

Pharmaceutical Giant Transforms Digital Presence with Drupal and Acquia

Acquia Cloud and Acquia Cloud Site Factory Provide Flexible, Faster Solution for Delivering Hundreds of Digital Experiences

Recently, a giant in the pharmaceutical industry found that the number of its digital properties had exploded. Most sites were custom developed to support individual brands or markets, and very few shared a common platform. The firm's IT department, convinced there had to be a better way, began a search for a platform. After careful evaluation of all available solutions, the pharmaceutical company sought to standardize on Drupal for all its commercial sites.

Quality, security, and scalability were key considerations in the selection of Drupal, as were speed to market and lower cost. In the end, two finalists were evaluated with critical use cases. Drupal, with the benefits brought by Acquia, won.

How They Did It

What the company found, both from its extensive evaluation and previous experience, was that open source solutions, and Drupal in particular, were far more efficient and effective than proprietary solutions. A proprietary solution might offer a very large feature set, but in almost all cases, it would require extensive customization to fit a particular use case, adding time and expense to the development cycle. Even when implemented, the solution would not scale past a dozen implementations before budget ran out.

Drupal, on the other hand, provided Drupal core, a lightweight basic site structure, which the company used unaltered on every site. The company's IT department developed a company distribution—a group of additional modules along with configurations, which added functionality required across all sites. Then custom and contributed modules rounded out the needs of each individual site.

Coupled with Acquia, Drupal offered even more. Continuous integration is the gold standard of coding best practices, and Acquia Cloud, a PaaS (platform as a service) offering, is built around these principles. Having a continuous integration environment was crucial for the company.

For a heavily regulated industry, content deployment becomes a big issue. The company needed a solution to deploy content only after extensive scrutiny, to guarantee it always met all regulatory requirements before going live on a production site. Using Jenkins, the open source continuous integration tool, integrated with Acquia Cloud, the company was able to devise a deployment strategy that fully met these needs.



DREAM IT. DRUPAL IT.



Deploying hundreds of Drupal sites required an influx of Drupal talent. Acquia employees are some of the top experts in the field. As consultants, they became so integrated into the company's workflow that the company viewed them as part of their internal team. For example, Acquia staff evaluate vendor plans to assure large projects follow Drupal best practices, saving the company time and money and avoiding problems down the road. Acquia also referred the company to other sources of Drupal talent.

This company's projects range in size from complex, multi-lingual applications to simple one-page sites promoting an event. Many of the sites do not need the almost unlimited flexibility provided by Drupal with PaaS on Acquia Cloud. For these sites, the company turned to Acquia Cloud Site Factory, a SaaS (software as a service) solution.

When developing hundreds of sites, certain patterns became clear. The company created a template on Acquia Cloud Site Factory that included the standard modules they deploy to every site then added as many other features as possible from this pattern. Even security testing for the smaller sites happened in the Acquia Cloud Site Factory SaaS template. Time to market and costs decreased dramatically for these sites.

Scaling sites became almost effortless. As anyone with experience in managing web properties can tell you, websites are not static; they are living, dynamic entities. A small Acquia Cloud Site Factory site, which might not have been deployed with the company's old model, might grow and take on a life of its own. When it outgrew the SaaS platform, it could be exported easily and graduate to the more flexible PaaS platform to better handle its development.

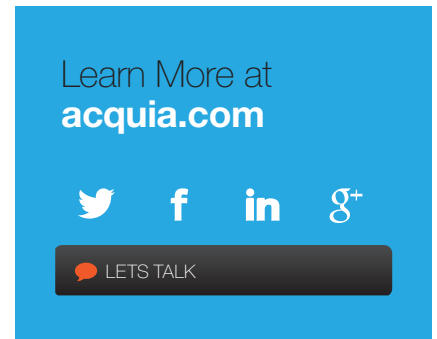
Drupal combined with Acquia's PaaS and SaaS services provided the only technology that could handle all the company's sites, from the smallest to the largest. This was perhaps the most critical factor in the success of the project. The company could develop functionality once and use it on any site, no matter the size, and easily support the needs of all sites, no matter how they changed.

The Results





After 18 months with Drupal, the choice has delivered on its promise. The company has all the quality, security, and capability they seek, with scalability, lower costs, and faster speed to market. In some cases, sites that would have taken months to launch can be delivered with full approval in days. With hundreds of sites launched in hundreds of days, the platform is working very well.


As successful as Drupal 7 has been for the company, they excitedly await the Drupal 8 release. This new version of Drupal offers even more quality, security, and flexibility. With Drupal 8 will come the ultimate in platform excellence, and the investment for migrating the modules needed is nowhere near the cost of switching to another technology. The company is determined to lead the way in moving Drupal 8 forward.

The pharmaceutical giant recognizes the benefits of contributing back to the Drupal open source community. One initiative in which the company's Drupal experts have engaged is Large Scale Drupal (www.largescaledrupal.com), a program run by Acquia. Large Scale Drupal provides a forum for collaboration between the largest organizations using Drupal, where they can work together to develop solutions to common problems through the community process. This group helps to optimize the business model of open source, in which a company invests in code contributed to the community, then reaps many times the original investment in community contributions developing the code further. With the promise of Drupal 8 and Large Scale Drupal, the company expects to be building with Drupal for years to come.



Learn More at
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 LETS TALK

Success Enabled With...

- Drupal 7
- Acquia Cloud
- Large Scale Drupal

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