



CMS and website upgrades boost subscriptions for online publisher

The client

As publisher of one of the oldest weekly magazines in the United States, this client serves as a progressive and independent voice for political issues, social causes, arts and culture. Their online presence delivers investigative reporting and spirited debate to a circulation of over 145,000 print and 15,000 digital subscribers (2017).

Industry: Publishing

Based: New York, USA

Solutions elements

RWS Digital Technology Services: digital experience platforms (DXP)

The challenge

The poor online experience for this well-known publication was frustrating both the magazine's editors, as they created content, and their subscribers when they tried to access content.

Authors struggled to update articles and other information in their content management system (CMS). This affected the magazine's ability to manage content modules and forms on the back-end, and to provide personalized content that met readers' interests and addressed market trends.

The publication also needed to make their website more mobile-friendly. Static designs and layouts didn't adjust to mobile and tablet display characteristics. Because good search functionality was lacking, users couldn't locate desired content based on their queries. Readers found it challenging to switch between sections and relevant articles. All of these challenges made the website less interactive, affected traffic and contributed to a higher bounce rate.

With the website failing to hold readers' interest and online donations and paid subscriptions declining, the publication knew something had to change.

The solution

The RWS solution was to create an extensive interactive digital platform to meet the varying demographic needs of the publication's mass audience, while improving navigation and search functionality and supporting the publisher's revenue model. It was critical for the platform to address current challenges while remaining flexible enough to accommodate future needs.

The client's content was first migrated from their Drupal CMS to WordPress. Custom additions were created to enhance administrative functionality on the back-end, and search functionality was added with Solr and Amazon Web Services (AWS) technologies.

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Technologies used

- PHP
- WordPress
- MySQL
- JavaScript
- Bootstrap

Third-party integrations

- Solr Search
- Sailthru Newsletter
- CDN EdgeCast
- Facebook Instant Articles
- Piano (Tinypass)
- SFG and PCD subscription management
- Apple News
- Invisibly (Advertise)

From the admin panel, content creators could now manage sections, adapt menu labels, and arrange or shuffle the homepage's modular layout. To make content more engaging, custom page designs were created for articles, author pages, magazine issues and lightbox popups.

A recirculation link was added at the end of each article, allowing readers to better navigate between sections. Infinite article scrolling and floating navigation further improved the user experience.

A microsite was created for travel, donations and events, and a metered paywall limited the number of free articles per user. Finally, a WooCommerce payment gateway was integrated into the site to enable subscriptions.

The results

The stunning results included significant growth in page views, donations, subscriptions and ad revenue, while administrators benefited from more efficient workflows and a more manageable back end. Accelerated mobile pages (AMP) improved content readability, the modular structure of the content enhanced user interactivity, and searching and tracking relevant information became easier.

Measurable results included:

- 48% increase in monthly page views
- 17% decrease in the bounce rate
- 90% relevancy for site searches
- Exponential growth in subscriptions
- An increase in Facebook Instant Article ad revenue

For more on our digital experience platforms

rws.com/digital-technology-services/digital-experience-platforms

About RWS

RWS Holdings plc is the world's leading provider of technology-enabled language, content management and intellectual property services. We help our customers to connect with and bring new ideas to people globally by communicating business critical content at scale and enabling the protection and realization of their innovations.

Our vision is to help organizations interact effectively with people anywhere in the world by solving their language, content and market access challenges through our collective global intelligence, deep expertise and smart technology.

Customers include 90 of the globe's top 100 brands, the top 10 pharmaceutical companies and approximately half of the top 20 patent filers worldwide. Our client base spans Europe, Asia Pacific, and North and South America across the technology, pharmaceutical, medical, legal, chemical, automotive, government and telecommunications sectors, which we serve from offices across five continents.

Founded in 1958, RWS is headquartered in the UK and publicly listed on AIM, the London Stock Exchange regulated market (RWS.L).

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