



Sitecore Case Study:



Ball State University – “Most wireless campus in the nation” chooses Sitecore and increases student applications by 38%

Summary

Ball State University, a nationally recognized school with over 20,000 students, was looking to enhance their website to help with student recruiting and other strategic goals. A main priority of the project was replacing their old web content management solution (WCM) with one that better fit with the university's technology infrastructure, that was more intuitive and user friendly, and that could scale to support their 220+ sites.

Sitecore CMS, with its unparalleled scalability and .NET infrastructure, was a natural fit for Ball State. Since the new site's launch in the fall of 2007, Ball State has already seen positive results. These include a significant increase in users updating web content, numerous awards and nominees from collegiate and online publications, and a staggering 38.5% increase in student applications over prior year.

Challenge

Possessing a highly functional, user-friendly site was very important to Ball State. According to Nancy Prater, university web coordinator at Ball State, “The website is often the first place prospective students will go to when deciding on what school to apply. Studies have shown that after visiting a campus, the number one influence on a prospective student is the website.” With

more than 220 sites, however, Ball State knew updating their online presence would indeed be a major challenge.

When Ball State University decided to launch a new brand campaign in 2007, updating their website was at the top of their to-do list. The evolution of Ball State's website was similar to

continued inside

Ball State University Site

www.bsu.edu



www.sitecore.net

Sitecore Case Study:



“Sitecore has built their CMS from the ground up with .NET. This offers tremendous potential for our programmers building web applications, which they can integrate more easily to the Ball State Website.”

**— Nancy Prater
University Web Coordinator
Ball State University**

that of many large universities – it was a site that had grown organically without a cohesive plan. The website’s information architecture needed an overhaul, and their CMS solution from Vignette was outdated and needed to be replaced. For years, the previous CMS had been too difficult for non-technical content managers to use, leaving them to sometimes write web content edits on printed-out pages. In addition, the CMS did not feature true workflow options, leaving editors to publish content immediately without review. With Ball State’s high standards for communications, they were disappointed to find “brand damaging” content, and inconsistent messaging and typos – sometimes remaining on the website for months before being noticed.

Solution

A large part of their website project included selecting a CMS that would better fit their needs. They evaluated several solutions, and ultimately chose Sitecore. According to Prater, “There were so many factors that pointed to Sitecore as a good solution for us, that it may be impossible to pick just one thing.”

In part, Ball State chose Sitecore because:

- **The interface for Web editors is intuitive and user friendly.** The Sitecore interface mimics Microsoft Office 2007, which many content editors on the Ball State campus were using or would be using within a few months. Prater states, “During the selection process, Sitecore demoed very well for ease of use. That was a huge criterion for us.”
- **Sitecore offers a better fit with the technology infrastructure at Ball State.** Says Prater, “The university programmers are knowledgeable with the Microsoft .NET environment. Sitecore has built their CMS from the ground up with .NET. This offers tremendous potential for our programmers building web applications, which they can integrate more easily to the Ball State Website.”
- **Sitecore offers better support for Macs.** Says Prater, “About 25 percent of our students, faculty, and staff use Macs. For whatever reason, not many CMS vendors support Macs - or at least as well as they do PCs.”



**Ball State University Site
Admissions Page**

eduStyle ★ Awards
The 1st Annual eduStyle Higher-Ed Web Awards



sitecore[®]
compelling web experiences™

Result

Ball State launched their new site in October 2007. The initial launch included the most important sections of their website, including pages for academics, financial aid, academic departments, and other audience gateway pages. Ball State is now planning to continue rolling out additional sites so that eventually all 220+ sites will be managed by Sitecore. The new Ball State website has been built upon organized, fully-planned information architecture, and offers an updated look that will be present throughout their sites.

Faculty, staff, and students with various technical skills can now make updates to the website with Sitecore. “With 600 people across the campus making edits, the CMS had to be easy to use,” says Prater. With such a large group of editors, Ball State is assured that their website content stays current.

According to Prater, the new marketing and communications efforts, including the new website, have accounted for student applications increasing 38.5% this year. Prater remarks about the enhanced website, “the site has a fresher, cleaner, more modern look that reflects where we are today as a top quality

university and where we are heading. There are also new or re-tooled sections (About, Campus Life, Admissions, and Academics) that speak to our prospective students, parents, and others who may not know much about Ball State. And, number one, the site is easier to navigate.”

Since the re-launch of the website, Ball State has won numerous awards and distinctions for their website, including:

- **eduStyle award for “Best Overall Site of the Year,”** as determined by a panel of judges surveying collegiate websites throughout the United States. The Ball State website was also nominated for “Best Redesign” and “Best Home Page”
- **collegewebeditor.com award for “Best Student Blog”**
- **Official “Webby Honoree” for 2008,** making them eligible for an award at the Webby Awards - the leading international award for internet excellence.

“Ball State has done a fantastic job of maintaining a consistent user experience while keeping each section of the site fresh and interesting. Well done.”

—Stewart Foss
Founder,
eduStyle Judge Panelist,
eduStyle Awards

continued on reverse

Ball State University Site
Newscenter Page



Sitecore Case Study:



“We’re very happy with Sitecore - it allows us to push things further than we ever thought we could...on the technical side, we’ve built a solid foundation for the future. The best is yet to come!”

**— Kyle Parker
Senior Development
Group Leader and
Systems Analyst
Ball State University**

- **Circle of Excellence Award** - Silver Medal, in the “Complete Institutional Web site” category, from the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE)
- **Award of Merit in the Internet/Web site category**, from the Admissions Advertising Awards, given by the Admissions Marketing Report.

The website has also caught the attention of news publications and sites like Content Marketing Today, whose reporter Newt Barrett states, “the [Ball State websites] represent the very best of content marketing. The school is creating intrinsically valuable content and using the Internet to make it available to researchers around the world...the quality of their content suggests that this is a school you might choose instead of Harvard or Stanford”

A national survey by Intel Corporation of US universities and colleges rated Ball State the #1 wireless campus in the nation. With its entire campus completely wireless since 2003, and its award winning websites powered by Sitecore, Ball State possesses online capabilities that are virtually unmatched in the collegiate world. When discussing how Sitecore has contributed to Ball State’s remarkable online capabilities, Kyle Parker, Senior Development Group Leader and Systems Analyst at Ball State, says “we’re very happy with

Sitecore – it allows us to push things further than we ever thought we could. We’re extremely proud of our new site and how it reflects our story – who we are as a university, and where we’re going. We’re getting our message across to various audiences, and the response has been overwhelmingly positive. On the technical side, we’ve built a solid foundation for the future. The best is yet to come!”

Technology Highlights

Solution Special Ingredients:

Community Server for blogs

Google Search Appliance for search

Internally developed calendar



Sitecore’s Web Content Management System (CMS) and portal software solutions enable companies to deliver compelling web experiences. Sitecore’s award-winning CMS software makes it easy for businesses to create and keep up-to-date dynamic, full featured Web sites of all types. Sitecore’s industry leading flexibility and scalability allows companies to better leverage their content to improve customer experience and drive business growth.

Thousands of public and private organizations, including national governments and Fortune 500 companies utilize Sitecore solutions for their Web sites. These organizations have created and now manage over 5,000 dynamic Web sites with Sitecore including Microsoft, Sara Lee, Siemens, Toshiba, Omni Hotels, Computer Associates, WebTrends and Atlanta Falcons. Sitecore has offices and representatives in more than 50 countries around the world.

Sitecore
www.sitecore.net

Ball State University
www.bsu.edu