

Corwin Press

Client Success: Sitefinity Website Implementation and Integration. Drupal Content Migration.

SNAPSHOT



ORGANIZATION

With corporate headquarters in Thousand Oaks, California, Corwin offers books, training and professional development resources for educators.

CHALLENGE

Rescue a failed website implementation project attempted by another provider. Re-engineer a complex website to coherently present a broad portfolio of more than 3,000 products and services. Improve the online experience for customers while streamlining website maintenance for staff.

STRATEGY

Collaborate with leaders at Corwin and Sage Publishing to design and deploy a modern website that is tightly integrated with backend information systems including product information management and customer relationship management systems. Deploy reusable templates, widgets and automation to simplify maintenance. Enhance product search and eCommerce experiences for customers.

RESULTS

Visus quickly delivered a modern website that makes searching, browsing, and purchasing products and services easy for customers. Marketing staff is now self-sufficient to make day-to-day changes to the site without relying on help from IT personnel. The transition from the old site to the new was seamless for customers and staff.

Corwin, an affiliate of Sage Publishing USA, provides professional development solutions including books, consulting, events, online courses and other resources and services for K-12 educators. Based in Thousand Oaks, California, Corwin has more than 3,000 books in print that support millions of educators.

Corwin frequently adds new content to its website, impacting navigability and complicating maintenance. The company recognized the need to improve the system to make its website more intuitive for customers and easier to manage by staff. Corwin worked with Visus LLC to redesign a new website based on the Progress Sitefinity content management system so they could provide a more consistent and cohesive experience.

After consulting with Corwin and designing prototypes for a new website, Visus offered to implement the Sitefinity solution, replacing the previous website, which was based on Drupal web content management system. However, Corwin initially partnered with an offshore technology partner the company had an existing relationship with, and challenges arose while working with that supplier.

Corwin sent the code to the professionals at Visus and asked them to look under the hood to provide some indication of how the project was proceeding. “We needed to start from scratch,” says Chris Wozniak, technology product manager at Sage Publishing. “They told us they could implement the solution and also extend the functionality and integrate it with our backend systems. This would give our marketing team the ability to be more self-sufficient so they could make updates to content and create new pages without needing to involve the IT department at Sage. We loved that strategy and brought Visus in to turn things around.”

The Visus team worked closely with product managers and other leaders at Sage Publishing and Corwin, collaborating to design and deploy the complex new website. “I am impressed with the Visus team’s ability to pull ideas out of a large brainstorming group and help us come up with a solution, fixing things for which we didn’t even know to ask,” says Elena Nikitina, vice president of marketing and channel development at Corwin. “They are excellent at explaining technical concepts to non-technical people.”

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The implementation needed to integrate with backend systems that manage the data of the books Corwin publishes—including details about authors, synopses, and content previews. It also managed and automated the presentation of information about services Corwin offers, such as conferences and training for educators. The Visus team led the addition of a contemporary eCommerce component, enhanced search functionality, integration with Sage’s customer relationship management (CRM) system, and

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synchronization of Sitefinity with data points from the company's product database.

In approximately one year, Visus fully implemented and integrated a modern solution that allows customers to enjoy a more streamlined user experience and enables non-technical users on Corwin's marketing staff to make updates to the website on their own without help from Sage's IT department.

"There was a lot of excitement around the company that we finally got this modern website with up-to-date technology to support our products and how we present information to customers," says Nikitina. "We love the look and feel and ease of use of the new site. Visus definitely succeeded in helping us meet our business objectives with this project."

"The Visus team's extensive knowledge of the technology, technical ability to both advise and implement, and their flexibility in approach has allowed us to meet the needs of our business stakeholders and customers," says John Shaw, chief technology officer at Sage.

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Expanded Capabilities Benefit Customers and Staff

Corwin does not have an IT team, so marketing personnel were previously reliant on the IT department at Sage Publishing whenever they needed to make changes to site content. The need for this decreased significantly with the Visus solution and implementation. "Members of our marketing team are much more self-sufficient to make day-to-day changes to the site without filing help tickets with Sage IT," says Amber Tolan, senior web manager at Corwin.

Visus created reusable templates and helpful widgets that give Corwin's marketing personnel control over things such as menu structure, menu updates, creating landing pages, and adding new products and services to the site. "It's very

simple to show marketing team members how to do these tasks themselves," Tolan says. "The self-service capability combined with custom workflows provide a balance of autonomy and governance that is a game-changer for us."

The Visus team worked with Corwin's marketing staff to automate key processes on the website by tightly integrating Corwin's product information system with Sitefinity and identifying crucial data points. With the new Visus solution when new books are added to the product database, relevant data is sent via API to Sitefinity so the information displayed on the website is always up to date.

"Visus created widgets that automate and streamline the process of keeping the site up to date," Tolan adds. "For instance, widgets allow our marketing team to pull book content into other landing pages directly from our product database. All the information that gets pulled in is the most up-to-date and does not need to be continually updated."

Widgets also help manage events such as conferences and certification training sessions. "The widgets automatically pull events from the Sitefinity database and adds them to the appropriate pages on our site," Tolan continues. "The system removes events once they have passed so out-of-date information never appears on the site. That eases site maintenance for us."

Along with improvements that simplify processes for Corwin marketing professionals, Visus made enhancements that modernize the site for customers. Advanced search capabilities from Bridgeline's HawkSearch, an add-on to Sitefinity, enable customers to quickly find exactly what they are looking for. It leverages machine learning capabilities to enrich the shopping experience by delivering recommendations about related products and services that other customers found valuable.

"With HawkSearch on Sitefinity, our overall search capabilities on the website are significantly improved from the old experience on Drupal," Tolan says. "Customers can quickly obtain the most relevant results and clearly see the different types of products we have available."

Visus integrated Kibo Commerce to simplify order management and eCommerce for customers. "Kibo eases the complexity of the checkout process by reducing it from multiple pages into one," Wozniak explains. "I like that it is a service we license rather than a product we need to

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maintain and keep up to date. It has a lot of functionality that we and our customers benefit from. It keeps all our compliance and security details up to date. It is very modern and works well with various payment providers so as we move to support different business models, it will adapt. Visus did a good job implementing and integrating this cloud-based service with their Sitefinity solution.”

Corwin serves customers throughout the world, which can make speedy web content delivery challenging. Visus instituted a content delivery network (CDN) so images are loaded from a server cluster that is geographically close to each user’s known IP address instead of from a single image library located in the primary website database. “The CDN that Visus deployed greatly reduces the time required to serve images to end users’ browser, regardless of geographic location,” Wozniak says.

Corwin has a huge user base of customers who used the previous version of the website for years. Company leaders at Corwin wanted to ensure that those users could seamlessly log in to the new version of the website using their existing credentials without creating new accounts. “Visus was very skilled in integrating Sage’s CRM system with Sitefinity for authentication and profile management,” Wozniak explains. “Customers can log in as they always have, and they have the ability to easily make changes to things such as email address and phone number.”

A Sense of Genuine Relief

“Visus really came through and delivered,” Wozniak summarizes. “There was a sense of genuine relief that the site had been implemented after a challenging period. There is a good deal of pride in our ability to provide a modern look and feel on the web for customers. The team at Visus is a pleasure to work with. We can truly trust them. They stick to their word, and they are tremendously flexible to meet our needs. They are a great partner for us.”

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– John Shaw, Chief Technology Officer, Sage

“We have worked with Visus for years,” Nikitina adds. “They are an amazing partner that brings high-level strategic vision while making things simple for us.”

“I am very happy to be able to provide our team with a new approach to our web presence,” Tolan says. “With our previous system, problem solving was limited. The new system opens up opportunities to be more nuanced so we can solve problems in the way we want them to be solved. It’s easier and more efficient for our staff and for our customers. Visus is a great development partner for us. They bring a high degree of professionalism and a willingness to go above and beyond for us.”

“Visus has been a critical partner to Sage while transforming our corporate websites to the Sitefinity platform,” Shaw says. “They feel like an extension of our own team.”

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