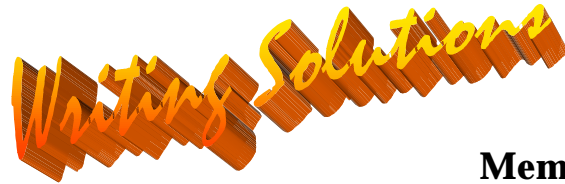


Request to Change Our Authoring Software

**Wendy A. Albrecht
Assignment #6: Proposal Memo
10/20/02**



Memo

To: Eyma Wrytorr, Documentation Manager
From: Wendy Albrecht, Senior Technical Communicator
Date: 10/20/02
Re: Request to change our authoring software

Purpose

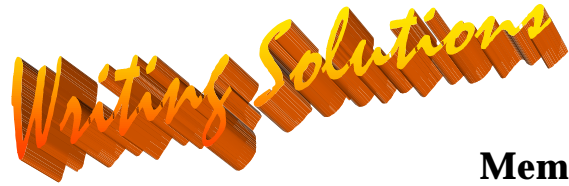
As an action item from our last staff meeting, this memo reports our writing team's description of the problem, solution, schedule, and cost to change our existing authoring software.

The Problem

Our current software programs have served us well since Writing Solutions was founded five years ago. By increasing the depth of our services, we have experienced an increase in sales. However, this growth has caused an increase in the size of our documents, which has caused the two following main documentation problems.

- **Wrestling MS Word issues with large documents.** Our larger documents have been causing excessive MS Word challenges—that is, MS Word exhibits time-consuming software bugs that sap our productivity as we devise workarounds. Two examples are sudden margin changes to bullets and numbered procedures, and sections that resist headers/footers that differ from previous sections. These formatting problems distract us from spending time on continuously improving content. According to our research with MS technical support, we have outgrown MS Word's capabilities as our source document software.
- **Updating two sets of source documents.** If we retain RoboHelp as our online Help authoring software, we must continue to manually create and maintain source documents in MS Word and in RoboHelp. When our documents were small, updates in MS Word and RoboHelp were not as time-consuming as they are now that our documents are larger.

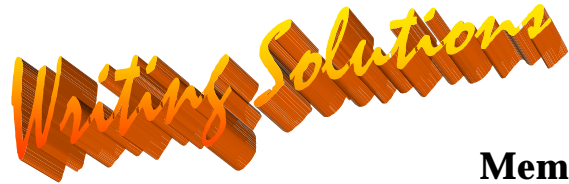
For a summary of specific costs because of these issues, see the "Costs" section on page 4.



The Solution

The following solutions can improve our productivity in addition to saving costs. We should be able to use both software programs for at least several years without having to incur expenses to upgrade to later versions.

1. Change our source authoring software from MS Word to Adobe **FrameMaker**. Although we considered other software options such as Interleaf, we recommend FrameMaker for many reasons, including:
 - Many of our colleagues who are members of the Society of Technical Communication (STC) have stated that their companies successfully use FrameMaker to author their source documents.
 - All the writers on our team have successfully used FrameMaker at other companies to overcome the types of challenges that we're experiencing with our large documents.
 - FrameMaker is compatible with Adobe Acrobat, which we're currently using to convert our documents into PDF files.
 - Our team's existing hardware and operating system meet FrameMaker's system requirements.
 - Because our staff has used FrameMaker, we require no training.
2. Change our online Help authoring software from RoboHelp to Quadralay **WebWorks**. Although we considered software options such as WinHelp, we concluded to recommend WebWorks for reasons including:
 - We'd be able to single-source—that is, create or update the information in a source documents that can be automatically converted into another format.
 - WebWorks is compatible with FrameMaker.
 - No additional cost is required for WebWorks—it is included with the FrameMaker software purchase.
 - Our team's existing hardware and operating system can handle WebWorks' system requirements.



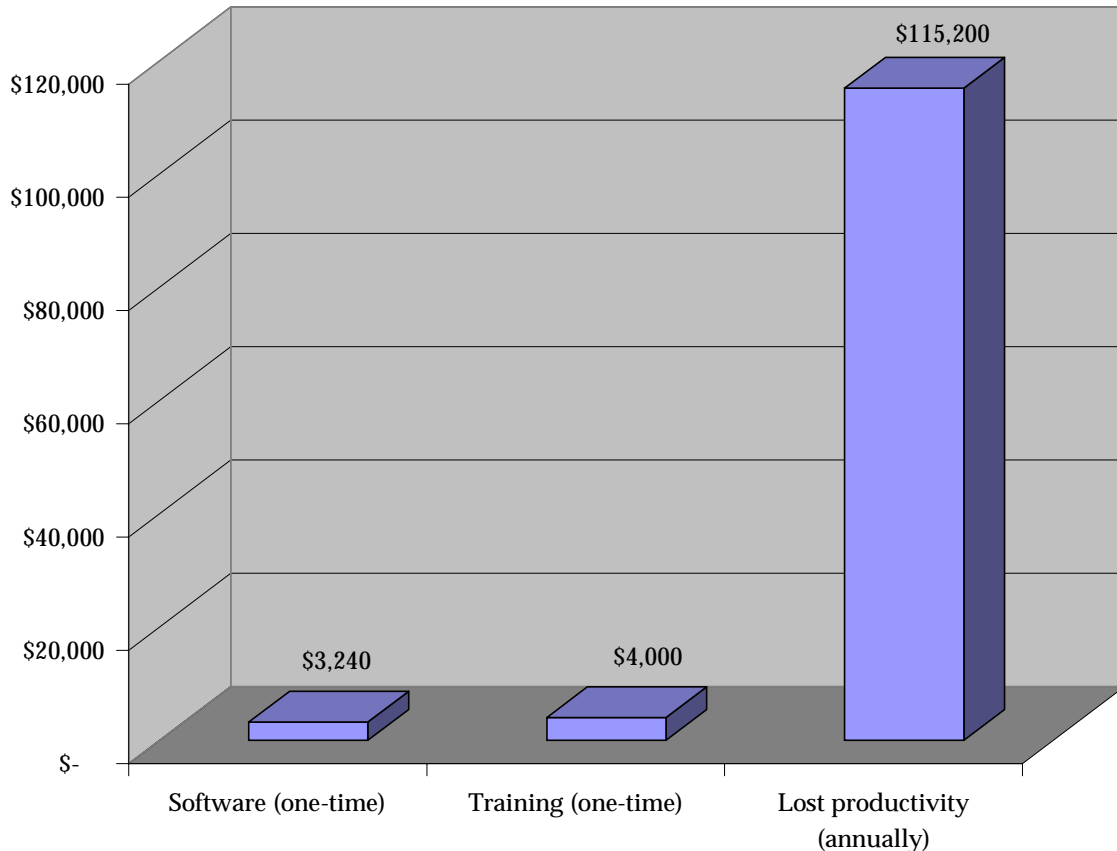
Schedule

Only a few tasks are needed to implement the proposed software changes. Acquisition and implementation of the new software and training can take from several days up to at least three months, depending on several factors mentioned below.

1. Acquire FrameMaker and WebWorks software. As soon as we provide the Accounting Department with the approved requisition, we can order the FrameMaker 7.0 software, which includes Quadralay's WebWorks Publisher Standard Edition 7.0 software. Options include:
 - Order online from www.adobe.com.
 - Order online www.amazon.com. Amazon can ship the software within two business days. Shipping cost is nominal (only \$5.50 per item for expedited shipping) and even less for standard shipping.
 - Find a local provider of the software.
2. Research WebWorks training options. This task should take one team member about a day. Two ideas are as follows:
 - Have our team take a two-day course. We need to determine if any courses can be provided in Washington, DC area within the next three months such as from Grafix Training & Consulting at:
<http://www.grafixtraining.com/pages/webworks.html>.
 - Have each team member spend an hour per day on performing a tutorial that might be provided with the software. This option provides some challenges if it would take several months to the complete the tutorial.

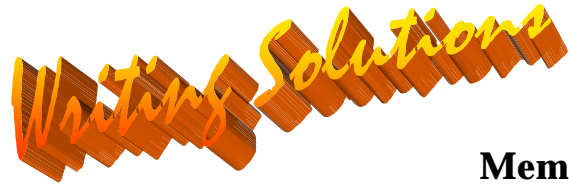
Costs

The \$7,230 one-time expense to purchase the software and training far outweighs the \$115,200 annual expense of lost productivity dealing with the current software problems. The following graph provides the significance of the \$107,960 savings in just one year.



Calculated costs are as follows:

- Software: $\$810$ (software & shipping) \times 4 workstations = $\$3,240$. This expense only needs to be paid once.
- Training: $\$1,000 \times 4$ writers = $\$4,000$. This expense is for WebWorks software.
- Lost productivity: This expense represents lost productivity from resolving MS Word software issues and creating or updating MS Word and RoboHelp over one year. 3 hours (1 hour/day for MS Word issues + 2 hours/day for updating two sets of source documents) \times 4 writers \times $\$40$ /hour \times 240 days/year = $\$115,200$.



Memo

Conclusion

We look forward to implementing the new authoring software of FrameMaker and WebWorks—especially because they will save our company substantial costs and enhance our productivity. Feel free to schedule a meeting for our team to discuss additional issues we can resolve about the changing of our existing authoring software.