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Justifying the Purchase of FrameMaker

by Melanie Shook

You've researched the tools and decided FrameMaker is the best one for the job. Now you just have to convince your company that the cost is justified. For most companies, budget is the bottom line. Therefore, you need to combine your knowledge of Frame's powerful features, your current tool's shortcomings, and your company's documentation process to demonstrate that purchasing FrameMaker will save them money. The following strategies will help you prepare winning proposal to do just that.

See the big picture

You know FrameMaker will make the work you do every day easier, but how will it affect the documentation process as a whole? Your boss may be concerned about how technical reviews will be accomplished, how changes will be managed, and how different types of documentation (print, PDF, online) will be produced. How will the purchase of FrameMaker change these procedures? Be prepared to show how FrameMaker will improve the efficiency of the process. Your awareness of the big picture will help convince the decision-maker that you're not just after a new toy. Consider the following questions when evaluating your organization's needs:

- What are the main reasons you decided FrameMaker is the best tool?
- Do you produce long documents, multiple versions of documents, or have several people working on the same documentation set at the same time?
- Are documents frequently updated?
- Will you be single sourcing? What types of documents do you produce now, and how can Frame suit your purposes better than your current tool?
- What is your current tool? What problems do you think Frame will solve? Will Frame work well with any of your existing too

- or documentation types (e.g. PDF)?
- How can FrameMaker improve the documentation process?

Know your audience

Most corporate decision-makers are looking at the financial bottom line, but if you know their hot-buttons, you can customize your approach. For example, are they impressed by features? Do long presentations make them roll their eyes? Do they like statistics? Are dollar figures the only thing that counts? Are they worried about compatibility with major customers, translation into multiple languages, or technical reviews? Your ideal proposal could be a short e-mail with succinct bulleted points, or a written report, complete with detailed financial analysis, depending on your audience. Choose the best format for your situation.

Do the research

If your boss thinks translation will be more expensive with Frame, get some actual estimates for both Frame and your existing software to prove it's not. Compare Frame with your current tool, and be prepared to explain the difference. Research add-on tools and their costs at the same time. Consider listing the "optional" tools with your proposal, that can add even more value to a FrameMaker package—but be sure it's clear that these extras aren't necessary to make Frame valuable to your company. Again, consider your audience. Don't add extras if they detract from your efforts to make FrameMaker the essential tool for your document production.

Demonstrate the bottom line

If you need to demonstrate how FrameMaker will actually save the company money, in real dollars, estimate the percentage of time you spend finding workarounds for your current tool that would be unnecessary with Frame. Monitor your activities for a few days or a few weeks if you need more concrete estimates. Explain how much time in man hours could be saved and translate that into a dollar amount. The cost of purchasing FrameMaker is a one-time cost, while problems with your current tool are an ongoing, ever-increasing cost. If necessary, back up your figures with concrete examples. Describe a problem you have had with your current tool and the time spent fixing it. (Last week I spent two days trying to fix the autonumbering in Word...) Then describe how FrameMaker's features solve the problem. Include testimonials from other FrameMaker users for added impact.

Be realistic

Be clear on what FrameMaker does and doesn't do. FrameMaker does have a steep learning curve, and you'll have to allow some time for getting up to speed. It's not designed for layout-intensive projects such as brochures or imposed booklets. But FrameMaker is designed

for creating long documents and has powerful features to make long document production a breeze. The following descriptions are some of Frame's time-saving features. Choose the ones you think are most relevant to your situation.

Book Making

FrameMaker is able to create books from any collection of files and easily generate Tables of Contents and Indexes. You can maintain cross-references across multiple files and even volumes. Multiple users can check out different files in the same book and formatting changes can easily be managed across an entire multifile project.

Autonumbering

Frame's autonumbering feature is able to handle virtually any numbering scheme you choose, including chapter numbers, figures, and tables, with numbers, letters or a combination of both. I know of no other program with such a powerful numbering feature. It works no matter how long the document is, throughout all the chapters of the book.

Conditional Text

With conditional text, you can manage several versions of a document with the same source file. For example, you can optimize text for print, PDF, and help, provide instructions for different releases of the same software, or describe two different products or similar applications, all within one source file. For example, I have one document that has conditions for print vs. online, two similar software applications, and two releases of each application. Instead of six documents, I have one. Changes can be made in one place, instead of six. This is definitely a huge time-saver.

Tables

FrameMaker provides excellent table management through its Table Designer. Table formats can be designed and stored for instant insertion into a document. You can easily resize columns, add rows or columns, or change the look of your tables in just a few mouse clicks. This feature can be a big time saver if you are currently using a product that does not support tables or table formats.

Your success in justifying the purchase of FrameMaker will depend in large part on your ability to illustrate how its features match your company's documentation needs and demonstrate that the purchase price is a one-time expense resulting in significant savings in both time and money.

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