Otto Bihler Maschinenfabrik GmbH

Getting technical

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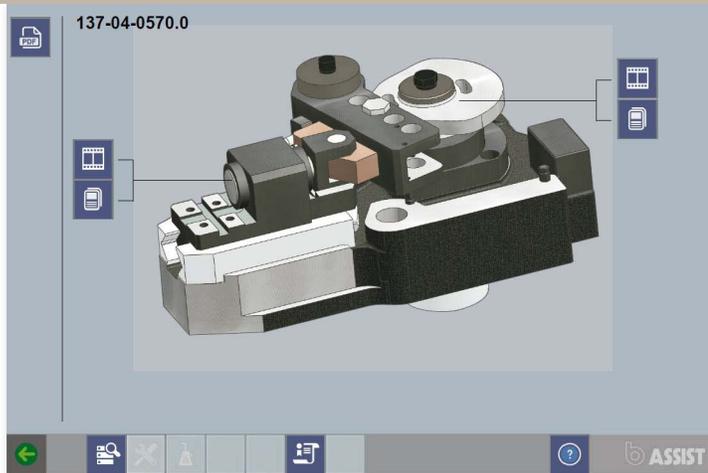Halblech, Germany
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Leading industrial machinery manufacturer uses Adobe® Technical Communication Suite to provide customers with easily accessible, onscreen technical documentation

Otto Bihler Maschinenfabrik GmbH, with headquarters in Halblech, Germany, is the world's leading system supplier in the fields of forming, assembly, and welding technology. The company offers a wide portfolio of products and services, including unique machine systems, flexible process modules and peripherals, complete automation solutions, 3D-CAD/CAM construction software, and custom-designed service features. Otto Bihler Maschinenfabrik GmbH is using Adobe software to work cost effectively and more efficiently.

For more than 50 years, Bihler has been synonymous with the highest-quality German manufacturing, providing customers with outstanding efficiencies and cost effectiveness. More than 900 employees worldwide are responsible for ensuring that customer production environments operate successfully. Bihler technologies are used across a wide variety of industries, including automotive, electronics, medical, and environmental, as well as by jewelry and watch manufacturers, to name a few. The company has a global presence, with offices in Germany, the United States, and several other countries.

With such a diverse customer base and expansive global footprint, the company needed a way to streamline technical documentation development, sharing, and archiving. "We found that three of our most productive, important departments—CAD, technical documentation, and software development— had different processes and procedures," says Bernd Bickl, manager of the technical documentation department at Otto Bihler Maschinenfabrik. "We wanted to create a unified workflow to make developing and deploying technical documents, including images and drawings, more efficient, cost effective, and secure."

Challenge

· Streamline technical documentation creation, delivery, and storage

· Enable touchscreen functionality

· Reduce operating costs while improving productivity

· Improve customer satisfaction to increase sales

Solution

· Use Adobe Technical Communication Suite to integrate multiple file formats into compact files for seamless delivery of technical documentation to touchscreen interfaces

· Use Adobe Creative Suite software to open, adapt, and save 3D and vector images for documentation

Benefits

· Created an innovative touchscreen delivery mechanism

· Revamped existing workflows to reduce order turnaround time by as much as 80%

· Enabled customers to create documentation as much as 30% faster

· Reduced operating and technical documentation storage costs

Toolkit

Adobe Technical Communication Suite. Components used include:

· Adobe FrameMaker 10

· Adobe Captivate 5.5

· Adobe Photoshop® CS5

· Adobe Acrobat® X Pro

Adobe Creative Suite. Components used include:

· Adobe Illustrator®

Compelling technical documentation

To revamp its documentation processes for its machine systems, Bihler partnered with SQUIDDS, a leading document production automation consultancy. SQUIDDS supports medium and large enterprises in the optimization of technical documentation workflows. As an Adobe Certified Expert, Georg Eck, SQUIDDS' managing director, is a sought-after trainer and speaker on the topic of technical documentation solutions. Given Bihler's goals of streamlining the creation, distribution, and storage of its technical documentation, Eck recommended deploying Adobe Technical Communication Suite to leverage Adobe FrameMaker® for its integration with Adobe Captivate® and Adobe Creative Suite® software.

In addition to developing complex machine systems, Otto Bihler Maschinenfabrik places great value on creating compelling technical documentation that is always current and available with its machine systems, making it easier for users to quickly grasp the complexity of the products. For this reason, technical documentation associated with machine operations, such as programming and user controls, needs to be seamlessly transmitted via a touchscreen.

SQUIDDS evaluated the company's operations and found that software documentation, spare parts lists, and user documentation existed in various forms. The technical documentation had to first be standardized so it was suitable for retrieval via a touchscreen at the machine control panel. Today, all technical documentation provided by Bihler is produced using Adobe Technical Communication Suite software and is accessible on the machine control panel via Adobe Reader®.
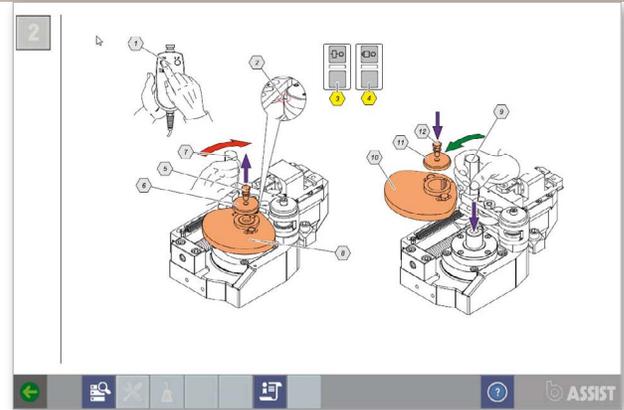
In the past, the company's library of technical documentation was primarily available in large, printed manuals. The printed documents, which include very sophisticated graphics, special representations, and structured designs, will continue to be available to customers. However, with the digital documents, Bihler is taking it a step further: from creation to storage, and all the way to publication on touchscreens, all documentation processes are now fully integrated. For this expanded offering, Bihler employs Adobe Technical Communication Suite—software along with the Tetra 4D 3D PDF Converter, SQUIDDS Finalyser, and Siemens NX. Now, creating, storing, and retrieving important documentation is fully integrated for a smoother, more efficient, and streamlined workflow—including the output of 3D PDF files for greater clarity and readability. In addition, CAD files, video sequences, adjustment instructions, and other important elements can also be included, enabling more data to be compiled without greatly increasing file sizes.

"The ability to produce 3D documentation with Adobe Technical Communication Suite components is extremely valuable to our operations," says Bickl. "We can reduce the cost of producing important product documents, while improving accessibility and quality. It helps customers feel more comfortable buying more machines, which is our goal in the first place."

"With Adobe FrameMaker and other Adobe software, important information such as software documentation, spare parts lists, and video materials can be generated approximately 30% faster and accessed directly from a machine without staff intervention or a support phone call."

Bernd Bickl
Manager of the technical documentation department,
Otto Bihler Maschinenfabrik GmbH

At your fingertips

Adobe Technical Communication Suite, specifically Adobe FrameMaker software, provides a single source for publishing, printing, and on-machine console viewing of technical instructions and documentation. Using Adobe FrameMaker, SQUIDDS created customized templates to accelerate Bihler's development of touchscreen-accessible documentation. The templates can easily incorporate videos using Adobe Captivate, as well as vector files and other drawings from Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop, and compile them into compact 3D PDF files for seamless delivery and navigation on machine touchscreens.

Today, the company is also enabling customers to select and reorder machine components directly on a machine's touchscreen. The orders are then transferred automatically to a PDF order form using Adobe Acrobat Pro for a simple, efficient procurement workflow. In the past, customers had to fill out paper request forms or make a phone call to place an order. With Adobe solutions, requests are completed and sent electronically in PDF, reducing order turnaround times by as much as 80%.

The company's innovative on-machine technical documentation process has been a huge marketing success and was met with great admiration at the EuroBLECH tradeshow in Hannover, Germany. Bihler customers have benefited from this distinctive feature, which is unavailable in competing solutions, and look forward to accessing the descriptions online directly via the touchscreen on machine control panels.

"With Adobe FrameMaker and other Adobe software, important information such as software documentation, spare parts lists, and video materials can be generated approximately 30% faster and accessed directly from a machine without staff intervention or a support phone call," Bickl says.

With the successful launch of its new, integrated workflow, the company is looking ahead to continuing to improve its internal processes and customer support operations. With the advancement of 3D solutions, customers will be able to view and order animated 3D replacement parts directly via a touchscreen.

"Touchscreen technology is the wave of the future in our industry," Bickl says. "Developing touchscreen functionality with Adobe Technical Communication Suite will help us to ensure that our customers have easy access to all the information they need, right at their fingertips."

For more information
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