



Case study

Client: Gloucester Shire Council
Industry: Local government
Last updated: 15 April 2015

Gloucester Council reaches out to residents and visitors

Summary

Gloucester Shire Council creates a fresh new site to reach ratepayers, residents and visitors wherever they are.

Business need

Gloucester Shire plays host to two seemingly divergent ideals: the area boasts significant natural assets and is also the focus of intense activity from the resource extraction industry. Tourism makes an important contribution to commerce and employment in Gloucester, and the town is a gateway to the World Heritage Barrington Tops wilderness area. While contentious, the mining industry is seen as a vital revenue generator by all levels of government.

The Council website plays a key role in the dissemination of local information for residents and visitors, such as updates about natural events and closures in the area's road network, as well as news and a busy calendar of events. With the ubiquity of the mobile internet and its importance as a channel of communication, the Council recognised the need for an improved mobile experience to broaden the reach of the Council's website across a diverse audience of locals and visitors alike.

Key challenges

Over time, the Council site had accumulated a volume of content that made navigation challenging, as older - but still relevant - information competed with newer additions.

Ownership of the site within the Council had been transferred from staff with a communications focus to the busy IT department, highlighting the need for improvements in the way the site was structured and managed. Existing workloads in IT made the task of managing day-to-day activity on the site a challenge, and commitment to a wholesale redevelopment project was difficult to accommodate.

As with many local government agencies, increasing budget pressures meant that a tightly managed scope was critical, to avoid extensions and over-runs that would delay the badly needed outcomes of the project.

Solution

The Council engaged Multibase's mbase360 team to develop a solution that included all of the elements required:

- Improved website search and navigation, and a new A-Z site index to improve information findability
- A new and simplified information hierarchy for existing information
- A new, responsive and touch screen friendly design for compatibility with all devices without the need for a separate mobile site
- A simple deployment plan that enabled the Council to continue to maintain the current site while the new site was developed, then migrate all of the existing information easily to the new structure
- A clearly defined process for delivery and a tightly managed scope to guard against unknown extras and hidden costs

Results

Feedback from within the Council and from residents has been positive and web statistics for the site are showing steady growth in visitation.

John Harding, Manager of IT Services at the Council, emphasised that the mbase360 team were "very proactive during the design stage of the process, pointing out what other local government sites were doing well and bringing these elements into our design. They helped us to reorganise and simplify what had become an overly complicated site structure, and we're really pleased with the result."

Council staff were involved with the migration of information and the launch of the new site and found the process easy and straightforward.

John's advice to other local government agencies thinking about mobile compatibility would be to "take the opportunity to rethink the site from top to bottom and give your visitors more than one path to the information they need. It's vital to be able to reach your users wherever they are, on whatever device they choose."

Customer profile

Gloucester Shire is a rural community located about 3.5 hours north of Sydney, famed for its tourism values and scenic beauty. The Council contends with some unique challenges, with one of the smallest populations for any local government area in New South Wales, increasing mining activity and a growing influx of city dwellers looking for a 'tree change'.

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