not DITA ready. Biggest issue relates to tasks. Either some tasks contain multiple procedures, or a task is written as a paragraph or embedded within a concept. Close pre-conversion analysis is the best way to catch this. If re-conversion is necessary, you can resubmit only individual topics to be converted, rather than the whole book.

# Conclusion

A very successful project that delivered time and cost savings, and quality improvements. It exceeded expectations. An unexpected benefit was that documentation team members improved their understanding of DITA concepts through the use of Migrate. As a project partner, Stilo provided a high-level of DITA expertise and support throughout, and were very responsive to improvement requests.

The Migrate service is now well-established for ongoing 24/7 usage at IBM Sterling Commerce, and has been recommended for deployment elsewhere within IBM.

# stilo.com/migrateDITA

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# Automating the conversion of FrameMaker to DITA at IBM Sterling Commerce

Using the Stilo Migrate cloud conversion service





This showcase at the CIDM **Best Practices Conference** 2011 was presented by IBM Sterling Commerce's Bob Zebian, Advisory Software

Engineer, Product Documentation.

Bob has been instrumental in managing the FrameMaker to DITA conversion project, operating the Migrate service and converting many thousands of pages of product content according to strict project deadlines.

The following provides detail of the conversion project to-date - covering the process, results achieved, lessons learned and conclusions – plus some of the Gotchas to look out for!

## Introduction

New to IBM via an acquisition, the Sterling Commerce Information Development Team recently embarked on a project to convert their legacy unstructured FrameMaker files to the IBM DITA standard, undertaking the conversion of approximately 150,000 pages of content. In previous years, the team had grown exponentially through a series of acquisitions, and so faced the challenge of standardizing their documentation templates, deliverables for reuse and bundling of separate products.

They had grappled for a number of years with the conversion through a combination of manual processes and outsourcing, making slow progress. The acquisition by IBM required the Sterling Commerce Information Development Team to adopt a faster, more efficient conversion approach.

#### In 2011, IBM Sterling Commerce selected Stilo's Migrate – a cloud XML DITA conversion service.

Migrate enabled them to deliver high-quality content more rapidly, while reducing conversion costs and ensuring product release schedules were met. In just a few months, the team were able to convert many thousands of pages of content, at their own pace, and according to shifting business priorities.

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The use of a sophisticated, but easy-to-use **Rules** Editor within the Migrate service enabled the team to become more ambitious with project deliverables. As their familiarity with the tool grew, so did

their understanding of its capabilities for generating complex conversion rules – and thereby reducing the need for any manual clean-up or post-processing tasks.

Using the Migrate DITA conversion service also threw up some unforeseen benefits – a key one being the accelerated rate of DITA adoption among team members – who, through the use of Migrate, were able to develop a deeper understanding of DITA concepts and methodologies.

### Problem

To convert 150,000 pages of unstructured FrameMaker content to DITA

- ID team built from a series of acquisitions, globally dispersed
- Challenges with standardization of document templates
- Multiple product lines to consider
- Need to undertake conversion during a regularly scheduled release cycle and hit product release deadlines

## Proposition

The Stilo Migrate cloud content conversion service could be used by team members to:

- Reduce turnaround times
- Improve content quality
- Retain full control over the conversion process
- Reduce costs

#### Process

- Sample documents provided to Stilo, analyzed and jointly reviewed
- Migrate conversion pipelines tailored

to meet detailed and complex IBM requirements

MIGRATE

- 5 team members provided access to Migrate
- Users trained in a single one hour web session
- Users uploaded a range of documents, at their own pace
- Any issues were reported to Stilo and additional pipeline tailoring took place as required
- Users refined conversion results utilizing the Migrate **Rules Editor**

# **Results**

20,000 pages successfully converted in a six week period, documents included...

- IBM Sterling Warehouse Management System Implementation Guide
- IBM Sterling Call Center Implementation Guide
- IBM Sterling Commerce Network Technical Overview
- IBM Sterling Connect: Direct for UNIX User Guide
- IBM Sterling Control Centre System Administration Guide
- Over 200 FrameMaker books converted

#### Quality of conversions were improved iteratively

- e.g. 638 page document was converted with zero errors
- Conversion rules addressed complex issues including:
- automatically creating a hierarchical ditamap
- automatically converting content in tables to definition lists or steps in a task
- automatically tagging conditional text and producing appropriate ditaval file
- automatically leveraging FrameMaker markers to generate correct topic types and file names

