![Acquia logo]

National Apartment Association Advances Online Strategies to Drive Unified, Cohesive User Experiences

Drupal Commons Integrates Community into Digital Experience, Increasing Site Visits by One Third

As America's leading advocate for quality rental housing, The National Apartment Association (NAA) is a federation of 170 state and local affiliates, comprised of more than 63,000 members representing more than 6.8 million apartment homes throughout the United States and Canada. Its mission is to serve the interests of multifamily housing owners, managers, developers, and suppliers, in order to better serve the rental housing needs of the public. That's a lot of different audiences to communicate with at one time, which is why it's imperative that the NAA has a crisp, clean, easy-to-navigate online presence. But that hasn't always been the case.

The Problem

Having run its website on Microsoft SharePoint CMS since 2007, the NAA had been dealing with an antiquated site for a long time, according to NAA web manager Julie Barden. "The website had a lot of limitations," she said. "For example, we were supposed to be using SharePoint as a CMS, but the way it was set up did not give us access to full CMS capabilities. Plus, our community, which is where people go to chat and exchange thoughts, ideas, and documents, was hosted on a completely different site."

The NAA's online resource manager, Mary Scott, continued, "There was almost no control over the look and feel of our former community site, and since it was also totally separate, people often either didn't know it existed, or they became easily confused. System updates to the community site were also deployed universally by the developer, so there was no way for us to customize them for our specific needs. We knew it was time for a more modern, cohesive look and feel, with more seamless functionality."

How They Did It

With these priorities in mind, the NAA team set its sights on creating a new digital experience for its users—one that would improve the usability of its website and allow members to connect easily with one another. Enter Blue Coda.

The National Apartment Association

→   http://www.naahq.org

→   The NAA is America's leading advocate for quality rental housing.

DREAM IT. DRUPAL IT.
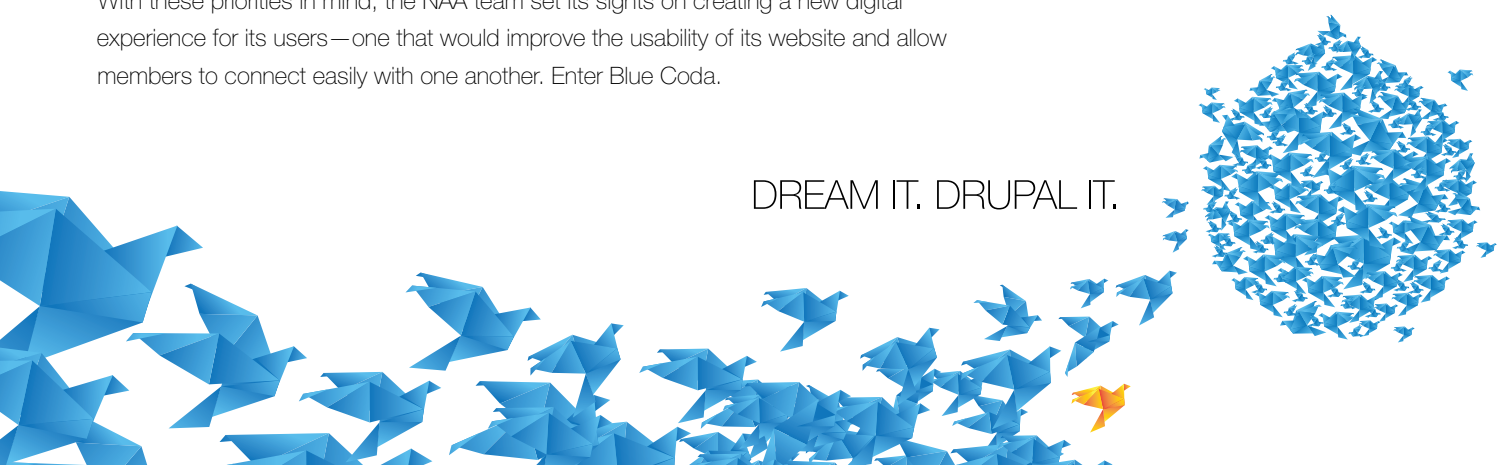
A web strategy, design, and development firm located in Cambridge, MA, Blue Coda took an in-depth look at the NAA's site by soliciting user feedback and developing a deep understanding of how the NAA wanted members to experience the site once it was redesigned. To provide the navigational flexibility the NAA desired, Blue Coda decided to use Acquia's Drupal Commons 3.0 to create the NAA's new social community platform.

As a longtime Acquia partner, Blue Coda had significant experience with Drupal Commons, having worked with Drupal Commons 2.0. While version 2.0 offered key advantages for the new NAA web experience, there were still important components Blue Coda would need to supplement with other Drupal modules to meet all of the NAA's business and design goals. However, all of that changed with Drupal Commons 3.0. As Blue Coda Partner and Director of Technology, Jason Schaffer, said, "Commons 3.0 represents a huge leap forward in usability, speed, performance, and stability, so we're thrilled that the production release of Commons 3.0 lined up perfectly with our launch of the NAA site."

Drupal Commons' robust platform enabled Blue Coda to combine the NAA's master site with its community site, Connect. This integrated web platform gave the NAA a user-centric and cohesive experience for its target audience that exceeded all goals.

In addition, the NAA team also gained a powerful CMS to manage its multiple websites.

"Along with Drupal Commons 3.0, we also collaborated with various Acquia teams to troubleshoot issues and help optimize the performance of the new NAA website," said Darrin Samaha, partner and director of client services at Blue Coda. "This included incorporating multiple site architectures and the Drupal Commons 3.0 community modules, along with integrating the NAA's existing CRM with the Commons installation. Acquia was a great partner to work with given these major overhauls we made to the site."

"Blue Coda's usage of Drupal Commons has given us a level of control over our website that we've never experienced before," said the NAA's Barden. "The new site is not only modern and clean, it's now easier to manage, enabling us to ensure it always reflects our key messages and adheres to the most up-to-date communications objectives of the organization."

The Results

Qualitatively, both Julie Barden and Mary Scott have received a lot of complimentary feedback. Members have commented that it's now much easier to find what they're looking for, and are happy to have the Connect site incorporated into the main website.

Quantitatively, the NAA has increased overall website traffic by 11.5 percent over last year. In addition, the NAA site is up 34 percent in unique visitors and 12 percent in page views so far this year. The numbers have been trending up since the site launched, so the NAA anticipates continued improvement.
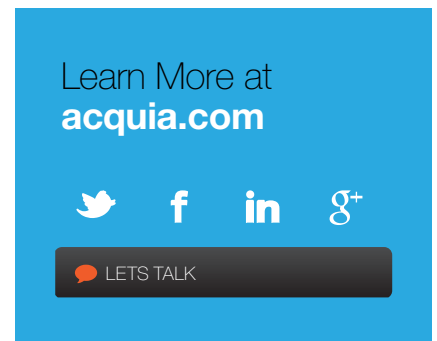
"Drupal Commons has given us a level of control over our website that we've never experienced before. The new site is not only modern and clean, it's now easier to manage."

– Julie Barden, National Apartment Association

The Statistics

→ 170 state and local affiliates.
→ More than 63,000 member companies.
→ 6.8 million apartments represented.
→ Members represent all facets of the multifamily housing industry: apartment owners, management executives, developers, builders, investors, property managers, leasing consultants, maintenance personnel, suppliers, and related business professionals throughout the U.S. and Canada.
→ The NAA provides a wealth of information through advocacy, research, technology, education, and strategic partnerships.
→ Drupal user since 2013
→ Acquia client since 2013

Success Enabled With…

→ Drupal Commons 3.0

DREAM IT. BUILD IT. TOGETHER. **Acquia**