



Industry

Government

Customer

British Council

Business Challenges

- A large organization with disparate Web sites around the world
- Duplication of effort resulting in a weak and unpopular online presence
- Online identity compromised by disparate layout and font
- Outdated information on most sites
- Cumulative cost associated with local hosting – grew at a rate of £150,000 each year
- Vast expenses associated with using new media companies and IT staff to update content

Business Solution

Livelink Web Content Management Server

- Web content authoring brought in-house
- A single and consistent online identity both on a global and regional level
- Up-to-date information on all sites throughout the world
- Consolidation of Web sites from 240 to 110, and 80 ISPs to 1
- Expected savings of over £1.3 million by 2005

British Council — Restructuring online presence

British Council is one of the most culturally diverse and geographically dispersed organizations in the world. With 240 Web sites scattered across 110 countries, British Council faced a chaotic collection of disparate Web sites with unrelated content, and as a result, turned to Open Text™ for help. Having deployed Livelink® WCM Server™, the organization has managed to consolidate its Web sites onto one Web hosting location and develop a single online identity. The new solution is now empowering non-technical authors around the world to update content, ensuring each Web site is relevant and enabling British Council to provide up-to-date and accurate information to each of its audiences.

Organization

British Council is a government-backed agency dedicated to promoting relationships between the UK and other countries. Run by the British consulates, British Council has 230 offices world-wide and operates across 110 countries. British Council's value proposition is to provide international audiences with access to the UK's educational services. As a result, its online presence is one of the most powerful tools it has to help promote educational opportunities in the UK to people around the world.

Situation

In 2001, British Council had 240 Web sites scattered across 110 countries with approximately 200 HTML authors providing content from 230 offices around the world. With so many people authoring content there was a considerable amount of duplication. British Council's online identity was further compromised by a lack of agreement on format and layout. The overall result was a weak and unpopular online brand. Furthermore, there was the issue of considerable cost accrual associated with contracting 50 new media companies to develop content, in addition to running the sites off approximately 80 ISPs worldwide.

British Council decided to rationalize the diversity of its sites under one technical design and content standard, and remove those sites that did not meet their primary purpose.

The organization invested a significant amount of resources to find out what its audience would like to see on its Web sites. By conducting market research and polling 40,000 people from a constituency of site visitors, staff and high valued customers, British Council was able to derive a valid analysis from the results. The research found that the sites had an unpopular, inward looking format that was weakening the British Council trade name.

British Council appointed a media design company to define the Web pages' online identities and layouts. The pages were designed to work across all cultures, ranging from the complex East Asian layouts to the more open, clearer Northern European styles. International considerations, such as the inability to drop Japanese characters straight into an Arial font, had to be taken into account.

"At the end of the day, this project was not just about technology; it was also about re-engineering the online presence of a complex and diverse organization. We love Livelink WCM Server as it has helped us to achieve our objectives, and it is extremely easy for our Web content providers to use."

**Ian Barnes, Global Web Manager,
British Council**

Solution

Ian Barnes, Global Web Manager for British Council, takes up the story, “Livelihood WCM Server was initially tested on our more complex language Web sites, such as the Japanese and Indian sites, to test the software, designs and editing standards. It quickly became evident that Livelihood WCM Server was extremely capable of handling complex language Web sites.”



The unique object-orientated approach of Livelihood WCM Server when handling data makes it easy to separate content from the display. As a result, British Council could develop one template with a single brand identity, whilst content authors could work on the same item in multiple languages. Content could then be edited in any number of languages, using different browsers and channels, such as WAP phones.

Because of the easy-to-use interface, Livelihood WCM Server allowed British Council’s non-technical authors from around the world to easily produce and update Web content. The solution was swiftly deployed into other countries, training a new class of writers in marketing and communications departments. The system was scaled to cope with 800 authors producing content for 150 Web sites, all of which share one set of templates and the same technical infrastructure.

Ian Barnes comments, “We have found that the Livelihood WCM Server solution has scaled well, especially in consideration of the complex nature of the project. It is a relatively cost-effective solution for our truly enterprise-wide requirements.”

Benefits

Once the project is complete, British Council will have Web sites available in 110 countries, offering the services of 40 departments. Authors from all corners of the world are now writing Web content for the organization, right through from Chile and China to Ghana and

Kazakhstan. This means that British Council can offer Web pages in a broad variety of languages, ranging from English to Farsi and from Italian to Azeri. The organization will be launching all Web sites with content available in the national language.

Ian Barnes continues, “We chose Livelihood WCM Server because we needed a robust Web content management solution with advanced functionality to suit our demanding requirements. Multilingual capability was essential due to the variety of languages the sites needed to be published in. For example, in the Arabic language the menus and texts need to be read from right to left, and this can be especially challenging in comparison with conventional Web pages! We have also deployed a multilingual search capability for each language.”

British Council is a non-profit organization, and calculation of return on investment from the Web project is based on efficiency savings. By comparing expenditure accrued with the new solution in place to the estimated costs that would have been incurred if the project had not been undertaken, British Council estimates that by 2005 it will have saved over £1.3million. A large amount of this money derives from consolidating the organization’s disparate sites and 80 ISPs onto one Web hosting location in Manchester, and just one ISP.

By splitting the presentation layer from the content, British Council has been able to ensure a consistent template to strengthen and protect its trade name. Meanwhile, the easy-to-use interface means that Web content is no longer outsourced to new media companies or produced by IT staff. Instead, non-technical authors can easily administer and manage the content. As a result, Web content is now updated significantly faster and at a lower cost. Ultimately, this benefits the Web site visitor who can enjoy a better online experience through a regularly updated and tailored Web site.

Ian Barnes concludes, “At the end of the day, this project was not just about technology; it was also about re-engineering the online presence of a complex and diverse organization. We love Livelihood WCM Server as it has helped us to achieve our objectives, and it is extremely easy for our Web content providers to use.”



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