



Estimating Return on Investment (ROI) for Author-it®

Estimating return on investment (ROI) is more of an art than a science. Few organizations collect and maintain the detailed metrics needed to compare new tools and processes with current solutions. In addition, some of the benefits of implementing a single sourcing solution are difficult to quantify. Nevertheless, it is possible to provide some guidelines about the savings and opportunities that are provided by implementing single sourcing. This document provides a summary of considerations that can be used to calculate ROI for *Author-it*.

ROI can be calculated by comparing the investment for *Author-it* licenses and startup costs to the savings gained by using *Author-it* relative to your current authoring and publishing system.

About *Author-it*

Author-it is an integrated application for creating, managing, and publishing reusable content. It provides reuse of content at various levels, from entire documents down to individual topics and commonly used sentences or phrases. Designed for collaborative authoring, *Author-it* enables organizations to maintain a single authoritative version of each content object, eliminating the need to create and update multiple versions of the same information for different documents or output types.

Author-it provides secure access control for content, preventing unauthorized modification of information assets. It also provides powerful content management features and automated publishing to print, web, and help outputs of various types.

The savings that an organization can gain by implementing *Author-it* as the centerpiece of a strategy for reuse range from direct savings in time and labor to secondary benefits that provide increased opportunity for new income streams.



The Investment

The investment required to implement *Author-it* can include the following items. Not all are required; but you would do well to consider each of them in your implementation plan.

- Analysis of content and workflow
- Cost of software licenses and support
- Installation and configuration
- Importing legacy content
- Creating custom publishing templates for print and electronic deliverables
- Learning curve for writers to use new tools
- Training

As an Authorized Reseller for *Author-it*, Systems Documentation, Inc. (SDI) can provide estimates as needed for each of these items.

Return on Investment

The ROI for *Author-it* stems from its support for reuse of content. In an ideal implementation, each unit of content exists in only one place. When a change is needed, it affects every document that includes that content, for all of the different output media to which it is published. (*Author-it* also provides methods for customizing standard content as needed.)



Direct Savings

Author-*it* provides direct savings in the following areas:

- **Reduced labor costs.** The need to maintain multiple versions of the same content is eliminated.
- **No reformatting.** Because content is stored independently of formatting, the same content can easily be published to print, web, and help outputs. There is no need to create content in one format (for example, print documents) and then convert to different formats (such as HTML or help outputs). Publishing to different media is automated and fast.
- **Faster review and approval cycle.** Author-*it* makes it easy to keep track of what content has been reviewed and approved. The need for content experts and managers to review previously accepted content when it is reused in new documents is greatly reduced.
- **Reduced translation costs.** Organizations that implement the Author-*it* Localization Manager can dramatically reduce translation and localization costs. The Localization Manager reduces the cost of new translations significantly and can completely eliminate the need for retranslation of content that has already been through the translation and review process. Content is only translated once.

In addition, the Localization Manager provides key management tools that include:

- Precise word counts
- XML packaging of content for use with translation memory applications
- Context documents that show content to be translated in the context of complete documents
- Facilities for managing ongoing updates from the source library to the translation library.

Because translated content resides in an Author-*it* library, you can publish translated content to all desired media (print, web, and help). This approach eliminates the need to translate the same content for different deliverables (print and electronic).



Secondary Savings

In addition to the direct savings in creating, maintaining, and publishing content, Author-*it* provides significant secondary benefits that increase your ROI:

- **Faster retrieval of source content.** When content is stored in one place, it is easier and faster to locate the authoritative version of that content. The need to search through multiple versions of content for the “best” one is eliminated.
- **Greater consistency and accuracy of content.** When multiple versions of a document exist, they inevitably begin to diverge from each other, creating differences in wording and, in many cases, significant differences in content. This situation can lead to confusion among content developers as well as customers. Having different versions of the same content can also have costly legal implications (especially in the area of product liability). Author-*it* makes it possible to maintain a single source for all content.
- **Secure access control.** User access to content is strictly controlled through flexible permissions. You can specify the content that different groups and users are allowed to view, modify, or publish, and you can protect approved content from unauthorized modifications that might entail a new review and approval process.
- **Improved formatting consistency and branding.** By automating the formatting of content for different deliverables, Author-*it* helps to ensure consistency in your published content. This consistency enhances the ability of your organization to provide a consistent message and a uniform “look and feel” for your content.
- **Faster time to market.** By reducing the need to create and maintain duplicate content for different publications, Author-*it* can reduce the time needed to develop new documents, making it possible to deliver content more rapidly. Author-*it* also provides numerous opportunities for increasing automation in content management and publishing.
- **Project management aids.** Author-*it* and the optional Project Manager module provide the ability to track the progress of content development through release states and through task and milestone definitions. You can monitor the status of individual content objects as well as complete documents, and generate reports that show various criteria to improve your ability to manage content.



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Organizational Benefits

Implementing Author-*it* throughout your organization can improve the flow of content across departmental boundaries and can provide additional benefits for your customers and business partners:

- Better communication and collaboration among departments
- Consistent information for customers, reducing operational issues and requirements for customer support
- Opportunities to deliver more customized deliverables for specific customers and partners
- Enhanced opportunities for innovation and new information products



Project Experience

Our data on estimated savings for specific projects is somewhat anecdotal, but the following summaries provide insight into how specific Author-*it* customers have estimated their savings:

- At a communications company, a comparison among three projects over a twelve month period showed that using Author-*it* saved an average of 2.16 hours per page in production time. This study compared using Author-*it* to a workflow that used RoboHelp and MS Word to produce print and help deliverables (with a conversion between help and print formats). Overall, the Author-*it* projects saved an average 138.5 hours (the projects were relatively small, 76 to 98 pages of documentation per project). Using an estimate of \$43.50 per hour for a mid-level technical writer, the use of Author-*it* provided savings of about \$6000 on these projects.
- A major computer manufacturer reported savings of 40% in personnel costs, 3 weeks in their production cycle, and 40-60% reduction in review time over a 2-3 year period. A training group within the same company went from 17 writers/editors to 5 and are now producing more output; they quoted overall savings of \$2.5 million after one year. (These savings were the result of a number of changes in tools and workflow; but they attribute the bulk of their savings to the use of Author-*it* as a single sourcing platform.) This training group was able to phase out the use of outside contractors in the first year. They also experienced savings through reuse of content, reduced review time, quick assembly of new documents, and automated publishing.
- At a major software company that was 30% down on headcount, using Author-*it* enabled them to maintain their workload without adding staff. Prior to using Author-*it*, they estimated that writers spent 50% of their time on formatting content. With Author-*it*, they reduced the time spent on formatting to 5%.



Localization Savings

A simple example illustrates the process of estimating savings provided by the Author-it Localization Manager. This example uses a document with the following characteristics:

New Translation without Author-it Localization Manager

No. of Topics	Avg. Words/Topic	Word Count	Cost/Word	Total Cost
1000	200	200,000	\$0.20	\$40,000

Now assume that the document has 10% reuse of content, which Author-it can identify and eliminate from the translation process. The result is as follows:

New Translation with Author-it Localization Manager

No. of Topics	Avg. Words/Topic	Word Count	Cost/Word	Total Cost
900	200	180,000	\$0.20	\$36,000

Eliminating reused content from the translation process **saves \$4000**.

Now assume that the original document, with some changes and new information, is sent for retranslation. In a traditional translation process, content that is matched by existing translation memory is charged at a lower rate (but is not free). This example assumes a cost of \$0.08 for matched content.



Retranslation without Author-it Localization Manager

	No. of Topics	Avg. Words/Topic	Word Count	Cost/Word	Total Cost
Existing Topics	1000	200	200,000	\$0.08	\$16,000
New/Changed Topics	50	200	10,000	\$0.20	\$2,000

Retranslation with Author-it Localization Manager

	No. of Topics	Avg. Words/Topic	Word Count	Cost/Word	Total Cost
New/Changed Topics	50	200	10,000	\$0.20	\$2,000

With the Author-it Localization Manager, only the new and changed topics are sent for translation. This approach for a retranslation **saves \$16,000**.

This example provides a simple calculation for one document being translated into one language. Translate that same document into 10 other languages, and multiply the savings 10 times. Translate a further 10 or 100 documents into multiple languages, and the savings provided by Author-it are huge.

In addition, because translated content can be published directly from Author-it, the need to pay translation vendors to perform Quality Assurance on published outputs is eliminated.