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A FileMaker Customer Story

One For The Books

Rebus Inc.

When you reach for a health-reference book you seldom stop to think about all the work that's gone into it -- from researching the facts to laying out the pages. But for those who build their business around the production of such volumes, nothing is taken for granted -- every step of the process requires close and careful supervision. That's why Rebus Inc. -- a leading publisher of direct-marketed books on health topics -- depends on the organizational power of FileMaker Pro, the award-winning database software application from FileMaker Inc.
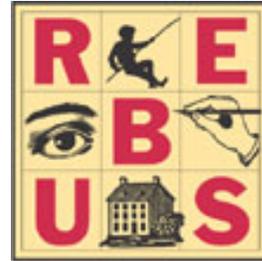
New York-based Rebus publishes a full line of consumer health newsletters and books on subjects ranging from nutrition to preventative health care, marketed under their own imprint and in partnerships with top direct-mail publishers like Time-Warner and Reader's Digest. "Much of our business growth in recent years has come from the development and marketing on consumer medical reference books, which we market as 'encyclopedias' and 'handbooks.'" explains Carney Mimms, Rebus's Computer Systems Manager. "Several years ago we realized that our existing methods of production of these books were inefficient and labor-intensive, especially at the productions stages. These methods also made it difficult for us to redesign and repurpose the material in these books for other customers and other purposes. We therefore determined that we would produce our next book, a guide to prescription and over-the-counter drugs, entirely from a FileMaker Pro database and use custom AppleScripts to produce the final Quark XPress pages."

To create this system, Rebus turned to developer John Thorsen, of TecSoft Inc. Working from Rebus's specifications, John assembled an automated system that allowed Rebus to put together the entire 770-page book on time and on budget with just a handful of editors and a single Quark production person working on the project. From that initial success a decade ago FileMaker application became a fixture in Rebus's production process. "Following our first successful use of FileMaker Pro for print production, we have expanded our use of FileMaker Pro to a wide range of publishing uses, including our line of healthy recipe cookbooks," Carney notes. "We also use Filemaker Pro databases to support our internal editorial website, and used it extensively during our participation in an alternative medicine web startup."

While its primary function is as a compositional tool, Rebus uses FileMaker Pro to create simple workflow tracking databases, allowing editorial staff to document each stage of the production process. "This replaces the hodgepodge of Excel spreadsheets that used to be used for this purpose," Carney explains. "Since most of our editorial projects involve the extensive use of outside editorial freelancers and reviewers -- among them consulting physicians -- the workflow databases also track freelance workflows and sometimes payments to freelancers and consultants as well."

Flexibility is the key to the system's success -- improving everyday productivity on a wide range of

Rebus Inc.
Customer Story At A Glance

Publishing handy health and medical references without an enormous commitment of time and labor -- it all comes together for Rebus Inc. through the power and flexibility of a custom FileMaker Pro application!

Rebus projects. A total of fifty FileMaker databases make up the system, with the number of individual records varying according to each project. "Because Rebus works on a wide variety of publications with small editorial teams, liberal use of freelance, and short completion deadlines," Carney elaborates, "we have found the easy setup and implementation of FileMaker databases and custom Applescripts to be an ideal approach to the daunting task of organizing and automating our print and web production."

Careful research, with careful production under the watchful eye of FileMaker Pro!

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