

Top 10 reasons to move from Microsoft Word to Adobe FrameMaker for Technical Documentation

The all-new Adobe FrameMaker (2017 release)



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We recently assisted a defence customer to transition from MS Word to [Adobe FrameMaker](#). With the transition, several different sized technical publication templates were developed in FrameMaker.

Some of the more complex requirements included the capability to have full page graphics from size A4 all the way up to large throw clears that were 147cm wide (7 x A4 size). There was full front and back matter, including List Of Effective Pages (LOEP), with set positions for this front matter in the book. There was a requirement to place an Amendment Leaflet (AL) number, in the footer area. There was also a requirement to have Warning, Caution, and Notes inserted consistent in size and position to the Military specification.

Once templates were complete and data converted and working in the templates, the team was trained in Adobe FrameMaker features and specifically in the use of their FrameMaker books to ensure they achieved the most in their new working environment.

A month after they were settled into their work cycle of maintaining their publications in Adobe FrameMaker, we checked in to see how things were going. The team was so excited with their new work environment, and so we asked them the ultimate question—What would you say are the major benefits you have gained from working in the Adobe FrameMaker environment? This list below is their top 10:

1. **It feels reliable**—While I still have a lot to learn about Frame, I can honestly say it is a great tool. Even though we always had a very controlled process in MS Word with custom Macros to make sure it worked in a far more consistent fashion than default; FrameMaker does what our MS Word Templates does and MORE, in that it 'manages' the document as a whole automatically. I like it, it 'feels reliable'. I have no hesitation in saying that I prefer using it over Word.
2. **FrameMaker has a solid feel**—I have found that Word can have a mind of its own. Sometimes I'm not quite sure if it is going to give me the output I require. At times it seems to pre-empt what it thinks I want and this can be frustrating. FrameMaker has a solid feel. When I execute an instruction it just does it and I know what the outcome will be and what I see on the screen is what I get.
3. **Frame handles large documents**—Some of my publications are over 400 pages with a mixture of A4 and A3. In some cases I have individual Frame files of over 100 pages. I have not experienced any strange behaviour or the 'crashes' that Word can often present when working with large documents.
4. **Images can be turned off**—This means that if I am using a FrameMaker file with large number of images the FrameMaker file can be worked in (with the anchor frames still present) and amended without images thus speeding up the amendment process. I can't do this when using Word.
5. **The TOC/LOF/LOT are automatically generated**—This is a very simple process and works without problem, every time. This reduces the chance of manual errors in this part of the publication.
6. **All the numbering is automatic, it is hassle free**—It is not rare to have to add a chapter to a publication and the control in the book with FrameMaker has made this easy. It handles all the Section/Chapter/Page/Figure/Table numbering with minimal input from me. It was surprisingly simple. I have found one of the real strengths of FrameMaker is its book management.
7. **References automatically update**—As I have been amending my pubs I have been applying figure and table referencing so that if I introduce a new figure/table into the middle of a chapter, Frame updates automatically all the figure references in the text. I have found this surprisingly simple.
8. **Warnings/Cautions/Notes are automatically inserted based on the style**—It ensures that they are formatted and positioned in the document in accordance with our Military Spec. 5629B. Frame will therefore automatically move the Warnings/Cautions/Notes to the following page if the rules of 5629B require it. FrameMaker does it with no intervention on my part, it is part of the style rules for Warnings/Cautions/Notes, it's a great feature.

9. **Drag'n'Drop files in the Book window, or content in the document**—As well as having the physical page of the document displayed as true WYSIWYG in the window, inside the document I can add (remove or move) figures, tables, paras, subparas, etc. simply by dragging and dropping. At the book level, I can add new chapter files, or re-arrange them via the Book window. Word does not begin to do this.
10. **Inserting and updating Amendment Numbers**—One of my pet frustrations with Word is publication footers. If I have varying Amendment Leaflet (AL) status pages in my chapter this is indicated in the footer. While I have become pretty good at manipulating a Word document using section breaks etc., it never happens easily, especially if there are many changing AL pages. The way Absolute Data Group (ADG) has setup the Amendment Frame on the reference pages to add AL markings to the footers make this task really simple. Each AL marking is independent of the others making it a 'set and forget' step in the amendment process.

For those of us that have been working with FrameMaker for many years, the consistency and robustness in production is something we take for granted, yet expect. It is a professional tool at a reasonable price that won't fall over when the heat is on. If you have taken Word as far as it can go, Adobe FrameMaker might be the next step for you!

For any queries, please reach out to us at techcomm@adobe.com

Biography



[Tammy Halter](#) is the founder and sole Director of [Absolute Data Group](#), with over 17 years experience in the information technology field; including SGML/XML publishing and document management experience with various solution companies. Tammy has been a technical trainer, support engineer and project manager for several SGML software Distributors over the years, and was the Frame Product Engineer, Asia Pacific & Latin America for Adobe Systems in 1997. Tammy is a winner of numerous awards in the industry and a speaker at several industry programs.



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