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How we helped the NorthSide Sun newspaper company migrate to the latest Drupal version

The NorthSideSun didn't leave a stone unturned to stay ahead of the competition in the digital age. So, when it came to migrating its website to Drupal 8, it knew that only a reliable and experienced partner could help them make this happen. We are happy to have migrated them!

Drupal partners Case Study

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About The Client

The NorthSideSun Newspaper company is a popular and trusted source for news, entertainment, and community events in the Jackson, Mississippi area. With 49 years of staying in the business, they were looking forward to providing a better experience to their viewers. Their digital platform had been running on an outdated version of Drupal which caused slow page loading times, poor performance, and a lack of customer engagement.

The Challenge

The NorthSideSun was running an outdated version of Drupal 7 and desired to upgrade to the latest Drupal 8. Consequently, they faced a huge issue in updating their copious contributed modules as well as custom code on top of having multiple years' worth of content that needed migrating.

In addition to the aforementioned, some of the major challenges include:

1. Initially, NorthSideSun had been developed with the ASP.NET cms platform blockbox.cms that housed 22 websites within it.

2. We had to migrate blockbox.cms to Drupal 7 in pantheon.io.

   a) Due to the following reason, the client expected the following solution.

   - Ads Integration
   - Custom Functionality
   - Low Cost Hosting

3. Content migration from unstructured XML file to Drupal 7 Contents, Taxonomy, Users, Comments, Orders.

4. Migrate all websites to Drupal 8 with Multi-Domain Website on AWS Server.

5. Complex Custom Functionality Implementation.

6. Performance Lag and frequent site down in the earlier stage of Drupal 8.

Solution Options

1. Build a custom XML migration script to migrate content from blockbox.cms to Drupal 7.

2. Mirror Server Implementation on AWS for preventing frequent site down.

3. Auto Scaling Implementation using AWS from where the Server connects to WFS to RDS to the git repository. This is to decrease the load of requests.

Our Useful Findings

Our team of highly-trained and certified Drupal migration specialists examined the website at length to recognize key points. After our extensive research, these were some of the essential discoveries we made:

1. Despite its fluid front-end performance, the website was powered by an outdated Drupal 7 version.

2. To ensure the site's ongoing success, it was essential to upgrade its core module.

3. After upgrading to Drupal 8, it was almost certain that technical difficulties would arise.

Our Approach

To begin with, we needed to upgrade all the contributed modules and custom code so that it would be compatible with Drupal 8; luckily, this process was fairly simple and only took us a couple of hours. The next approach was to migrate the existing data and content, which was probably the most challenging part of the process.

Drupal 7 to Drupal 8 - The Upgrade

1. Here is how we moved NorthSideSun to the latest Drupal 8

2. Analyzed the migration process and prepared the specifications

3. Take a fresh setup for Drupal 8 and install the necessary modules

4. Switching Drupal 7 to Drupal 8 migration with AWS Server

5. Work on the Content-type and Field Creation

5. Export the data from Drupal 7 (using the view data export module)

6. Apply the ETL process

7. Install the Migration, Migration UI, Migration Plus, and CSV Migration modules

8. Write the custom CSV migration script for all the content types, images, media, orders, products, etc,.

9. Import the data using Drush Comments

10. Install Multi Domain module (3 - Drupal 7 websites to 1 set of servers) for cost efficiency for 6 sets.

11. Once data are ready, work on the UI part

12. Work on the UI development and move it to QC

13. Work on the SEO and Performance Optimization

14. Once it is confirmed from the Client end, Setup Live server

15. Do the final Content Migration

16. Test the website (Recognition testing)

17. Move it to Live to the Latest Drupal 8 version

Custom Functionality Implementation

1. News Post

2. Once a user posts content, it is reviewed, and the end user earns a Micropayment. This credit is later converted into money with a bonus on the basis of Views, Comments, and Likes.

3. Leader Board

4. Workflow Implementation

5. Multi Theme Implementation has been customized

6. Flex Theme

7. Standard Theme

8. Recurring Payment (Braintree Programming) works on both print and online subscriptions.

9. Mailchimp Integration with article and edition posts.

10. Scheduled publishing - To automatically publish the schedule.

11. Notifications - Emails and SMS are notified using Twilio.

12. Friends Post / Neighbor Post

13. Add a list of friends, and you can view the friend's posts. Once a user posts content, the end user earns a Micropayment. This credit is later converted into money with a bonus on the basis of Views, Comments, and Likes.

14. Add a list of neighbors depending on your location, and you can view the post. Once a user posts content, the end user earns a Micropayment. This credit is later converted into money with a bonus on the basis of Views, Comments, and Likes.

15. Front Page Shuffle - Shuffling the content with time duration, which is done in the backend configuration.

16. Social Media Posting - Automatically posting content in Twitter and Facebook.

17. Cross Domain Posting - Posting content within the 22 websites.

18. Flipbook integration - Displaying books using FlipSnack as a PDF on the website.

19. Getting news from AP news websites and posting it on our websites based on the locations.

20. Broad Street ads Integration - Switching the gads section to Broad Street ads Integration.

21. Web Application Firewall (WAF) - Used for controlling the Bot access.

22. Progressing Web Application (PWA) - Implementing all 22 websites for easy access in mobile devices for both Android and iOs.

Conclusion

We successfully migrated NorthSideSun from Drupal 7 to Drupal 8 with the custom functionality as per their requirement. We were very pleased with the outcome of our work, and we are proud that the website is running smoothly on its new version. In addition, we improved the website's performance, making it more efficient for users to navigate. We hope that our work will have a positive impact on the NorthSideSun!

Other Useful Resources

- Case studies
- Whitepaper
- Fact Sheet
- eBook
- Blog
- Webinar
- Infographics

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