# LEADING TECHNICAL INFORMATION PROVIDER STREAMLINES WORKFLOW WITH QUARK XML AUTHOR

AUTODATA LTD., THE LARGEST INDEPENDENT PUBLISHER AND SUPPLIER OF TECHNICAL INFORMATION FOR AUTOMOTIVE PROFESSIONALS, PRODUCES ACCURATE INFORMATION IN MULTIPLE LANGUAGES WITH QUARK XML AUTHOR

A reduced model life for vehicles means Autodata now produces documentation for more cars, more often.
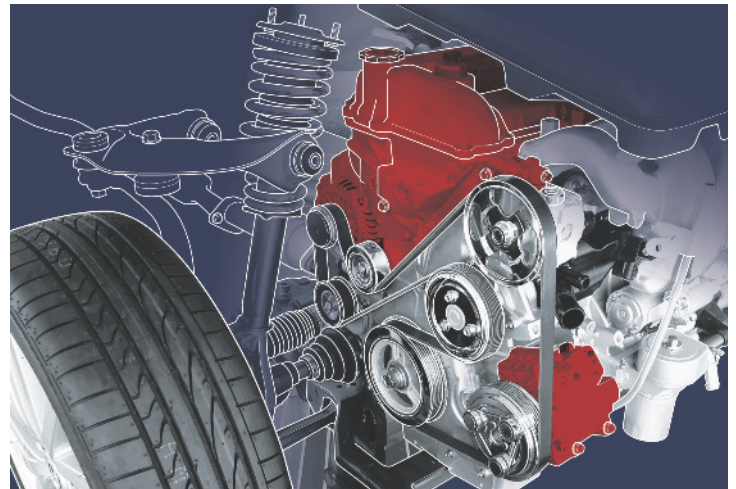
Established in 1975, Autodata is Europe's leading publisher and supplier of technical information for automotive professionals through printed and electronic media. Autodata's core business is researching, compiling, and creating technical information for the maintenance and repair of motor vehicles, for use in independent automotive workshops. Over the last 30 years, Autodata has developed long-standing relationships with vehicle manufacturers in order to provide accurate information to the professional independent automotive aftermarket.

## The Transition from Typesetting to Markup Languages

In the 1970s, Autodata used the Varityper typesetting system to produce workshop manuals, service specifications, schedules, and wiring diagrams. However, with the advent of personal computers and the growing popularity of desktop publishing software, "paste-up" soon became obsolete. Always at the cutting edge of technology standards, in the mid-1990s Autodata introduced Standard Generalized Markup Language (SGML) to its production workflow to publish technical documentation more quickly and accurately, thus entering the world of structured content.

Markup languages, where authors apply tags to content to describe how it should be published, are a great advantage to technical publishers because they allow those publishers to produce high volumes of documentation for different products and audiences, and because they enable content to be easily repurposed. Implementing a structured content workflow, however, typically involves purchasing and integrating new tools — such as complex XML editors — as well as investing in specialized training. Many companies have found consistency and accuracy in the authoring process to be a challenge.

Gabriele Ostermaier, Business Assurance Manager at Autodata, explains, "In recent years Autodata experienced a drastic shift from paper-based products to electronic media. Higher processing demands for electronic publishing, new products, and new languages exposed the limitations of the SGML-based markup we had developed and used. Some issues were caused by inconsistent use of tags, tags containing formatting information, and tags without an end delimiter. Other problems derived from the method of text creation. It still placed the responsibility of inserting the correct codes into the file with the author."

The secret of Autodata's success in delivering accurate and comprehensive documentation for automotive professionals lies in its 55 skilled writers, who have hands-on experience in the workshop and can therefore produce rigorous yet user-friendly information. These skilled technical writers are the key to the production cycle, and their training is pivotal to the creation of structured content. When Autodata implemented their SGML-based system, authors used to create their content in the familiar environment of MS Word and received specific training on how to code and insert the right tags in the text they were writing.

Autodata's investment in training for technical writers was substantial, yet it still did not always produce the levels of accuracy that were needed to reap the benefits of their SGML-based system. The company decided to look for

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alternative solutions, where authors did not have to get involved in the technicalities of the markup language. A thorough review of the market led Autodata to choose Quark XML Author for Microsoft Word.

"Our technical authors were already compiling information using Microsoft Word and therefore were familiar with its layout and functions. We did not want our authors to invest their time inserting the correct markup codes, but to focus on content. Also, we did not want to move them from the familiarity of Microsoft Word to the alien environment of an XML editor. We took the view that Quark XML Author was the most user-friendly and suitable option," comments Gabriele Ostermaier.

### XML: Reducing Time to Market

Autodata Ltd., like many other technical information providers, was facing the challenge of moving from paper manuals to a more fast-paced production cycle imposed by technology developments in the industry, and now had to keep up with regular monthly updates of their electronic products, which made up 90% of their sales.

Mark Trepte, Autodata's Production Director, explains, "Vehicles now have a reduced model life. This means more models more often, which we have to research and supply information for. This presents us with the challenge of progressively reducing time to market."

The migration to XML (Extensible Markup Language) allowed Autodata to produce their documentation in a collaborative authoring environment, streamline their workflow, and reduce the possibility of human mistakes. Autodata was able to further improve the effectiveness of their production cycle, making it simpler to repurpose content for faster delivery of documentation. With XML, Autodata was able to rely on a consistent document format to preserve accuracy.

### Tailor-made Configuration and Support

To help Autodata capitalize on the benefits of an XML-based production, Quark worked with them to develop a custom-made schema with customized rules and templates that meet Autodata's specific needs. Authors were guided through the compilation process, the Unicode character conversion process, and the crucial step of making sure tags are well-formed and valid.

## CHALLENGE

Autodata's mission is to always be the most innovative, accurate, and respected supplier of technical information to the automotive industry

## SOLUTIONS

- Quark XML Author and Microsoft Word

## BENEFITS

- Streamlined workflow
- Reduced time-to-market
- Increased accuracy and consistency
- Savings on training
- Implement-and-go solution

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— GABRIELE OSTERMAIER, AUTODATA BUSINESS ASSURANCE MANAGER

"Quark's Professional Services team in Dublin provided outstanding service throughout the configuration process. They were readily accessible with expertise and support, and we formed a solid working relationship, which enabled us to achieve a positive outcome," commented Gabriele Ostermaier.

### Savings on Costly Training

With Quark XML Author for Microsoft Word, Autodata's technical writers can now easily create XML documents with no knowledge of markup languages and little training. While other XML-based solutions require the use of specialized

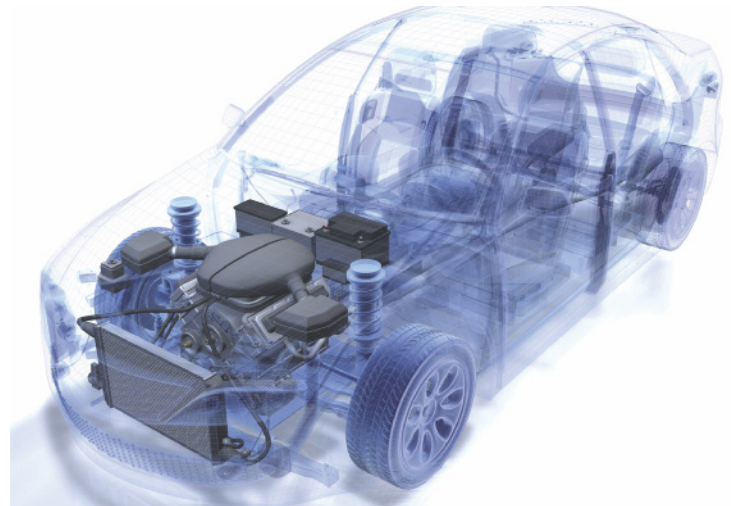*Autodata*
It's what we know

Quark

tools and costly training sessions, Quark XML Author lets writers create, edit, and review content for the production of technical documentation in an environment they already know and feel comfortable with: Microsoft Word.

At Autodata, training for Quark XML Author is considered straightforward and does not require a large effort or investment by the company. As Gabriele Ostermaier explains: "We are training new authors on the job, generally one-to-one. The main source of guidance comes from subject master files based on the Quark XML Author template that was part of our custom configuration. These act like templates for the author. We also created an in-house user document for reference."

### The Author is the King

With Quark XML Author, technical writers are free to concentrate on the creation of accurate, timely, and effective content without having to use their precious time and skills for metadata, markup tags, or formatting.

After extensive research and tests, Autodata concluded, "Quark XML Author is very user-friendly. The authors are not confronted with code input and can focus on what they do best — writing. And this means a competitive edge for our business.".

With Quark XML Author, technical writers can focus on what they do best: writing accurate and user-friendly content.

## ABOUT QUARK SOFTWARE INC.

Quark's software enables organizations of all sizes to meet customer demand for engaging, relevant communications when, where and how they want them. Our solutions combine the power of XML with flexible layout and design to automate the delivery of customer communications to print, Web, and interactive experiences on the latest digital devices. Financial services firms, manufacturers, and governments around the world rely on Quark solutions to elevate customer communications to new levels, reduce time to market, and lower costs.

To find out more about Quark Enterprise Solutions visit **www.quark.com/enterprise** or contact us at **www.quark.com/contact**

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