

Macromedia Case Study

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University of Notre Dame (<http://www.nd.edu>)



Products used

[Contribute 2](#), [Dreamweaver MX](#)

Challenge

University of Notre Dame needed a simple, inexpensive way to enable faculty and staff to take ownership of their department web content while ensuring web developers retained necessary quality and look-and-feel controls. The University's Office of Information Technologies (OIT) didn't have the means to centrally manage the University's website, which had grown to more than 270,000 pages spread across 300 separate websites. Few departments had the expertise or time to use complex content publishing software. Many department websites languished, information went stale, and professional web developers spent too much time posting and editing content when they could have been creating effective, visually appealing websites instead.

Solution

Contribute 2
Dreamweaver MX

Benefits

- Low cost of software purchase, implementation, training, and support saves University an extra \$100,000 a year
- No user resistance: faculty and staff quickly learn and easily use Contribute
- Department web content is kept current, so visitors receive proper communications and are encouraged to return
- Site-wide quality and consistency is centrally controlled: web developers supply Dreamweaver templates, issue content-access permissions, and monitor staging URLs
- Content management and web development roles are separated and strengthened

Project Details

In 1999, Tom Monaghan, director of planning and programs for the Notre Dame Office of Information Technologies (OIT), led the effort to find a centrally managed web publishing system. The systems the OIT reviewed were either too expensive, too complex, or too difficult to integrate with the University's mixed computing environment. "We looked at our peers, we looked at industry, we looked at buying a system, we considered building our own," says Monaghan. "Our first budget, at seven figures, was turned down. So we rethought our criteria, lowered our sights, got some funding at a lower level, and started implementing a centrally managed solution. But our pilot groups told us it was way too complicated. We were really at our wit's end."

Fortunately, Monaghan and the Notre Dame OIT were invited to beta test Macromedia Contribute, a new content publishing tool that, according to Monaghan, "covered most of what was offered in the system we nearly implemented

but in a much simpler way, and at a much lower cost.” In fact the cost was so low, and Monaghan so sure Contribute was the right solution for the University, that Notre Dame OIT gave every department a copy when Contribute was rolled out across the University in June of 2003.

Faculty and staff dived right in, using the software with only a little or no training. “After we rolled out the software, we started checking in with the various groups to see if we could help them get started,” says Monaghan. “But it turned most of them were already using it, without training.” Notre Dame offers one Contribute training class and provides an online Help Center with an FAQ page and step-by-step instructions.

Contribute users can build their web content as easily as dragging and dropping Microsoft Office documents right onto a web page. “It amazes me each time I see our front-line personnel modifying and editing content so easily with Contribute,” says Matt Klawitter, currently interim director of the Notre Dame Web Group. The Web Group, recently spun off from the OIT, functions as the web design component of an in-house print-and-web communications agency. “And they can see immediately how the page looks. If they don’t like it, they change it just as easily.”

Amy Amoni is a happy Contribute user at the University. Amoni, the director of project management for Business Operations—a group comprising six business units and more than 1,200 full-time staff responsible for the campus’s physical infrastructure—oversees 15 websites in addition to her other duties. The content managers for these websites now regularly post files, graphics, and links to existing pages, and create new pages offering new services.

“Prior to standardizing on Contribute, managing our websites was time-consuming and complicated,” says Amoni. “Naturally, site managers weren’t motivated to update content often enough, which led to outdated information.” That’s no longer the case. “Site managers are comfortable with Contribute after a brief training session, even if they use the software only sporadically,” says Amoni. “Our sites are current and our customers are informed.”

Ensuring Consistent Messaging, Look and Feel, and Quality

The Web Group felt it was necessary to retain control even as faculty and staff post their own content—and that’s a key feature of Notre Dame’s Contribute solution. The control begins with the ability to create and deliver a secure connection key, which gives the website administrator all the required rights and privileges—quickly and simply. “I don’t have to visit everyone’s computer to set up a connection, and we can all skip the FTP stuff,” says Klawitter. “It’s fantastic how fast we can get set up.”

The Web Group or the website administrator then grants specific individuals defined, password-protected access to certain portions of the various pages. Perhaps more important, they can establish the staging process: whether new or updated content can be published live or must go to a staging URL where it can be reviewed first. And if something gets published in error, Notre Dame is ready. “Mistakes happen, despite our controls,” says Klawitter. “So Contribute lets us recover and post the previous version.”

Today, the Notre Dame Web Group spends more time crafting websites that reflect a department’s unique messaging and communications goals. They begin with a Dreamweaver template, which makes it easy to centrally update a website’s page structure and design—everything from swapping logos and colors and links to rearranging the layout. “Many departments simply adopt our ready-made template,” says Klawitter. “And that’s fine because that’s what their budget or resources or marketing objectives dictate. But for the groups who need our expertise, we can work closely with them to create a unique, more-robust design that still meets University standards.”

“The University standardized on Contribute and Dreamweaver in large part because the software supported our effort, now underway, to speak consistently to all our audiences,” says James Cope, OIT public relations administrator. “Now that we’ve standardized on web development and content management tools, the University is moving forward with plans to harmonize all its communications.”

The Bottom Line

“The point is, websites are there to be used,” declares OIT’s Monaghan. “And if you’re not updating the content frequently enough, your audience—students, parents, the University community—isn’t going to see the value.” Monaghan notes that www.nd.edu site traffic rose 15 percent year over year several months following the Contribute rollout.

Managing 300 separate websites and more than 270,000 pages might appear daunting. Yet, according to Monaghan,

“Many of the technical challenges of managing it simply went away when we adopted Contribute. For example, it blends seamlessly with the University’s thoroughly mixed computing environment, so we didn’t have to upgrade our servers and hardware. And we don’t have to hire highly trained technicians to support it, or invest much in training people to use it.”

Monaghan and Klawitter both shy away from citing specific return on investment (ROI) figures, preferring to highlight the greater efficiencies among department and web staff. Monaghan explains that he looks at value on investment (VOI), instead. “The VOI is substantially high, in part because Contribute is so inexpensive to buy, implement, and support. But if you want to look at actual savings, I’d say with Contribute we’re keeping an extra \$100,000 a year inside Notre Dame.”

Return on Investment for University of Notre Dame

- Contribute is so easy to learn, few resources are tied up in training
- Contribute is so easy to use, faculty and staff rarely require technical support
- Contribute is so easy to learn, and so easy and to use to keep web content up to date, that there’s been no resistance from faculty and staff
- Because web content is easily updated as often as needed, Notre Dame delivers the latest, most accurate information and messaging to web visitors
- Web developers spend their time designing and building websites—what they’re trained and paid to do—not performing content management tasks
- Contribute runs on a variety of hardware and operating systems, so the University did not have to upgrade existing computing infrastructure
- Contribute is so inexpensive, the Office of Information Technology provided every Notre Dame department with a copy
- Dreamweaver templates are used to establish consistent look-and-feel and reinforce the University “brand,” an invaluable Notre Dame selling point
- Contribute and Dreamweaver give greater clarity and strength to web developer and content manager roles: faculty and staff know what to handle themselves with Contribute; web developers know when to get involved with Dreamweaver

Benefits for University Faculty and Staff

- Don’t have to depend on outside department to manage web content: no requests for help, no waiting, etc.
- Don’t invest much time learning content management software
- Don’t invest much time posting and editing content
- Can share content management duties with others in department
- Communicate what they want to communicate in timely manner
- Draw more return visitors (thanks to frequently refreshed content) so latest content reaches more people

Benefits for University Web Developers

- Can concentrate on designing and building websites that promote the diverse interests of individual departments and are in synch with the University’s overarching messaging
- Don’t get bogged down with content management tasks
- Don’t have to train faculty and staff how to use professional development software
- Don’t invest much time supporting Contribute
- Can review content before it goes live
- Can maintain sitewide look and feel

- Can centrally implement sitewide changes to Dreamweaver templates
- Can control who has access to what content areas in any page or website



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