



Sitecore
Case Study:



Hudson Health Plan – Rebuilding their intranet to improve internal communications and employee morale

Summary

Founded in the mid-1980s by a coalition of community health centers, the mission of Hudson Health Plan is “to promote and provide access to excellent health services for all people.” The Tarrytown, NY-based nonprofit organization provides comprehensive medical and dental coverage to more than 85,000 members in New York’s Hudson Valley.

Challenge

Hudson Health Plan had operated an intranet for a number of years to communicate with employees. It was a great concept, but it was not being updated in an effective manner, and, as a result, it wasn’t used much by employees.

A Production Bottleneck

Like many early-adopter intranet projects, the old intranet at Hudson was built several years ago with the only tools that were available at the time: hand-coded HTML pages. To edit existing materials or publish new pages on the intranet required the hands-on efforts of skilled programmers in the Information Technology (IT) department. What was the end result of this process? There was a needless burden on the IT department as well as a production bottleneck for the content contributors.

The problems with the old intranet were more than just a simple manual production issue. “This was really a multi-faceted problem,” said Ted Herman, Vice President of Public Relations & Communications at Hudson. “Due to the production process bottleneck, it actually discouraged us from keeping the information up-to-date on our intranet.”

“On top of the production issues,” continued Herman, “there was the overarching problem of maintaining a consistent brand presentation and design on the intranet pages. The presentation of our brand is very important to us, and on the old intranet it was difficult to maintain the proper look and feel.”

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Solution

Given the challenges they faced, Hudson needed a new method of producing and operating their intranet. Their core team began the process of collecting and assessing the company's requirements for a new web content management system (CMS).

The intranet project was led by the Communications Department, with Rich Byrne, Content Webmaster, acting as the project manager and interface between the communications department, the IT department, other contributing departments, and vendors.

Remembering to Dream

In researching and selecting the new intranet CMS, "our goal was to involve all departments to build a set of minimum requirements for the project," said Herman. "But we also wanted to push beyond the basics. We asked the contributing departments what they aspired to do on the intranet. Under the restrictions of the old intranet, our fellow departments had forgotten how to dream, and so we helped them to imagine what could be done on the new intranet."

Basic capabilities such as posting photographs, and the quick and easy posting of downloadable documents were examples of some advancements Hudson was seeking in its new system.

Streamlining the Process

During the research phase, the need for one critical function became clear—the ability to distribute publishing capabilities to multiple departments. "We wanted to give more direct responsibility to individual departments so they could publish to the intranet themselves," said Herman. "We wanted to be able to designate and train individuals to publish their own content, while simultaneously maintaining control over the quality of the content, the writing style, the grammar, and the overall brand 'look and feel' on the intranet. This was a critical feature, because we didn't want that old production bottleneck problem to simply move from IT to the Communications Department."

Following a rigorous requirements-gathering phase, "we did our due diligence in researching the available CMS platforms, trying to match them to our base requirements and our wish list," said Herman. "Once it was clear that Sitecore was the best content management system for our needs, we contacted them, and they referred us to their implementation partner, mindSHIFT Technologies."

Building the New Intranet

"Implementation was very smooth," reports Herman. "mindSHIFT followed a thorough, step-by-step process

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that was mapped out and agreed upon in advance by both teams. As the anxiety level increased approaching the launch date, the lid stayed on the pot, and nothing boiled over—everything continued to go smoothly. There was, as expected, a curve ball or two, but that’s why we chose to work with mindSHIFT, a company that is tightly connected with the CMS vendor Sitecore. mindSHIFT handled all the issues and made things work for us, so we could achieve our original project objectives.”

After several months of planning and development, the new Hudson Health Plan intranet, “Team.Site,” was launched.

A Smash Hit...Boffo!...Standing Room Only

“Rollout was a major success. We treated it like a product launch,” said Herman. “We gave our new intranet its own brand name: Team.Site. This name had multiple benefits. “Team” is a theme and concept that we use in our internal human resources communications with employees.” By naming the intranet, Hudson was able to market it internally like a product, giving it a memorable identity that resonated with employees.

“There is always some trepidation regarding anything new, so we encouraged department heads and key influencers throughout the company to be champions for Team.Site at the launch,” said Herman. “And then we promoted the results in many ways, one of which was an internal advertisement that read like a movie review, quoting happy and satisfied users throughout the organization.”

Herman and his communications team needed a way to keep the momentum going following the launch. They were regularly updating Team.Site with new content, but they also needed to encourage people to visit the site regularly too. To promote frequent usage of the intranet, they introduced a bi-weekly email newsletter in concert with the launch of Team.Site. This newsletter highlights five to seven stories, such as new product announcements, new hire photos, etc., in each issue. “We track the click-throughs and we know that this email drives readers to visit Team.Site for the full story. That has been a useful traffic driver for the intranet,” says Herman.

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**— Ted Herman,
Vice President of
Public Relations &
Communications,
Hudson Health Plan**

Results

The launch of the new Team.Site intranet at Hudson Health Plan was successful in a number of ways. “It has improved efficiencies in our internal communications, improved the quality of the employee experience, and gone a long way to support an improved morale among employees,” said Herman. “People really like to hear about what’s going on in their company, learn more about their fellow employees, and generally stay involved with everything at Hudson. And Team.Site helps them to stay involved.”

With this Sitecore-based solution from mindSHIFT, Hudson Health Plan was able to achieve multiple goals:

- Update and add content to its intranet quickly and easily
- Increase efficiency in the production process and remove dependence on technical programming staff for simple day-to-day changes on the site
- Implement a consistently-branded user experience across all pages of the intranet
- Increase effectiveness of internal communications
- Enable distributed content editing and publication via workflow features

“One of the things we did right — and it’s a critical component,” said Herman, “was to involve many people across the organization in the planning and development. When Team.Site was launched, they all had a stake in its success, and they continue to contribute to its success. And we couldn’t have done it without Sitecore and mindSHIFT.”



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