

Rodale

Successfully shifting content standards and best practices to support a multi-platform publishing strategy



RODALE HAS been a long-standing client of Technology for Publishing, and through the years, TFP has assisted Rodale's various publishing groups with workflow and technology enhancements as the company has grown and changed. Rodale is the publisher of some of the best-known health and wellness lifestyle magazines, including *Prevention*, *Runner's World*, and *Men's Health*, as well as books, such as *Eat This, Not That!* and Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth*. The organization's content-related projects have spanned content strategy, structure, process optimization, digital asset management, and various publishing automation initiatives, all of which TFP has helped to guide in some form.

In 2010, after attempting for many years to justify the implementation of a publishing system, Rodale



communicate statuses, Excel files to track materials, and network folders to store content. Under an existing workflow that had few safeguards in place, Adobe InDesign and Microsoft Word files could easily be overwritten or deleted, and comments or edits made on printed copies of the articles could be lost or misinterpreted.

Rodale's primary objectives were to

be able to centrally manage all associated files, to effectively collaborate on content creation, and to automate and streamline production processes so that content could be reused.

This effort would encompass a custom publications group and the magazine titles ***Men's Health***, ***Women's Health***, ***Prevention***,

Runner's World, ***Bicycling***, and ***Organic Gardening***.

Rodale once again turned to TFP to help with what would be its biggest publishing initiative yet.

Building A Future Publishing Model

It was important to Rodale management that each of the editorial teams actively steer and participate in the workflow effort. Since the teams had been asking for more-robust tools for years, ensuring that the new systems would address the concerns and needs of all of the groups was vital.

The project was partitioned into several stages. The first stage was to build a forward-looking best-practices workflow that took into account the company's future business direction and content needs, which included the ability to easily reuse print content online, in syndication, and on tablet devices.

TFP facilitated workflow review

felt it was the right time to pursue a magazine best-practices workflow initiative. That effort helped lay the groundwork for a publishing system that would provide editorial workflow tools as well as cross-media publishing capabilities.

The new workflow system would be replacing a process that had relied on emails to

sessions with each of the Rodale teams, documenting current processes and eliciting what each group thought its best-practices workflow should be. In those sessions, each group also carefully considered Rodale's future business and content goals. It was clear that each group had its comfort zones when it came to work habits and processes, and each team would need to stretch and learn to embrace the changes needed to implement a best-practices workflow. Through several highly collaborative sessions, TFP facilitated the development of a recommendation that the group was confident about presenting to management.

Once Rodale had more clearly mapped out its future requirements, it could then pursue more robust technologies to support that workflow. During this stage, TFP helped the Rodale team boil down its best practices into a list of technical requirements that would ideally be

supported by a publishing system. Among them were improvements in production efficiencies, collaboration capabilities, the ability to track and plan, and the ability to produce more content across

the New York City and Emmaus, Pa., office locations. Editorial staffs independently voted after completing an in-depth checklist.

When the votes were tallied, the Rodale editorial teams ultimately

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multiple platforms.

Once again, Rodale put this process into the hands of its editorial teams. They developed the detailed evaluation criteria and demo requirements that vendors would need to measure up against. A list of potential solutions was narrowed down to a set of finalists, who conducted detailed demonstrations for the editorial teams at both

chose vjoon K4™ as their platform to work with Adobe’s InDesign and InCopy publishing software. Arriving at the decision was difficult in some ways because most members of the editorial teams had used various publishing systems in previous jobs and thus had preconceived ideas of what Rodale’s new system should look like. Using the criteria checklist had helped to

keep the decision-making process fair and unbiased, despite that fact that there were a number of similarities between the systems.

Implementing A Best-Practices Workflow

With a best-practices workflow mapped out and the technology selected, the major work began. TFP met again with each of the groups to educate them about the publishing system. In these working sessions, TFP helped the editorial teams envision how they could use the tool set that the system provided to support the best practices they had identified. TFP walked step by step through the envisioned process by role and by content type to help the teams design their optimal workflow.

The new workflow incorporated a number of elements that would result in greater efficiencies:

1] Beginning content planning for all channels during the issue line-up phase, so that all content could be developed efficiently and cost-effectively across each publication.

2] Creating issues and document placeholder files in K4 that would represent a virtual, real-time line-up that could be easily adjusted as needed and kept up to date in the workflow management system.

3] Developing InDesign and InCopy templates with predefined styles and tags for consistent design and styling, and the ability to easily export content to other formats, including XML for web, syndication, and other uses.

4] Entering and editing outline text in InCopy files managed by K4 and attaching them to InDesign documents for parallel editing and design, and to leverage K4's production tracking, routing, version management, and change-tracking capabilities.

5] Leveraging parallel editing and design processes where possible, so that the design could be more closely aligned with the content earlier in the workflow, and for more efficient copyfitting.

6] Eliminating manual and redundant processes where possible by implementing digital proofing, editing, and file routing, and building automation into the workflow where the publishing tools allowed for it. Making edits electronically would also help manage the constraints of working across multiple geographic locations.



7] Determining the graphic elements needed earlier in the workflow to ensure their relevance to a story, and using K4 to track digital rights and permissions.

The project stakeholders for each editorial team pilot-tested the workflow in the K4 system to ensure that it was sustainable and met the best-practices requirements, and that they would feel confident asking their teams to embrace it.

Once an approved workflow was crafted for the system, TFP worked closely with the publishing systems group to make sure the software was installed and configured properly, and helped the team to develop solid backup and disaster recovery procedures. Once all systems and workflows were tested, it was time to start rolling them out.

Working closely with Rodale’s project lead, Sandie Roberts, and project managers Carol DaSilva

and Scott Protchko, TFP trained, implemented, and supported one editorial group’s launch at a time, starting with **Organic Gardening** and **Bicycling**. The rollout to the

methods to the new, electronic workflow.

As each group was trained, TFP’s team provided one-on-one support to help each Rodale staff member

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TECHNOLOGY FOR PUBLISHING

seven brands spanned a year and a half.

With each team, TFP provided hands-on training, first to teach InCopy and InDesign best practices, followed by training in the K4 workflow system. The teams then learned how to successfully migrate their current work

fully understand the new tools and the new workflow, and how to successfully perform their job tasks to meet their deadlines. Throughout the project, TFP worked closely with Rodale’s team to transfer knowledge, moving them toward full self-sufficiency with system and process support. For the final two

magazines, Rodale's team was able to successfully complete the rollouts on their own.

"TFP's approach to working with us allowed us to rapidly deploy K4 to multiple magazines with a consistent approach while our team got up to speed on this new environment," says Sandie Roberts, Director of Publishing Systems at Rodale. "It really enabled us to understand the full capabilities of K4 and positioned us to expand this solution to other areas of our business."

Personalizing Implementation

TFP worked with each team over three issues, providing hands-on support during production of the initial issue, followed by fine-tuning and further enhancements during production of the next two issues. By conducting an audit at the end of each

production cycle, TFP was able to help Rodale identify what was working and what was not, and to reach consensus on what changes should be implemented for the next issue.

TFP is a strong proponent of making iterative adjustments and helping teams understand that change is constant and that processes can continually be adjusted and improved as needed. TFP founder and CEO Margot Knorr Mancini observes, "Rodale's strong support of our methodology allowed us to demonstrate a best-practices approach to some significant change management, and as a result they reaped the

benefits of buy-in and deeper education within their teams, bringing greater success."

As each group implemented the technology and word got out about how well each implementation was going, each group that was still awaiting the rollout became more excited and less resistant to change.

As the end of the implementations drew near, the editorial teams began to implement a digital publication strategy for tablet devices. Since this was integral to the content best practices and workflow, TFP also assisted with this effort, helping to define the implementation strategy.

At ***Men's Health***, which was the first to implement a tablet workflow, TFP facilitated meetings involving all contributing groups—editorial, design, advertising, and IT. There, the various stakeholders could sort out the requirements for a digital process and determine



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both how it would differ from and how it needed to integrate with the print process. TFP was also able to help **Men's Health** determine where to focus its time and resources when creating the digital product, evaluating the content structure and sequence to best define where and how to leverage digital content.

All of Rodale's magazines have

now successfully migrated onto K4, and the organization is evaluating using K4 in other business areas, such as its book division. The system has 267 end users, including six print publications as well as special interest publications, nine “bookazines,” and two publications managed by the custom publishing team.

The implementation of the publishing system has also made content more accessible. Through template and styling best practices introduced by TFP, all content is exported via XML and moves to syndication partners and into the repository that houses Rodale's content. The next step is to automate the content feeds to Rodale's various online systems.

“One of our best practices was to capture metadata earlier in the process,” Roberts explains. “The result was that we are now capturing contract information for 75% of our articles and images earlier in the

process. This has enabled us to tag content faster with metadata and rights information. What used to take an average of 60 days now takes 10 days—content is available for reuse faster.”

The phased approach Rodale took to determine its overall requirements and to gather feedback and buy-in from all levels of the organization, along with the involvement of end users in the selection and implementation process, has resulted in huge returns on its effort. Rodale is now better positioned on many levels for what the next wave of change in publishing requires.

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