The Business Case for XML
and Intelligent Content

DITA Metrics101

Mark Lewis

Foreword by Ann Rockley

Excerpt from Chapter 8 - Structured Authoring Metrics

For information, contact:

Structured Authoring Metrics

How do we measure the ROI of structured authoring? What metrics and cost models can we create for it? This section focuses on metrics for the cost of development, review, and maintenance. When authoring is structured and content can be reused, savings occur in all phases of the content development lifecycle (CDLC) and the cost of authoring and editing is reduced. Taking advantage of content reuse allows reviewers to spend more time doing their "real" job, which usually involves generating revenue for the company. These savings also cascade into the translation process. We discuss this concept in detail in "Translation Metrics 102".

In this chapter we:

- Design a cost model for a structured authoring process without reuse
- Design a cost model for a structured authoring process with reuse
- Compare the cost models and determine the savings with reuse
- Explore the savings of eliminating formatting
- Explore the savings in the content maintenance lifecycle (CMLC)

The metrics in this cost model represent the cost of a topic in the structured authoring process and incorporate some of the topic-based metrics we've developed in other chapters. In addition, these metrics apply to both systematic and opportunistic reuse. To simplify the model, we are not taking into account the difference in wages that each role receives and assume that the cost of each labor hour is equal. When you customize the model for your own purposes, you can incorporate complexity or weighting factors for each role type to better approximate real wage levels in your organization.

If we take a sneak peek at the savings trend from the end of this chapter, we see that in a structured authoring process with content reuse, the cost to create a topic decreases proportionally as the percent reuse increases. This is true for most tasks in this process; content creation by the author, content review by the technical reviewer, and content proofing by the editor. The technical reviewer is usually a subject matter expert (SME) and if they are highly paid then some of the greatest savings can occur when their review time is reduced.

Figure 72: Savings trend

Figure 72: Savings trend
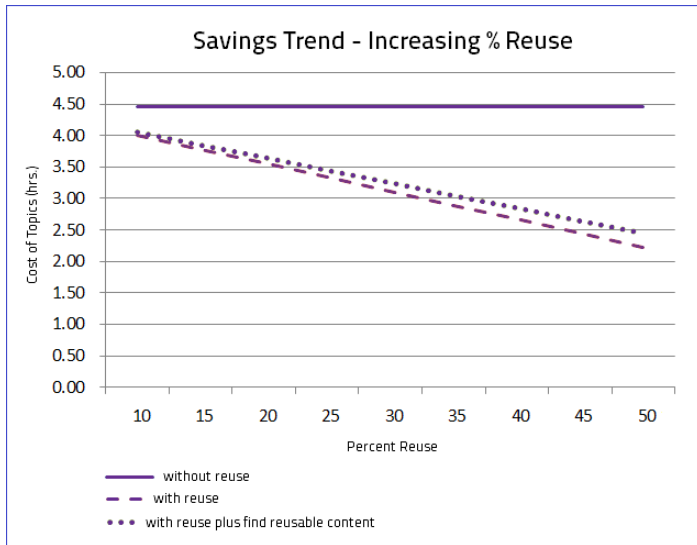
How do we determine the savings shown in **Figure 72**? Let's start by looking at a CDLC in which an author creates a topic. Then, a technical reviewer reviews the topic for technical accuracy. Finally, an editor proofs the topic for readability, and consistency, and brings down the grammar hammer. **Figure 73** shows the lifecycle. Your situation may be different, but you can customize the model to represent your authoring process.

Content Development LifeCycle
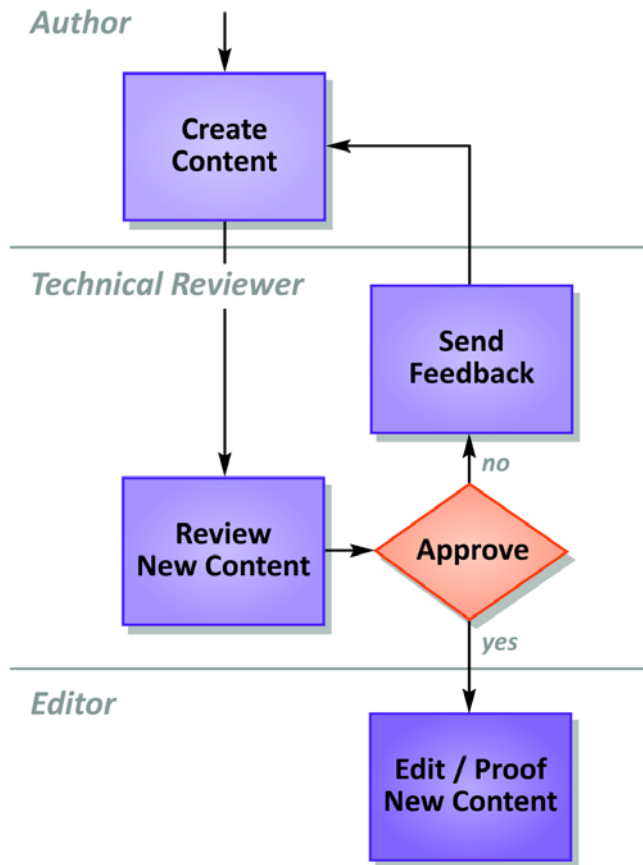
This cost model is simplified in that it does not include a separate cost formatting or for question-and-answer discussions between the author and reviewers. This model assumes that authors, reviewers, and editors work on the same document so the author does not have to transfer edits and changes from the reviewer's copy of the document to the final version of the document.

Figure 74 shows the cost of a topic without reuse in this lifecycle.

Figure 74: Cost of topic without reuse

Role	Task	Label	Cost (hrs.)
Author			
	Create Content	A	**4.45**
Technical Reviewer			
	Review New Content	B	0.75
Editor			
	Proof New Content	C	0.33
Total			5.53

The values are:

- Cost to create new content = cost of the basic *Adding a Calendar Event* topic = 4.45 hours from **Figure 15**

The calculation is:

- Total cost of topic without reuse = (cost to create new content) + (cost to review new content) + (cost to edit new content) = 4.45 hours + 0.75 hours + 0.33 hours = 5.53 hours per topic

 See spreadsheet, "Structured_Authoring."

Figure 75 shows the structured authoring process *with reuse*. The author creates a topic, but whenever possible the author finds reusable content that has already been created and inserts that content into the topic. An SME reviews the topic for technical accuracy. We reduce the amount of new content that must be reviewed by 25%. If you feel this reduces the technical review time too much and instead should be higher because the technical reviewer has to review the topic as a whole to ensure it's accurate, then I recommend increasing the technical reviewer contextual review time to compensate. This can apply to the editor contextual review time as well. The technical reviewer does not have to review the reusable content for accuracy, but does have to determine if it is applicable and technically correct to use within the context of the

topic. Similarly, the editor proofs the topic, but does not have to proof the reusable content. Instead the editor only performs a review of the reusable content for readability, and consistency within the context of the topic.

Figure 75: CDLC with reuse