

**Industry:**

Technical education and certification

**Seapine Products:**

Surround SCM

**System Technology Institute**

Since 1984, System Technology Institute (STI) has provided industry and government with efficient, cost effective technology training and seminars in a variety of software engineering, management, and assurance disciplines including SQA, CMM/CMML, configuration management, software standards and best practices. When STI needed to migrate from its manual change management process, Seapine Software delivered the features they needed while keeping them on budget.

**Situation**

[Systems Technology Institute](#) faced the same challenges confronting many other training, documentation, and publishing firms: how to manage changes to information assets and provide access to up-to-date materials. At STI, instructors and curriculum designers used a manual process to update the courseware, with all the assets stored on a file server. A curriculum designer started the revision process by making a copy of the previous version of the materials, and as changes were completed, editors performed document reviews via email. Even with ownership restrictions and archive folders, the process led to confusion. Files were not labeled adequately and products were often misfiled.

With some courses consisting of hundreds of files, including presentations, exams, and handouts, editors struggled to determine which changes were made and to ensure that everyone had the most current versions. In some cases, a change request would surface two or even three times before being dealt with. The manual process resulted in failure to integrate recently proposed improvements in time for upcoming classes and differences between the instructor and student materials. These variances prompted STI into action because presenting a course on configuration management with materials that clearly have some configuration problems is, at very the least, embarrassing.

**Solution**

STI spent several months evaluating document management solutions before selecting Surround SCM. While STI provides courses on technical

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topics, their target users are writers, curriculum designers, and instructors. STI needed cross-platform, state-of-the-art source code and document control with an interface easy enough for non-technical users to use.

In order to address ease-of-use, STI considered content management products. These met STI's needs for Web access and ease of use but lacked the necessary configuration management and versioning options. STI worked to find a solution that provided sound configuration management, versioning, and release management. They found that just about every tool offered one, perhaps two of these, but never all three.

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Surround SCM was the only exception that met their technical and usability requirements. While it still had high-end technical capabilities, the security management made it possible for STI to hide the unneeded features and options that were too advanced for their user base.

Licensing also played a part in STI's decision. As a small company with a distributed workforce, most configuration management systems were out of their price range. By combining named and floating Surround SCM licenses, STI provided the appropriate access for administrators and users while staying on budget.

## Results

STI's coursework releases are now much more consistent. They standardized their review and approval process and reduced the manual review and double checking. With full version history, they reduced their risk of missing a critical edit or printing out-of-date materials.

Surround SCM's sharing capability enabled STI to streamline management of data by sharing common assets among projects, significantly decreasing the maintenance and duplication of effort.

STI's process was sound, but what it was missing was enforceability and tracing. "Surround SCM offers workflow management features," says [Zacharias Beckman](#), CEO/director, education services, System Technical Institute. "These allow tracking of assets beyond a simple 'checked in' status, enabling you to model your organization's change processes and ensure your team follows them every time a file is added or a change is made."

Surround SCM also improved review cycles and helped STI implement better release controls. "We have increased our ability to reliably release new versions of our coursework," says Beckman. "We used to perform semi-annual updates. Now, after only a couple months using Surround SCM, we are approaching a quarterly release cycle."

Apart from the definite improvement in productivity, STI has experienced other benefits. "We are seeing a lot more confidence in our product," adds Beckman. "Our catalog has improved substantially now that all assets reside in Surround SCM."