Pac-12 Networks Embraces Drupal to Deliver Fan-Centric Experience

Acquia Cloud Helps "Conference of Champions" Deploy Event and Video-Centric Sites, Increases Fan Engagement

Pac-12 Networks, the content and media home for the "Conference of Champions," embarked on a massive overhaul of its website. Turning to Drupal and leveraging Phase2 and Acquia's expertise in the open source community, the new Pac-12 Networks was up and running within five months, featuring a completely redesigned event and video-centric website that delivers a more dynamic, engaging experience for fans.

Video recap: Arizona State football wins Territorial Cup game against Arizona

The Problem

Pac-12 Networks operates Pac-12.com with a goal to provide a great digital media experience that would make the site a daily destination for fans.

But the former web platform for Pac-12 Networks made innovation difficult. It consisted of a combination of off-the-shelf software that was slow and inflexible, making it challenging to display live updates and publish thousands of pieces of rich media on school sites. And with a large archive of existing content—including videos, news articles, and game stats—located in multiple sources (Wordpress, external services, and the existing CMS for Pac-12 Networks), the network's digital team found it difficult to deliver a unified digital experience to its fans and at scale as the amount of content grew.

"Since we launched Pac-12 Networks, our primary goal has been to make Pac-12.com the go-to destination for the conference's fans by delivering the best content available," said David Aufhauser, vice president and general manager of Pac-12 Digital. "We needed a flexible, unified platform that supported rich, diverse, and engaging content in a scalable way."

Pac-12 Networks needed a *single* content management system that enabled the creation of professional websites with the same high level of performance the conference's athletes exhibit on the field.

How They Did It

Pac-12 Networks wanted the new network of athletic sites to focus on five key areas: team schedules, video, mobile optimization, social media and engagement, and content creation.

To determine how to best engage fans, Pac-12 Networks needed to decide if it should

Pac-12 Networks

→ http://pac-12.com
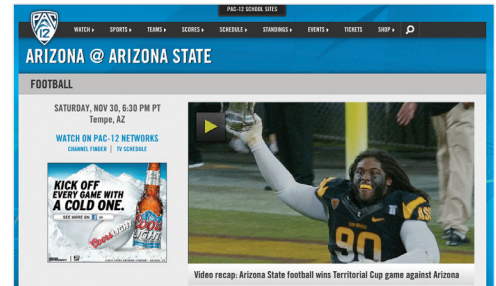
→ Pac-12 Enterprises is the content and multiplatform media company for the Pac-12 Conference, a leader in collegiate athletics that includes 12 of the most prestigious universities in the world.

→ 160 employees

→ Drupal user since 2013

→ Acquia client since 2013

DREAM IT. DRUPAL IT.

stick with its existing content management system (CMS) or build a brand new site using the open source Drupal CMS. Although the existing CMS was familiar, Drupal offered Pac-12 Networks better scalability, security, and significantly more capabilities. The Pac-12 Network selected a one-two open source combination of Acquia Cloud and Phase2 Technology, a strategic web development, design, and consulting agency, to deploy a centralized CMS for its network of sites.

Phase2 worked with Pac-12 to develop and implement a highly integrated, centralized CMS that enables its content editors to store, organize, and deliver the network's vast content resources. By creating a customized central repository for these digital assets, Phase2 integrated a third-party video platform to seamlessly display high-quality video directly on the site, and which automatically stores video and attaches metadata locally in the CMS. Phase2 also built a private calendar portal that school administers can access to enter game schedules and events easily. This portal provides schools with user-friendly scheduling tools developed within the CMS, without Pac-12 Networks needing to grant each school full access to the platform.

To further the fan experience, Phase2 worked with Pac-12 Networks to integrate individual school content into the CMS. Scores, standings, and stats were incorporated through an API, which tags and displays stats and standings in real time. A second API was integrated to pull from each school's athletic news feeds, allowing school coverage to be published alongside Pac-12 Networks content.

Critical to the decision was Drupal's flexibility and ease of integration, especially because there was concern around the migration of historical content and multimedia. But with Acquia and the flexibility of Drupal, customization, and thousands of available modules offered by open source and implemented by Phase2 and Pac-12 Networks, transferring the content was simple. Pac-12 Networks used Acquia Cloud to build the new Pac-12.com sites from the ground up, which allowed it to deploy all content seamlessly, effortlessly, and quickly from the old site to the new ones. Nothing was lost in translation.

The Results

Drupal, Acquia, and Phase2's capabilities allowed Pac-12 Networks to address all five of the key areas critical to its site redesign within just five months. The biggest change was making the athletic events calendar the backbone for the site, resulting in the creation of individual landing pages for all of the 3000-plus annual Pac-12 Conference events, a feat made possible by Drupal's flexibility and scalability.

"The whole idea is that every single event has a home on the web—a microportal—where that event's content lives before, during, and after the game," Aufhauser said.

Selecting Drupal and Acquia also helped Pac-12 Networks achieve another goal: increasing the amount of video on its sites. Thousands of athletic events mean tens of thousands of hours of video that needs hosting on the web. Drupal's flexibility, ease-of-integration, and its centralized platform allowed Pac-12 Networks to migrate all existing video and host all pregame, live-game, and post-game video. The move brought instant results. In the first year on Drupal platform, Pac-12 Networks doubled the number of hours that people viewed video content on the site.

"We've seen incredible growth in the consumption of video, which was one of our key objectives when making the decision to move to Drupal," Aufhauser said.

With Acquia and its new network of Drupal sites, Pac-12 Networks is delivering the fan experience it wanted, one that meets the high expectations of the conference's athletes. In addition to deeper fan engagement, Pac-12 Networks was also able to create a seamless fan experience from site to site, school to school, as a result of a single web, video, and publishing platform. Call it "The Network of Champions."

"The whole idea behind it is connecting with the exuberance of the fans, celebrating the joy before the game, during the game and after the game with us. We're bringing these sports forward to our passionate fans with tens of thousands of hours of on-demand video."

– Mark Kramer, Head of Technology, Pac-12 Enterprises

The Numbers

➔ Doubled number of video hours viewed in first year of moving to Drupal

➔ More than 3000 events covered annually

➔ More than 750 events streamed and broadcast on TV

➔ Another 500–600 events streamed online exclusively

➔ Tens of thousands of hours of archived video content

Success Enabled With…

➔ Drupal 7

➔ Acquia Cloud

➔ Website development by Phase2

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