

America's Test Kitchen

Fast growth at a popular cooking magazine and television show calls for big changes in content process and technology.



HAVE YOU checked out Cook's Illustrated's [website](#) lately? If not, you're missing out on some exciting new approaches to content delivery and audience engagement.

Years of planning, along with technology and process changes, are paying off in ways that publisher America's Test Kitchen is just beginning to explore and leverage.

With a new content workflow foundation and standardized processes in place, the media company is embracing its growth under expanded leadership and taking advantage of opportunities to better serve and engage its subscribers, according to Jack Bishop, longtime editorial director and recently appointed chief creative officer.

It Starts with a Solid Content Mission

Since its launch in 1993, America's Test Kitchen has stayed focused on its mission: to be America's most

trusted source for cooking information. It has researched and tested thousands of recipes, building a vast pool of original content across multiple platforms—including websites, magazines, cookbooks, special-interest publications, television shows, an online cooking school, and more.

But with its rapid growth and ever-expanding volume of assets, the company realized that in order to continue to scale and gain efficiencies, it would need to implement more consistent standards, establish a more effective way to structure and manage its content, and update its technology.

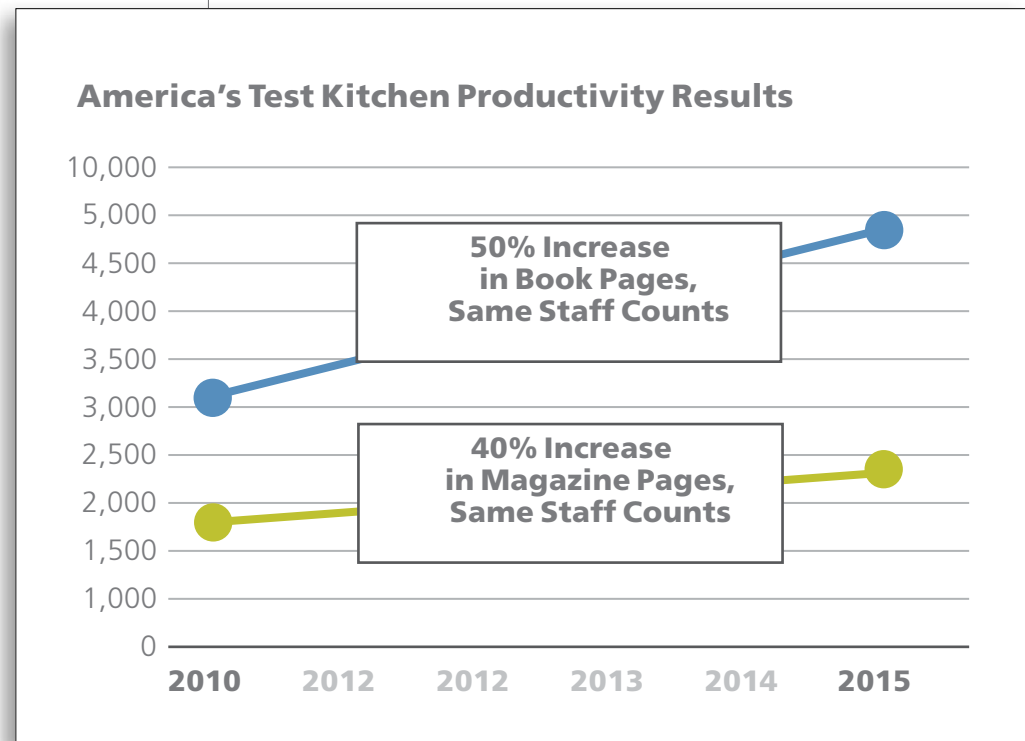
Defining Content Objectives

To accomplish those goals, America’s Test Kitchen turned to Technology for Publishing for guidance.

“We came to a point where we really needed help in better managing our content,” says Bishop. “We were growing quickly, our production volume was increasing in magnitude each year, we needed to add more staff, but we also needed to work with our content more quickly and more effectively.”

As Bishop explains, recipes are the foundation and origination point for all content produced by America’s

Test Kitchen, and because of that, they are heavily tested on a repeated basis to ensure they meet all content objectives and the high standard of the company’s



mission. Today, whether the recipes are used in print, online, for tablet issues, or elsewhere, a number of additional assets are created and incorporated into that process—broadening opportunities to generate new products and revenue streams from established content.

Implementing Content Structure

How did America's Test Kitchen get there? Working with Technology for Publishing, it started with a list of core action items, including:

- Aligning editorial style and voice to better prepare content for reuse.
- Establishing content creation standards and best practices that included shifting from paper-based processes to electronic methods, which improved workflows, especially for remote staff.
- Standardizing how files are prepared, as well as how text and layouts are structured and styled.
- Aligning content- and style-naming methods across all publishing groups to bring new capabilities and efficiencies to where and how content can be used.

Along with content structure, there were some easier tasks, like standardizing how content is named, to enable users to easily locate all assets related to a specific recipe within any system or product.

Design director Amy Klee took the lead on aligning content structure, practices, and terminology, with the idea of having everyone in the organization speak the same language when dealing with content components.

On the technology front, production director Guy Rochford advocated for a tool to bring discipline and transparency to the editorial process, one that would be easy to use and accessible, and not add to the tasks of an already taxed staff.

"Working with the America's Test Kitchen team was very rewarding because we had engagement from all of the right people at the top, including design, editorial, and technology," says Margot Knorr Mancini, CEO,

Technology for Publishing. "Each leader personally spent time to understand the impact on their teams, engaging at the detail level to make sure all new processes



were manageable. They also listened carefully to their teams during the transition to gather appropriate feedback, and dealt effectively with the natural resistance to change. This also provided the opportunity to fine-tune in real time, and push the proposed changes even further than expected coming out of the gate."

"We were growing quickly, our production volume was increasing in magnitude each year, we needed to add more staff, but we also needed to work with our content more quickly and more effectively."

– JACK BISHOP, CHIEF CREATIVE OFFICER

Managing Content Workflows

To meet those requirements, with Technology for Publishing's guidance, America's Test Kitchen decided to implement [vjoon K4®](#).

The cross-media publishing platform offered the organization effective workflow management and strong editorial tools, as well as the advantage of being able to deliver content to America's Test Kitchen website and other content channels. It also provided a central vehicle for managing its original recipe content in one place, in a well-structured form.

The result of America's Test Kitchen's efforts?

- Book page production has nearly doubled without an increase in staff.
- Magazine pages have increased by 500 per year, also with the same staff, with additional content for other platforms prepared in the same workstream.
- Magazine staff has taken on the production of iPad digital issues in addition to producing print issues.
- Recipe assets have been used to launch an online cooking school, which generates significant subscription revenue.
- Structured content in K4 is allowing the team to build an Enterprise CMS for legacy content.



Achieving Cross-Platform Content

And that's just for starters. By streamlining content process, structure, and technologies, America's Test Kitchen was able to move its print issue content to digital issues almost seamlessly, rolling in supplemental content to create an immersive tablet experience.

Technology for Publishing helped America's Test Kitchen implement its digital magazine using [Adobe's Digital Publishing Suite/Solution](#), advising on strategy, process, and technical requirements. Available in the Apple App Store, the digital magazine form of [Cook's Illustrated](#) and [Cook's Country](#) are highly regarded in the digital community for their design approach, and were even profiled as one of Apple's Apps of the Week.

For online content, the established print processes and content structure are now carrying a number of additional content components through the editorial workflow, feeding America's Test Kitchen online offerings in a number of ways.

The editorial team now thinks more broadly about all content needs, putting more focus on the background and related material that helps tell a recipe story. A photojournalist now helps to capture the lifecycle of a recipe as well throughout this process.

For instance, when readers search for "Baked Alaska" on Cooks Illustrated's website, they see not only the

recipe itself but also a Recipe Development tab that takes them to photos, digital animation graphics, and other content documenting the behind-the-scenes "journey" of the recipe, from creation to the final result.

Online digital content is now fully responsive to work across multiple devices, and is prepared to draw readers in a number of new and engaging ways.

Bishop says with greater collaboration across platforms, these new features and enhanced forms of storytelling are being brainstormed with the print team early on—transforming the quality of the content it offers to subscribers.

What's Next?

Going forward, America's Test Kitchen will be sharpening its focus on what's happening in the kitchen and enhancing its content processes even further.

"In addition to our two television shows, we are generating hundreds of Web-original videos every year. We have also doubled our photography output in the past three years. Better managing videos and photos in sync with our recipes and text assets is the next big challenge."

Technology for Publishing[®] helps publishers work smarter and faster by solving content, process, and technology problems. Learn how at www.tech4pub.com.