

Case Study – Bell Helicopter Textron

Date: 22 Sept 2003

The Bell Helicopter Textron Web Content Management Solution

*An Interview with John Martin, Information Architect and Program Manager,
Bell Helicopter Textron*

In the following interview, John Martin, Information Architect and Program Manager, Bell Helicopter Textron, discusses the challenges he faced—cutting publication costs, enabling content creators to publish content, standardizing more than 40 sub webs—plus how and why he chose the Revize® content management solution to resolve those challenges for the Bell Helicopter Textron Intranet.

Bell Helicopter Textron, a subsidiary of Textron Inc., is a \$1.6 billion, leading producer of commercial and military helicopters, and the pioneer of the revolutionary tiltrotor aircraft. Globally recognized for customer service, innovation and superior quality, Bell Helicopter's global workforce of over 7,500 employees serves customers flying Bell aircraft in over 120 countries.

Core Challenges

“At Bell Helicopter we faced several core problems that helped us focus on a content management solution. First, was the need to cut cost in the publication process. At Bell we had several hundred people spending a significant amount of time just publishing content for other people across the Intranet. Additionally, we wanted to reduce that number and put those people back to their real work of making helicopters.

“Second, the people who were creating content were not in control of their content. If they needed a period change, they had to call a Webmaster. If they found some strange display artifact on the web, they had to call a Webmaster. If they needed a document converted from Microsoft Word to html, they had to call the Webmaster. That was a tremendous waste of time and effort.

“Third, we had websites of every shape and variety, design, colors—you name it, we had websites that looked like it. And, from a user point of view, navigating around the Bell Helicopter Intranet was a nightmare. Therefore, visiting a new website or a new department meant learning a whole new method of accessing information.”

The Old Intranet

“Many departments had ‘quick links’ off the old Intranet home page. But, our quick links section had about 40 or 50 links on it. So, that wasn’t too quick of a link.

“The Bell Intranet generally falls into two broad categories: content and content provisioning; and application and data provisioning.

- *Content*
Example: what is new in HR; a description of new benefits; a list of local

doctors.

- *Application and Data Provisioning*
Example: the latest test specs on weak spar 22.

“The primary differential between them is that *Content* is human driven and *Application and Data Provisioning* is data driven. Yet, we had a need for a common interface, a common look and feel and a common set of standards for the display of information. But, we could not enforce those standards without going to a managed content system.”

Flexibility

“Revize® gave us the flexibility we needed.

“In making my decision, I reviewed several content management software choices. Certainly they are not a dime a dozen, but there are a lot of companies with very good, very strong systems. As a project leader, my challenge was to provide a project that would show a positive internal rate of return (IRR) within two years. I had to get an IRR that looked pretty good and Revize gave us a .77 IRR. Translated, that meant, by using Revize®, I could expect to gain payback in a year and one-half vs. up to three years when compared with some of the other software.

“For example, different tools have different utilization and acceptance rates across an organization. If I were to use Documentum, the levels of complexity inherent in the software influence the way I must sell it to the organization. And my communications plans must reflect all of that. Therefore, a simpler tool, such as Revize®, is better because I can sell it faster. The faster I can sell it, the sooner I get a return. And, the selling aspect is complicated, because every department at Bell uses this software.

“We currently have 27 web spaces in production. There are some small departments, with another dozen or so on the way, plus we have multiple plants and additionally, multiple organizations in different countries. That’s just the Intranet application. We have yet to start the Extranet and the Internet.

“By the way, our Internet site is brand new and we are very proud of it. I think it’s going to win a couple of awards this year. We spent a lot of time working with users making sure it was designed properly. In fact, the most important aspect about the site is the ease at which one can go from the low-density site to the high-resolution site and back and forth.

“It solves a number of on going problems that people have with web sites. From a handicapped point of view it’s very friendly. From a utility point of view, if I’m sitting in a shop in Des Moines, Iowa, and all I need to do is get a piece of information and print the data out, I can do it on this website. You can’t do that with any of the other aerospace sites. And, even though we have yet to incorporate our drop down menus, you can still quickly find things. So, we are pretty happy with that. It’s a smart design. We spent a lot of time with our customers.

“From a Revize point of view, we are publishing from a single input, from a single source, and we are getting multiple outputs. In other words, that low-resolution site does not cost us any extra. All we are doing is creating a duplicate set of templates that have been slightly re-purposed for deploying the same data and sending it out

The Bell Helicopter Textron Web Content Management Solution – Revize CMS

two different ways. As an author, all I have to do is update one page and I cover all my websites.

“Our public relations people, for example, need to fill out only one page for a new news story, then publish it to the Intranet, Extranet, Internet, high- and low-resolution, all at the same time. That saves them a great deal of time. No webmaster has to touch it. It’s all automated.

“And, where there’s some kind of an immediate crisis, where somebody needs to change something, it’s doable right now at the lowest possible level in our organization. That means that workflows are managed in the department not in a big workflow management infrastructure layer. They are managed where it makes sense to manage them.”

People Are On Mission

“Our content management system has helped us redeployed people who were really sort of going the wrong direction due to the nature of the way things have grown up at Bell over the last few years, Our productivity has been greatly enhanced back toward our main tasks.

“Also, just like our competitors throughout the commercial aerospace industry, the economic slowdown forced a number of layoffs here at Bell and that has subsequently reduced headcount. Still, we were able to maintain a high level of customer responsiveness. In fact, for the second time, we just won the industry award for the *best customer support*.

“There is no doubt in my mind that Revize® content management has helped us and I know it will help us win that award again next year because, at least in the web staff, we are able to maintain a level of support with greatly reduced staffing.”

When Things Go Wrong

“Today, we can boast, we are pretty darn good at this product. One of our developer’s nickname is *Obi-Wan Kenobi*. People at Revize refer to him as *Obi-Wan*. He knows as much about the API as many of them do. We had a few minor challenges, but importantly, to the absolute credit of Revize, they responded extremely well—openly and honestly, to every challenge.

“When first considering Revize®, I knew it had the basics. Further, I knew that we had enough talent to be able to make it work. I’ve been around the block a couple of times and I’ve worked with a number of good teams and this one is one of the best I’ve ever seen. So, I was pretty comfortable with the knowledge that we could make it work. It had the basic components—workflow, a simple editor and a good JSP engine sitting underneath it. Those were the three really critical things for us.

“The other part of the equation is at this price point, what’s the real risk? If you are mom and pop shop this is the only price point you have and so there’s a risk. For us at Bell, our alternatives were an unproven Macromedia product that was just coming into the marketplace, open source or a million-dollar package. So, Revize® looked pretty darned attractive compared to those options.

“Further, I looked at the numbers and it looked O.K. So the risk, if you average it out, was reasonable.”

The Bell Helicopter Textron Web Content Management Solution – Revize CMS

The Net Result

“A year and one-half later and Revize® is up, running and working. Overall, people have been pretty receptive. Importantly, Bell employees are able to get real work done. But, the original metrics for the content management system really don't apply anymore because of the significant organizational and personnel changes that Bell has made.

“So bottom line is: Revize Software Systems is a good company and a responsive group. They are dealing in a very, very open market, at an attractive price point. They are doing excellent work and one of the most committed companies with which I have had the pleasure of working.

“Those are great things, absolutely great things.

What Was Done

Bell Helicopter originally purchased a Revize® server license from Revize Software Systems with five Revize webSpaces™ – a Revize software concept that supports unlimited Web Pages, Web Sites, Web Developers and Content Editors but allows clients to segment administrative control (i.e., management of security – users, roles and permissions, workflow approvals).

Typically, clients will allocate webSpaces to individual departments or groups. After an initial pilot period that validated the use and value of Revize within the Bell Helicopter environment, other Bell Helicopter departments and groups started using Revize®. Currently, Bell Helicopter has implemented 27 webSpaces.

With Bell Helicopter as one of its first Revize v3.5 clients, it is important to note that both companies were moving into new territories. For example, Bell Helicopter was the first Revize implementation with an Oracle database instead of using Revize's imbedded database. Additionally, Bell Helicopter and Revize worked very closely on new features required to help Bell Helicopter meet its objectives and areas where documentation needed to be improved and expanded.

As a result of this successful collaboration, the current release Revize v4.3 is a great product. And, as Bell Helicopter materially represents a market segment of large, sophisticated users of technology that looks for quick deployment and real “return on investment” metrics, Revize continues to value and benefit from Bell Helicopter's input and advice regarding the future direction of the product.

Created in 1996, Revize® CMS is a pioneer product in web content management systems. The company, Revize Software Systems develops and markets Revize® CMS, an affordable, innovative web content management and delivery system for non-technical people, across multiple market sectors. Revize® CMS is based on an intuitive user approach, it combines sound software architecture with similar state-of-the-art functionality, simplicity, rapid deployment, ease-of-use and scalability previously found only in more expensive, custom-designed software. For more information about Revize Software Systems or Revize® CMS, contact the company at Revize Software Systems, 1890 Crooks, Suite 340, Troy, MI 48084. Phone: 248-269-9362 x15, Web Site: www.revize.com

-end-