

From system adaptation to digital information basis: Walther Trowal realigns its technical documentation

A specialist in industrial surface finishing: Walther Trowal at a glance

Walther Trowal GmbH is an established mechanical engineering company focusing on industrial surface finishing. The company develops and produces equipment for mass finishing – a process that cleans, deburs, or polishes workpieces by vibrating them in abrasives.



The machinery is used worldwide in a wide range of industries – wherever surface quality is the decisive factor. Here, the equipment tends to be configured individually and consists of numerous components and variants.



This wide variety poses particular challenges not just for production, but also for technical documentation.

Whenever systems dictate processes: Technical documentation under pressure to adapt

Many technical writing departments will be familiar with the problem: Rather than the processes determining the system, it is the system that determines the processes.

At Walther Trowal, working practices have also been established within the technical writing department over many years that were one thing if nothing else: adapted. Adapted to a content management system that could not directly map key requirements.

The upshot was increasing costs, complex workflows, and documentation that wasted lots of energy.

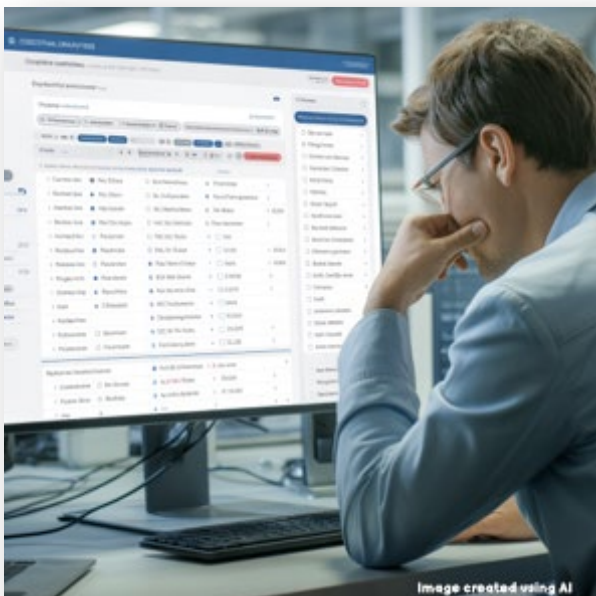
A multitude of variants slowing down workflows: When complexity becomes the problem

The technical writing department set out clear goals a long time ago:

- Modular structured content
- Flexible variant control
- Consistent reuse

Yet the reality was totally different.

Each time new documentation was published, numerous parameters had to be managed manually – in some cases up to 130 variants that had to be actively selected and combined.



In practice this meant:

- A great deal of time spent creating documents
- Error-prone processes
- Unnecessary workload for the authoring team

Instead of working efficiently, the team was forced to adapt to the limits of the existing system.

The turning point: A system tailored to working practices

After around ten years, Walther Trowal was given the opportunity to reassess its existing system landscape.

At its heart was not the question of how existing content can be copied unmodified wherever possible. Rather, it was about finding a system that systematically supports the established working practices of the technical writing department.

After all, the basic principles had been defined internally a long time ago: modular structured content, a clear variant logic, and the consistent reuse of information.

The challenge was not in the structure of the documentation – but in allowing this structure to be used efficiently and directly in the system.

They were therefore not looking for a technical one-to-one replacement, but a solution that better maps the existing requirements and supports the authoring department in its working practices, rather than adapting those practices.

XR put to the test: How the existing logic can be mapped in the system

As part of workshops with gds, the XR content management system was tested directly on the basis of real content and existing documentation structures.

A decisive difference quickly emerged:

XR did not force the authoring department to adopt workarounds – but precisely mapped the logic that the team had itself already devised over the years.

The decisive factor: This system consistently adopts the principle of modular, variant-ready documentation – an approach that has established itself as best practice in many technical authoring departments.

The fact that XR in this case “fits directly” is no coincidence, but an expression of a system logic that is geared to established requirements of the technical documentation.

For Walther Trowal that meant: The existing content structure could be retained and used for the first time directly in the system.



“In the past, we adapted to the system – today the system supports us,” is how Klaus Dieter Kupfermann, Head of Technical Documentation at Walther Trowal explains the difference.

What before had to be implemented with numerous individual steps, could now be mapped in a structured,

reproducible manner.

Transferring structures in a targeted manner: The path to XR system logic

A key success factor in the project was the conscious decision to specifically consolidate existing content and to transfer it to a clear, future-proof structure.

In this respect, only current and relevant content was copied and transferred to the XR logic.

Altogether some 40 master documents with around 5,000 objects (2,530 modules, 1,792 graphics, 564 fragments) were created as the new foundation. These today form the basis for all variants and documentation.

From workaround to system logic: How the working practices have changed

With the rollout of XR, the working practices have changed radically:

In the past:

- Manual control of complex variants
- Numerous individual steps with each piece
- Processes had to be adapted to the system

Today:

- Structured variant logic in the system
- Automatable document generation
- Processes follow in-house working practices

The documentation has therefore not only become more efficient, but also far more robust and consistent.

“The possibility of reproducing operating manuals at the push of a button makes our work immensely easier. At the same time, we benefit from greater quality – especially with deputizations in the team,” stresses Klaus Dieter Kupfermann.

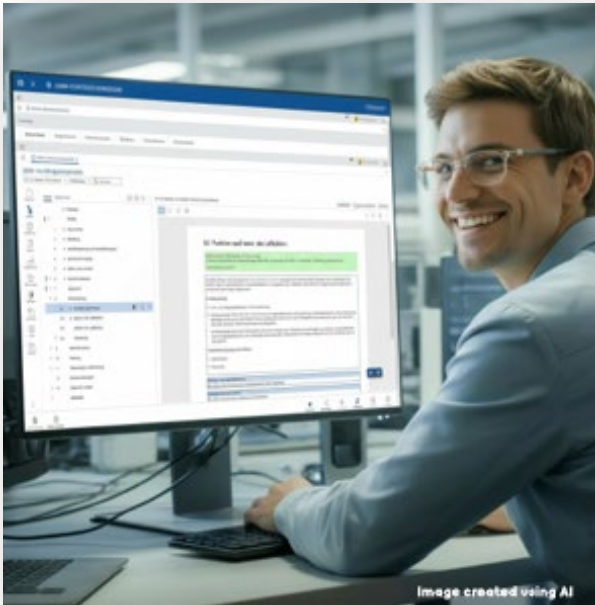
Meanwhile, the manual management overhead is reduced considerably, especially with the creation of variant-rich documentation that was previously associated with numerous individual steps.

An often underestimated success factor: Acceptance in the team

A particularly clear signal for the success of the switch-over came from the authoring department team itself: Employees that previously had reservations about the old system, quickly got to grips with the functionality of the new gads content management system XR.

User-friendliness also played a key role in this respect. While the previous system only offered limited options for custom presentation as part of daily work – such as with the font size or color in the editor – working with XR is today felt to be much more accessible and understandable.

This not only makes the induction much easier for individual employees, but also supports collaboration in the team. An aspect that is underestimated in many projects – but which is the determining factor for long-term success.



Collaboration as a partnership of equals: A decisive factor throughout the project

Besides the system decision, the collaboration in the project also played an important role.

From the outset, the knowledge sharing between Walther Trowal and gds was shaped by a common understanding – functionally and organizationally. Requirements were clarified quickly and solutions agreed directly.

A clear advantage also emerged as part of daily collaboration: short paths, direct contacts, and timely coordination without delays.

This not only facilitated implementation but helped decisively to ensure the project could be implemented smoothly and efficiently.

Structure as the foundation: More than documentation

The rollout of XR not only reorganized the creation of the documentation – it also produced a structured and consistent data basis.

Content is now available in a modular format, clearly classified and variant-ready. As such, that content can no longer be used just for classic documentation publication, but can be reused flexibly in different contexts.

All of which makes clear: The structured data basis is not just the result of the system conversion. It is also the starting point for further developments.

Looking ahead: Next step in digital information provisioning

With the rollout of XR, Walther Trowal has laid the foundation for future-proof technical documentation.

In the next step, the company is planning to further extend the information provisioning – including rolling out the easybrowse content delivery system to provide content in an even more targeted and user-oriented manner.

The structured and modular data basis in XR puts in place the key prerequisite in this respect: Content is already available so that it can be provided specifically for each target audience, as context-sensitive information across a range of formats.

Conclusion: The decisive factor is how well a system fits in with working practices

At Walther Trowal, the decisive factor was not just the functional scope of the new system, but how consistently the existing working practices can be mapped in that system.

It is not the tool that decides how successful everything is, but how well it fits in with the existing logic: Does the system support the authoring department – or does it prescribe the processes?

Walther Trowal has opted with XR for a solution that does not replace the existing structures, but allow them to be used.

All of which gives rise to more efficient processes, consistent results, and the foundation for future-proof digital information provisioning.