



Sitecore Case Study:



GuideStone – Finding Value in Turbulent Times

Summary

Founded in 1918, GuideStone Financial Resources is a diversified Christian financial services provider of retirement, insurance, investment management, and executive planning products and services to the evangelical Christian community including churches, ministries, hospitals, educational, and other institutions.

Today, GuideStone Financial Resources manages over \$7 billion in assets and enhances the financial security of ministers, employees and seminary students. They also help retired ministers and widows with financial assistance through their Mission:Dignity ministry.

Challenge

GuideStone's site had originally been developed in the late 1990s, so there was a limited content management system in place, and the design and code were in need of updating. Site visitors—including new prospects and returning customer—often found it difficult to find the information they were looking for.

Without analytics, custom messaging and segmentation capabilities, adjusting the site with new information that aligned with user usage patterns was impossible. Integrating web-based applications also proved difficult.

In the previous environment, content editors in each of GuideStone's six marketing departments, amounting to roughly 40 editors total, would have to request content changes through the company's IT department. This resulted in very slow response and development time as the content went through multiple stages before being approved for the site. Often by the time edits were completed, the content was already out of date.

With all site changes dependent on the IT department, GuideStone sought a solution

that would allow them to achieve their goals by putting the website into the hands of the marketing team. They also wanted to communicate the company's new position with an updated look and feel, while engaging customers and prospects.

Solution

GuideStone turned to Innis Maggiore, their existing advertising agency, to help them redesign their site and implement an effective CMS solution. Innis Maggiore, the nation's leading agency in the practice of positioning, began their search for an enterprise level CMS. After evaluating several solutions, including Microsoft Office SharePoint (MOSS), Innis Maggiore felt that Sitecore was the best fit for GuideStone's needs, based on the key functionality such as unlimited and flexible workflow templates, the developer's UI, and XML handling and sharing of content.

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GuideStone
Site
www.guidestone.org



Sitecore Case Study:



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**—Toby Cupstid,
Strategic Project
Director, GuideStone**



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**—Mark Vandegrift,
Principal, Web & Digital
Services, Innis Maggiore**

According to Mark Vandegrift, Principal, Web & Digital Services, Innis Maggiore, “While MOSS has worked well for GuideStone as an internal, file sharing system, in order to meet their goals, GuideStone needed a CMS that would provide a solid integration foundation—which is Sitecore’s strength.”

The GuideStone project was one of Innis Maggiore’s first Sitecore implementations, but with their extensive technical capabilities, they were able to not only create a new site but also contribute code that was incorporated into the Sitecore help manual. Their developmental skills are coupled with marketing capabilities that include information architecture, content creation, and web design.

Says Vandegrift, “We really appreciate Sitecore’s ease of use. We had six authors that required full training on Sitecore after our implementation of the site. Because the site is very intuitive and easy to use it made training a breeze. I think the ease of use can be attributed to the Windows-based functionality that Sitecore uses. Authors that have used a Windows product feel very comfortable navigating the site and rarely run into something they don’t understand.”

Result

Since the site relaunch, GuideStone has moved up from almost 4mm in the Alexa rankings to within the top 700,000 sites, and is now being recognized as one of the best in the industry against leading competitors. With a strong article marketing effort, a focused messaging platform, and ongoing additions to the website, GuideStone continues to achieve business objectives through the web.

According to Toby Cupstid, Strategic Project Director at GuideStone, “Our new site is much more dynamic than our previous site. With the ease of use of Sitecore’s content editor, we have expanded our number of content authors. Publishing new content, images, PDFs—you name it—is much simpler. Sitecore’s workflow process also allows us to provide different levels of governance for publishing content, which is important for us due to certain regulations that are stipulated for parts of our business.”

Other benefits of the new site include:

- **Increased customer satisfaction:** GuideStone’s customers are thrilled with both the general access site and the secure online investment management site. In addition, the sales team was previously hesitant to point prospects to the old website, however, today part of the sales pitch actually includes presenting GuideStone’s various web properties.
- **Ability to put the content in the hands of the marketing team:** Marketing is ecstatic with the messaging segmentation abilities that have been built into their web presence. GuideStone has moved many of their marketing efforts online and now most of their offline marketing efforts involve a focused landing page strategy.
- **Maximized efficiency:** With the previous site it was difficult to integrate web based applications into the site. For example, GuideStone updates content regarding their funds on a quarterly basis – which involves a substantial amount of information that needs to be updated. With the old site, all this information was entered manually. With the new site, Innis Maggiore created an application using Sitecore that automatically imports information from specified Excel spreadsheets and loads this data to the site.



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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