SAÏD BUSINESS SCHOOL CONNECTS CAMPUS, CREATES ONLINE COMMUNITIES

Collaborative development of an innovative online community to support learning, discovery, and problem solving

Saïd Business School, University of Oxford is dedicated to developing a new generation of business leaders and entrepreneurs. The School conducts research not only into the nature of business, but the connections between business and the wider world.

In 2013 the *Financial Times* ranked The School's MBA 24th in the world. The School is ranked in the top 10 globally for student diversity, and its executive education programmes are ranked number 1 in the UK and 7th in the world.

The Challenge

Saïd Business School needed to make its websites more effective, more attractive, and more manageable. It had a range of legacy sites, all built on different platforms, none of which allowed The School to make the most of its online presence. The goal was to produce a first-class online experience for visitors, students, staff, and faculty.

The School wanted a common platform for current, new, and future web projects. It was important that a new content management system would stay current with advances in technology and educational delivery systems whilst supporting an environment where requirements often change quickly.

The School also wanted to simplify content management so staff members could communicate more effectively with students, faculty, and executive education programme participants. To this end, The School wanted to develop a single platform to share content across all of The School's sites to eliminate redundant content creation. Throughout the project, content was viewed as an enterprise asset, and all the sites in the new School web estate have been developed with enterprise-wide data in mind.

Four websites were delivered, with the following requirements:

- **The public website** needed to enhance The School's reputation, support its brand values, enable all site visitors to find the information they need, and encourage site visitors to come back to the site and read more.

- **Executive Education extranet** was required to be a participant portal and learning management system, configurable to make each programme relevant and unique.

- **Saïd Business School intranet** needed to be a site that was easy to navigate and to locate information. It also needed to allow online group creation.

- **GOTO** needed to be a completely new learning environment that creates and enables an online community to support learning, discovery, and problem solving. Global Opportunities & Threads: Oxford (GOTO) is an integral element of the MBA course, a commitment to lifelong learning for alumni, and a flagship School initiative.
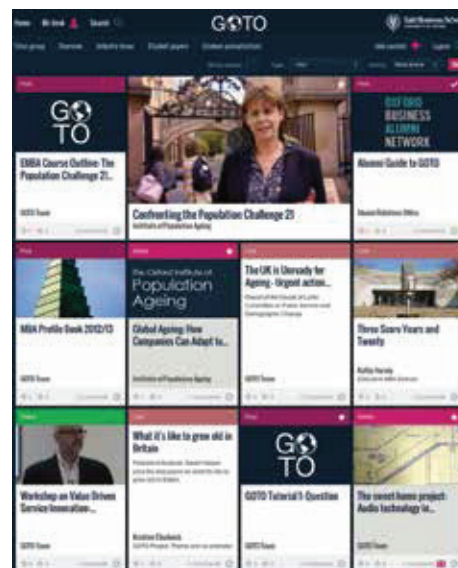
COMPANY INFORMATION

- Saïd Business School
- www.sbs.ox.ac.uk
- UK's leading business school
- Executive Education programmes ranked no.1 in the UK
- Industry sector: Education.
- World-class Business School, embedded in a world-class University, tackling world-scale issues
- 250 Employees
- Drupal user since 2012
- Acquia client since 2012

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How They Did It

The School's IT strategy encourages using open-source software wherever possible, and embraces principles of open architecture, public protocols, modularity, an enterprise-wide data perspective, rapidly increasing bandwidth, and scalability. The IT team conducted vendor reviews based on these principles and selected Drupal as The School's preferred content management system.

The project had a delivery timeline of 11 months. This aggressive timeline would be accomplished by The School's intention to follow an agile development strategy—delivering continuous improvement rather than adopting a single go-live strategy. This project architecture called for rapid prototyping and a scrum development approach, which saw regular and repeated delivery of useable code.

To meet the aggressive project timeline, the internal IT team sought assistance from the following partners:

- **Acquia** provided the project management, Drupal consulting services, and technical support.

- **One** designed all four sites, designed the information architecture for the public site and the intranet and, along with The School and Acquia, designed and refined the GOTO concept.

- **Pronovix** provides the Drupal development resources.

"We were introduced to Acquia via the Drupal Community and took up references with their existing clients as part of the selection process," Sue Rogers, IT Director, Saïd Business School.

For the GOTO project, Acquia recommended an innovative approach to development and user acceptance testing. Acquia, developers from Pronovix, designers from One, and members of the internal project team took part in a two-week onsite micro-scrum, working through development issues in real time to ensure that the first phase of the site was live in nine weeks. The onsite scrum enabled issues to be identified and resolved quickly. It also allowed the team to gain the early buy-in of site managers and content contributors during the testing phase.

"Saïd Business School's strategy was to build an integrated infrastructure to cover all digital requirements—rather than a series of discrete web projects. Drupal and Acquia have helped us achieve this."

– Sue Rogers, IT Director, Saïd Business School

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The four projects had different complexities:

- **Public website** would be a rich, media-heavy site with finder-based navigation and parallax scrolling.

- **Executive Education extranet** required multiple standalone, co-branded sites; extensive use of Drupal organic groups; complex notifications and permissions engine; workflow and business logic to support programme-specific data capture; and an auto-PDF generation for the programme calendar.

- **Saïd Business School intranet** would use a central user-profile server, acting as an authoritative source of user-profile data, along with extensive use of groups and group inheritance and drag-and-drop user tools.

- **GOTO** must support a wide range of rich and structured content types, integrations with Shibboleth single sign-on and Brightcove video streaming; and feature energy-based content ranking, rating, and navigation; faceted search.

The Results

In addition to achieving all individual site goals, the project team has reported many benefits across the whole organisation including:

- The ability to market more effectively to both internal and external audiences.

- A better user experience for administrators, content contributors, students, faculty, and site visitors.

- Removal of the internal IT department from the day-to-day content management process.

- An agile development platform—all sites have been designed to allow continual and progressive improvement.

- Acquia's collaborative approach has enabled the internal IT team to acquire the skills it needs to support ongoing development.

- The School is no longer managing assets separately in content silos.

- Internal team collaboration has improved—teams have greater synergy, sharing skills and resources where needed, and each new project is benefiting from expertise.

SUCCESS ENABLED WITH

- Acquia Network with Support

- Acquia Professional Services (Technical Consultant, Technical Account Manager & Project Management) http://www.acquia.com

- UX, information architecture, site and feature design by One Ltd, http://oneltd.co.uk

- Development by Pronovix, http://pronovix.com

ACQUIA

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The **Executive Education** site has been well received by staff and participants, and has simplified the process of site administration. Staff may clone a new site using the appearance and structure of an existing site as a template. That created an unexpected marketing benefit for The School; it is now easy for programme administrators to show corporate prospects how their programme will be delivered online. The success of the site will be measured ultimately by its performance in the *Financial Times* rankings—which includes a category for "UI Platform" as part of the Executive Education Programme ranking criteria.

GOTO was launched to support MBA students, The School community, and 10,000 alumni—all creating content and collaborating with each other in a community-based discovery and learning environment.

"The GOTO site is an innovative element of our academic programmes and introduces a new way of connecting with our alumni. When considering some of the biggest challenges facing humanity, GOTO brings together a diverse community of problem-solvers. We are grateful to our IT team, Acquia, One Ltd, and Pronovix for their enthusiasm, commitment, and creativity in delivering a ground-breaking application," said Professor Peter Tufano, Peter Moores Dean, University of Oxford, Saïd Business School.

The **intranet** and **external** site launches followed. The intranet now allows site administrators to add features iteratively, enabling the site to keep pace with changing requirements. The external site will deliver a stunning user experience, a clear and simple information architecture, a rich media experience, and a wide range of new and exciting content.

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