



Sitecore
Case Study:



Beliefnet – Sitecore helps to inspire this online community with enhanced social networking capabilities

Summary

Beliefnet knew the importance of selecting the “right” CMS solution for their needs. After choosing Sitecore over fifteen other CMS solutions, Beliefnet has been able to create the type of site they needed for their online community web site. Their results include a huge time savings for the Beliefnet editorial staff and, most importantly, a truly engaging site, with an array of cool social networking features.

Challenge

Beliefnet is one of the largest multi-faith online communities for spirituality and inspiration. Its mission is to help people find and walk a spiritual path that instills comfort, hope, clarity, strength and happiness for people who are exploring their own faith or who are curious about others. Whether traditional, new age, holistic or alternative, Beliefnet is a definitive source of spiritual information presented without a defined editorial point-of-view, and is a leading authority for major news organizations in the US. It covers an exhaustive range of topics and is continually enhanced by its users. A subsidiary of Fox Entertainment Group, Beliefnet is not affiliated with any spiritual organization or movement, and has partnerships with The Wall Street Journal, Chicken Soup for the Soul, and Fox Faith.

Previously, Beliefnet had implemented a CMS to support their website nearly a decade ago and was constantly struggling keep up to date with the types of features and new technology that other media sites were releasing. Beliefnet was facing a lot of challenges, and they had done as much as they could do manually with the existing CMS, but it was antiquated technology. They realized they needed to upgrade.

Three goals for the new site included:

- 1. Increase site traffic** based on:
 - A redesigned site with an updated new look and feel
 - Improved SEO, a critical goal for the new CMS
 - Easily updated, fresh content, another crucial driver for a new CMS
- 2. Increase ad revenue.** Previously, targeted ads on Beliefnet.com required content to be duplicated, and ads required manual coding onto each page. This manual process was time intensive, and content couldn't be moved around easily.
- 3. Increase overall editorial efficiency.** Previously, the responsibility for managing content on the website weighed heavily on the technical team. According to Jason Rodriguez, CTO, Beliefnet, “I manage the entire technical staff and all of the projects they're working on. We were not able to focus on greater efforts because we were supporting editors who needed to create and update content, reformat pages, etc.”

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Beliefnet
Site

www.beliefnet.com





“We were able to create the type of site we wanted with the help of Sitecore.”

**—Jason Rodriguez,
CTO, Beliefnet**

Solution

Says Rodriguez, “I had been part of a few CMS implementations in previous companies, so I know it’s a huge undertaking for a company to take on. Selecting the right CMS for our particular needs was very important, so we put out an RFP to have a consultant come in and help us select a product. We wanted an organization to assess Beliefnet as a business and what we needed to accomplish with our website, and help us to determine what we needed from our CMS. Our requirements were that the organization be technology agnostic, and also have a strong knowledge of the CMS solutions on the market.”

Beliefnet partnered with Digitaria to write a CMS RFP, which was submitted to fifteen different CMS vendors. They started to get responses back, and were able to quickly narrow down to five CMS solutions. Says Rodriguez, “On our own, we started to research some sites that are using Sitecore. I was struck by how different all of the sites were – regarding their look and feel, as well as how content was presented. My first impression was that Sitecore does an excellent job of separating the data and the presentation layer.” As a next step, Beliefnet signed up for a Sitecore demonstration, and they were “blown away” by the presentation.

Rodriguez knew that selecting the right CMS was a huge decision. Says Rodriguez, “We couldn’t afford to get it wrong.”

Sitecore was selected based on the following reasons:

- **Price:** The price point was right for Beliefnet’s budget.
- **Solid company:** Beliefnet felt that Sitecore seemed like “the” up-and-coming company, with the best technology fit for their needs. They also felt that Sitecore’s list of clients was in the right range for Beliefnet.
- **Good technology:** For Rodriguez, one big factor was that out of the box, none of the commercially

available CMS solutions were going to do exactly what they needed, so he knew they would need to customize whatever CMS they chose. “With Sitecore,” says Rodriguez, “I saw how easy it was to change and customize the solution, and I was also impressed when I saw what some of the existing Sitecore clients had done. I felt very comfortable knowing that we would be able to create the type of site we wanted with the help of Sitecore.”

Result

Working with Sitecore partner Digitaria, Beliefnet overhauled the front and back-ends of the site to provide improved accessibility for both the Beliefnet staff and the end-users. The installation of the Sitecore CMS simplified management of content and streamlined the process for the content administrators. New publication guidelines and specifications are automatically enforced through the CMS. The sophisticated tagging system built into the new design gives Beliefnet the ability to constantly rotate content—which prevents important information from being buried into obscurity by the sheer volume of articles and media on the site. The new site has created huge time savings for the Beliefnet editorial staff.

Beliefnet has more than 12 million newsletter subscribers and averages between 2.5 and 3 million unique visitors per month. Since redesigning their site and integrating Sitecore, Beliefnet has received the National Magazine Award for General Excellence Online.

Technology Highlights

- Custom poll module built by Digitaria
- Custom tagging system for the Beliefnet editors
- The ability to customize modules to appear only based on sections and content type
- The ability to integrate with a 3rd party social networking platform



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 update dynamic, full-featured websites of all types. Sitecore’s industry leading flexibility and scalability allows companies to better leverage their content, 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 websites. These organizations have created and now manage more than 20,000 dynamic websites with Sitecore including Microsoft, Sara Lee, Siemens, Toshiba, Omni Hotels, Computer Associates, ISS and Atlanta Falcons. Sitecore has offices and representatives in more than 50 countries around the world.

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