



Is It Time to Migrate from RoboHelp to Flare?

Scott DeLoach | Rob Houser

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Overview

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 - Reasons to stay with RoboHelp
 - Reasons not to stay with RoboHelp
- Flare
 - What's happening
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Our position

- We don't have a vested interest in which tool you use
- We want to help you make the right choice
- We are...
 - Certified RoboHelp instructors (for 8 years)
 - Certified Flare instructors
 - Authors of the official Flare training guide

What happened to RoboHelp?

- October 22, 2003 - Macromedia bought eHelp
- January 22, 2004 - RoboHelp x5 released
- July 21, 2004 - RoboHelp for Frame canceled
- April 18, 2005 - Adobe bought Macromedia

What's happening now with RoboHelp?

April 11, 2006 - New version announced

- Release date - "early 2007"
- Team - one member with RoboHelp experience
- Features - unknown
- Potential - will they combine RoboHelp with Dreamweaver, Acrobat, FrameMaker, Contribute, and/or Captivate?

Reasons to stay with RoboHelp

- Features
 - Imports FrameMaker documents
 - Imports/exports PDF files
 - Supports older versions of Microsoft Word
- Output formats
 - FlashHelp
 - JavaHelp
 - Oracle Help

Reasons not to stay with RoboHelp

- Support for Office 12? **unknown**
- Support for Internet Explorer 7? **unknown**
- x6 release date? **“early 2007”**
- x6 features? **unknown**
- Maintenance plans? **Not currently offered**

What's happening with Flare?

- February 28, 2006 - Flare v1.0 released
- May 1, 2006 - Flare v1.1 released
 - Bug fixes
 - Section 508-compliant WebHelp
 - Updated help system
- September 2006 - Flare v2.0 scheduled for release
 - Round-trip FrameMaker and Word support
 - PDF export

Reasons to migrate to Flare

- Command line compiling
- DotNet Help
- Printed documentation with odd/even/first footer and headers, links, and cross references
- Table stylesheets
- Better single sourcing support
 - Snippets and variables
 - Multiple TOCs
 - Conditional TOCs and index entries
- XML-based authoring

DotNet Help

- MadCap's new help format
- Designed for .NET applications
(Requires .NET Framework 2.0)
- Can run from a file server
- Not compiled
- Viewed in the Flare Help viewer
(free distribution)

DotNet Help example

The screenshot displays the MadCap Flare application window. The title bar reads "MadCap Flare". The menu bar includes "File", "Edit", "View", "Tools", "Window", and "Help". Below the menu bar is a toolbar with icons for home, back, forward, search, and print. The main window is divided into three panes:

- Left Pane (TOC):** A tree view showing the table of contents. The "Asian Cuisine" folder is expanded, listing items such as "About Asian cuisine", "Common Asian ingredients", "Cabbage Salad", "California Rolls", "Stir Fry with Noodles", "Kimchi Pancake", "Korean Barbecued Beef", "Kung Pao Chicken", "Steamed Jasmine Rice", "Stir-fried Chicken with Lemon Grass", "Vietnamese Fried Rice", and "Yakisoba".
- Top Pane (Help Topic):** The active help topic is "California Rolls". It features a navigation bar with "Help Topic" and various navigation icons. The page content includes the heading "Easy Asian Cuisine" and "California Rolls".
- Bottom Pane:** A list of ingredients for the California Rolls:
 - 4 cups sushi rice
 - 4 sheets of nori (dried seaweed)
 - 1 avocado
 - 2 carrots

At the bottom left of the application window, there is a sidebar with navigation options: "TOC" (selected), "Index", "Search", and "Favorites".

Table stylesheets

The screenshot shows the MadCap Flare TableStyle Editor interface. The window title is "Cuisine.flprj - MadCap Flare". The menu bar includes File, Edit, View, Insert, Format, Project, Build, Tools, Table, Window, and Help. The toolbar contains various icons for file operations and editing. The breadcrumb trail shows "Project... > 1/2 > MyTableStyle* > Step 3 - Develop Outputs > About_Asian_cuisine.htm".

The TableStyle Editor is divided into several sections:

- General:** A sidebar on the left lists categories: Rows, Columns, Header, and Footer. The "Rows" category is currently selected.
- Outer Borders:** Four dropdown menus for Left, Right, Top, and Bottom borders, all set to "solid 1px #008000".
- Cell Padding:** Four spinners for Left, Right, Top, and Bottom padding, all set to "0".
- Cell Border Collapse:** Two radio buttons: "Collapse cell borders" (selected) and "Do not collapse cell borders".
- Cell Border Spacing:** Two spinners for Vertical and Horizontal spacing, both set to "0".

At the bottom, a **Preview** section shows a table with 7 columns and 5 rows. The first row is a header row with 7 cells, each containing "Head 1". The subsequent 4 rows are body rows, each with 7 cells containing "Body 1", "Body 2", "Body 3", and "Body 4" respectively. The table uses a green header and alternating green/white body rows.

At the bottom left, there are three buttons: "Project Organizer", "Content Explorer", and "Glossary".

Variables and snippets

Variables

- Unformatted text
- Can use system variables: time, date, page number, and page count
- Can override when building a target

Snippets

- Can contain any content: formatted text, tables, images, snippets, and variables

Upsides of migrating to Flare

- Migration process is surprisingly easy
- MadCap is interested in and acts on customer feedback
- Excellent single-sourcing features
- Very good printed documentation output
- FrameMaker output is coming with v2.0

Downsides of migrating to Flare

- No FlashHelp
- WebHelp skins don't convert
- Build times may be slightly longer

What's the risk?

- Time to learn Flare and migrate projects
 - It's a new tool...you may occasionally need technical support
- + You will not lose content

Things to consider before migrating

- Do you customize your WebHelp after it is generated?
- Can you migrate a test project?
- Can you work with technical support to resolve unique/new issues?

Cost Comparison

RoboHelp x5 \$999
\$499 competitive upgrade

Flare \$799
\$599 competitive upgrade

Stay or Go?

If you are creating...	Recommended HAT	Considerations
WinHelp	RoboHelp HTML or Flare	Switch to HTML Help or DotNet Help (Flare only).
HTML Help	RoboHelp or Flare	Flare doesn't require the hhactivex.dll but also doesn't have the cool RoboHelp browse sequences.
WebHelp	RoboHelp or Flare	Stay with RoboHelp if you provide field-level context-sensitive help.
JavaHelp or Oracle Help	RoboHelp	Flare does not support JavaHelp or Oracle Help.
Help for a .NET application	Flare	Use Flare's DotNet Help.

Stay or Go?

If you are creating...	Recommended HAT	Considerations
Printed documentation	Flare or AuthorIT	Flare v2.0 will provide round-trip integration with Frame.
Help with extensive single-sourcing	Flare or AuthorIT	AuthorIT is more complicated and more expensive, but it's also more powerful for single-sourcing.
Help that is translated into other languages	Flare or AuthorIT	AuthorIT has a special translation management module that gives it an edge.

Stay or Go?

If you are...	Recommended HAT	Considerations
Trying to make yourself more employable (in the short-term)	RoboHelp	RoboHelp still dominates the current help market
Not sure about migrating to Flare	RoboHelp	Buy one Flare license while it's cheap and test it out.
Unable to afford changing to a new HAT	RoboHelp, but keep watching Flare and AuthorIT	Be careful before migrating to new versions of Word or providing WebHelp to users with browsers.

Questions?

Signup for our Flare/RoboHelp newsletter:
www.userfirst.net

Check out Scott's book (see www.userfirst.net):
MadCap Flare for RoboHelp Users

Scott DeLoach and Rob Houser
Founding Partners, User First Services
Certified Instructors, MadCap Flare | RoboHelp | Captivate
scott@userfirst.net | rob@userfirst.net | www.userfirst.net
770.446.8474



