



Altera Corporation
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Altera Corporation

Help is here

Global leader in high-tech logic solutions and semiconductors uses Adobe® RoboHelp® to accelerate development and delivery of rich, online technical Help resources

High technology can be complex. For every piece of hardware or software developed, there are likely to be numerous teams behind the scenes developing support materials. For Altera Corporation—a global leader in programmable logic solutions, semiconductors, and integrated circuit technologies—creating detailed and complex product support documentation is the norm. The company relies on teams of specialists spread among its 2,900 global employees to develop documentation for its products and services, which makes collaborating on the production process a unique challenge.

The company produces a range of products that help customers in various industries manage the power consumption, performance, and cost of computing systems. In addition to devices, Altera's comprehensive solutions portfolio contains fully integrated software development tools; versatile embedded processors; optimized intellectual property (IP) cores; reference designs examples; and a variety of development kits.

For each of these deliverables, Altera provides extensive online Help, product handbooks, installation guides, troubleshooting references, and other support information—complete with workflow drawings, screen shots, and animated tutorial presentations. Given the extent of its product and service lines, Altera Corporation's support operations are consistently challenged to create updated materials in a timely, efficient manner. To address these concerns, Altera adopted Adobe RoboHelp to accelerate and streamline the production process for online Help.

"Our online Help projects are complicated and detailed, with some reaching as many as 3,000 topics," says Mark Whisler, senior technical writer, Technical Publications, Altera Corporation. "Adobe RoboHelp integrates our workflows into a single platform, enabling seamless collaboration among our team members and eliminating much of the wasted time we used to spend trying to pull in content from third-party applications."

Bringing it together

Adobe RoboHelp is an intuitive authoring solution that helps technical communicators collaborate, customize, and optimize content for Help systems, policies and procedures, and professional knowledge databases. Altera content producers use the solution to consolidate and accelerate previously disparate, slow production processes for creating a number of technical resources. For Whisler's group, which focuses primarily on developing online Help resources and handbooks for the company's Quartus II software, the addition of Adobe software has been a boon to productivity.

"When we first started publishing online resources, every topic was edited individually, and was difficult to share across a project team. Pulling information together from members located around the world is tricky and time-consuming," says Whisler. "RoboHelp offers resource sharing and advanced collaboration functionality that helps us create, review, modify, and deploy content in a fraction of the time as before."

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Senior technical writer, Technical Publications,
Altera Corporation

Challenge

- Accelerating production of product and service online Help resources
- Consolidating version management to a single platform
- Improving collaboration among disparate team members for greater accuracy, productivity, and reduced costs

Solution

- Altera uses Adobe RoboHelp to integrate its handbook and online Help resource production processes
- The company uses the integrated Perforce version control system to help ensure that document changes and updates are made in real time to avoid confusion and mistakes associated with multiversion change management

Benefits

- Enabled geographically dispersed team members to work on projects simultaneously
- Improved collaboration
- Reduced version control issues from as many as ten per month to one
- Improved productivity and work output
- Consolidated disparate processes into a single platform
- Enabled seamless collection and integration of multiple file types

RoboHelp features next-generation collaboration and review workflows—enabling subject matter experts (SMEs), project leaders, and writers to share information more efficiently. With advanced PDF sharing capabilities, Altera project managers can compile information in multiple formats.

The Adobe solution also integrates seamlessly with Perforce, a universally recognized centralized version control system. The Perforce server manages a central database and a master repository of file versions, storing system-related metadata such as file state, file attributes, branching and merging history, change lists, change descriptions, users, groups, and labels. The robust system allows Whisler and his colleagues to work on files independently in desktop workspaces and submit changed files together in change lists for continuity and consistency in a project.

“Perforce syncs very well with what we use for our software development, so we’ve been able to integrate our Help builds into our nightly software build,” Whisler says. “Now all of our content is accessible through one global build process, giving authors and contributors better control over the process, resulting in faster production of more accurate and helpful information.”

The Technical Publications group used to spend a lot of time troubleshooting workspace issues and matching file versions and changes. “With the upgrade to RoboHelp 9, we estimate that the multi-author environment created by the integration between Perforce and RoboHelp will increase our output by as much as 15% because we’ve been able to reduce the number of version control issues on average from ten per month to one,” says Whisler.

In addition to version management, Altera is investigating using RoboHelp to streamline the development process through automated context-sensitive Help authoring to reduce the amount of manual linking and coding when completing components of a handbook or online resource. As each component of a document deliverable is complete, it can be saved to a common file directory and be accessed by other authors—helping to ensure consistency in the quality, messaging, and compliance of the information developed.

“All of our projects have to meet certain criteria: company style sheets, industry compliance, and other common guidelines,” Whisler says. “Since we cross link between Help and Handbook files to deliver the most relevant pieces of the project to our users in the most appropriate place, we gain consistency and higher quality across all of our documentation.”

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Toolkit

- Adobe RoboHelp 9
- Adobe FrameMaker*
- Perforce
- Adobe Captivate 5*

Transforming the process

Help resources need to go beyond simple text. Altera Help documents feature an array of diagrams, video tutorials, images, and step-by-step procedures. With RoboHelp, Altera technical communicators can easily import text-based information and technical documents from Adobe FrameMaker into new Help resources.

Adobe RoboHelp has transformed Altera Corporation's support production processes. The integrated, efficient workflows help reduce delivery times of new resources while helping to ensure they conform to industry and company standards. With reusable resources, teams can deliver content drafts faster and perform reviews quicker using advanced collaboration workflows.

In the future, the company plans to explore the impact of reaching out to a wider audience by publishing Help content in multiple formats to mobile devices, with a single click, via electronic publishing (EPUB), as well as integrating videos created using Adobe Captivate, and leveraging the Scripting toolkit for faster builds.

"Overall, the impact Adobe RoboHelp has had on our processes and business has been tremendous," Whisler says. "Everyone involved with a project is now on the same page all the time. It's taken a previously time-consuming, inefficient, and often frustrating process and turned it into a seamless production line."

For more information

www.adobe.com/products/robohelp



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