aMarketForce

Technical Documentation And Content Repurposing

Outsourced Writing Services

CUSTOMER: A premier software company based in North America offering custom IT development and consulting services

Business issues

Our client's consulting division had designed a custom software solution for some large accounts. Over time, the solution was implemented at about 34 clients' locations. Being a 'custom' solution, it was not 'productized' or supported by the usual product documentation, support or training materials.

When our client reorganized their Services Division in 2009, most consultants who had developed the custom solution were reassigned, or laid off. One unfortunate outcome was that the 34 clients who had implemented the custom solution suddenly lost the support they got from these consultants. With no formal documentation to fall back upon, the Clients' IT teams were left hanging.

Having come to depend on the solution, the 34 clients were not willing to uninstall it, and demanded that our client find a way to provide support.

Our client's management evaluated the options they had. All these clients were major accounts. They decided that the only scalable way to solve the problem was to create a full set of product documentation to support their product, and add paid support services.

Solution

Our client asked several companies to bid on the project that included the creation of a full set of documentation – Product Functionality, Support, Installation, Troubleshooting, Web-based on-line help, for IT staff, users and support teams, among others.

Our client was in a difficult position. They had lost all but one of the original engineers, were under pressure from clients, and had limited funding. They selected aMarketForce to provide technical documentation Services because the company offered something other documentation vendors did not – a content re-purposing technology that could take the core product content, parse it intelligently and deliver materials for different audiences in a variety of formats at various levels of complexity, automatically. The benefit was lower total cost and consistent documentation, since all materials would be created from the same source content.

The final solution as executed was:

- An aMarketForce technical writer worked with our client's engineer on a local implementation of the software to reverse-document the solution, resulting in a core product document.

- aMarketForce then used their unique technology to automatically repurpose the core document into several other formats for use by various groups. They delivered, at little additional cost,

- *The core product functional document*
- *An installation and troubleshooting guide*
- *On-line help in CHM format for behind-the-firewall use*
- *A searchable, web-based technical FAQ*
- *Training courseware package in presentation format, with instructor guide and separate student material*

Value delivered

When aMarketForce initially presented the idea of combining technical writing with multi-purposing to save costs and deliver documents faster, Our client's managers were receptive to technical writing but were skeptical of content repurposing (the concept of content created in one format could be parsed and delivered in another format, for another purpose, to a different audience). They anticipated a lot of time-consuming human intervention transforming content from a standard document format to HTML, CHM and other formats.

When the final documents were delivered, our clients were quite surprised. Not only did the content repurposing process work as claimed, it was also done very quickly.

Our client benefited significantly from this document creation and multi-purposing task.

- *With a limited budget, they were able to properly document the solution and provide their customers with all the material needed to manage their in-house installations.*

- *The Technical Support staff could access readily available on-line materials to enable them to provide support.*

- *Where IT administrators at customer sites had moved on, our client was able to send instructors to run a class and bring the new staff up to speed with proper training courseware (another outcome of automatically repurposing the core content).*

It was estimated that our client saved about 70% of the expense that would have been incurred if they had chosen to create all of the content in the traditional way.