

# Driving Efficiencies with Single-Sourcing

## Challenge

Axon, a Pro Mach brand and leader in the worldwide packaging industry, provides packaging systems that are customized to meet the unique needs of each of its customers. Axon needed a more efficient way to create a custom Installation, Operation and Maintenance manual (IOM) based on the bill of materials for each customer order.

There were a number of goals related to optimizing this process:

- Enable the use of a product’s IOM to differentiate it from the competition.
- Produce and update IOMs on time to be provided with initial product shipments.
- Reduce the time Axon engineers spend developing and updating IOMs.
- Increase the volume of parts sales by providing customers the drawings and parts specific to their configurations of products.
- Reduce support calls and enhance the customer experience by providing clear, easy-to-use procedures.

Axon chose InfoPros based upon the experience it had working with other mid-sized industrial companies and its ability to design and implement a solution, then provide onsite training to Axon personnel as well as any required ongoing support.

After analyzing Axon’s business needs and existing processes, InfoPros’ Consulting Services group recommended an approach using a low-cost, off-the-shelf tool that provided most of the benefits associated with big-dollar documentation platforms. This approach minimized the upfront investment by Axon while providing the capabilities and cost savings that Axon sought.

## Approach

InfoPros Consulting Services implemented a ‘single-sourcing’ platform at Axon. Now, as new IOMs are created, all new content is tagged and added to a library of Axon content (e.g., procedures, warranty information, diagrams and digital photos). The content can easily be pulled into new or existing IOMs.

Specifically, InfoPros:

- Assigned a project team comprised of a project manager, a technical writer, a technical illustrator and an editor that is available to support the ongoing needs of Axon.
- Designed an Axon-branded template that will be used for all Axon manuals, ensuring a consistent, professional look and feel for each manual.
- Updated all procedures and product information to ensure they are easy to use by the target audience, the people operating the machinery.
- Trained Axon personnel onsite on how to use the new, single-sourcing platform, giving Axon personnel the flexibility to engage InfoPros for future manual creation or to develop the manuals themselves.

InfoPros developed a DITA/XML solution using Adobe FrameMaker. DITA/XML and FrameMaker allow Axon to ‘chunk’ their content into easily reusable components that can be quickly developed and efficiently assembled into a customized manual.

Mid-size industrial “companies have the same needs and requirements as many F500 companies, but can’t justify the six-figure investment required to implement custom content management system (CMS) platforms,” said Rob Vaglia, InfoPros VP, Consulting Services. “Our job is to figure out how to get 80% of the benefit associated with implementing a CMS but with one-tenth of the budget.”

InfoPros Consulting Services is a team of solution architects who specialize in analyzing and solving the business and production challenges companies face regarding technical documentation and training. If you need help developing your documentation strategy or just need some help getting started, please [contact us](#).

[www.InfoPros.com](http://www.InfoPros.com)

Corporate Headquarters:  
12325 Oracle Blvd, Ste 100  
Colorado Springs, CO 80921  
800.493.7370

Locations:  
California  
Colorado  
North Carolina  
Texas  
Wisconsin

## Results

The solution InfoPros implemented for Axon provides significant benefits, achieving each of the objectives established for the program. More specifically:

- The new Axon IOM is a significant upgrade from what previously was provided to its customers. Axon now provides IOMs that can be considered best in class, which aligns with Axon’s reputation for providing quality products.
  - The number of engineering hours required to produce a ready-to-ship IOM has been reduced. This allows Axon not only to use those engineering cycles on other high value-add activities but it reduces what has historically been a major roadblock to producing IOMs in parallel with new product shipments, thus increasing customer satisfaction.
  - The cost-per-page for the third IOM developed on the new platform was 30% lower than that of the first.
  - **The cost of the fourth IOM was 68% less than that of the first, due to the growing amount of content reuse.**
  - Axon has the flexibility to ramp the InfoPros project team up or down, creating its own IOMs or having InfoPros create them, making product documentation a variable cost in line with Axon’s sales.
  - Axon’s customers now more easily can identify the parts they need to order.
- The single-sourcing platform InfoPros implemented for Axon will drive significant benefits over the coming years:
    - Axon will expand the library of reusable content that easily can be assembled into a custom IOM based on a BOM.
    - The unit cost to create new IOMs will continue to trend down as the amount of reuse increases.
    - When a standard piece of content needs to be updated (e.g., warranty information), it needs to be updated in one place only, not on every page it appears in each IOM. This significantly reduces the cost of making updates and makes it much easier to provide customers with up-to-date manuals.
    - The content of an IOM is not tied to the format of the manual. As such, it is relatively easy to change the look or layout of a manual without needing to redo or adjust the content. The content also can be displayed online or used in other product documents, such as data sheets and quick start guides.
    - Sharing content among IOMs normally reduces the cost for translating the manuals to other languages by 10-40%.

[www.InfoPros.com](http://www.InfoPros.com)

Corporate Headquarters:  
12325 Oracle Blvd, Ste 100  
Colorado Springs, CO 80921  
800.493.7370

Locations:  
California  
Colorado  
North Carolina  
Texas  
Wisconsin

**Bottom Line:** The quality of Axon’s new manuals represents a significant upgrade from what was being provided to its customers. The manuals are being produced in a more timely fashion while reducing the time required of Axon product engineers. In addition, it is now less expensive to develop new manuals and update existing ones.