

VISION AUSTRALIA PARTNERS WITH SITEFINITY PLATINUM PARTNER WEBSILK AND CREATES A NEW BENCHMARK FOR WEB ACCESSIBILITY

Client



Partner



Industry

Not-for-profit

Summary

As the leading national provider of blindness and low vision services in Australia, Vision Australia needed a web presence that was highly accessible to best support its customers and its mission to create a community partnership of knowledge, skills and expertise; to enrich the participation in life of people who are blind or have low vision and their families.

Background

Vision Australia is one of the largest not-for-profit organizations in Australia. They wanted to partner with a technically-driven agency that could help demonstrate best practice design for people who are blind or have low vision.

Vision Australia is recognised as the industry leader for accessibility and its new website needed to reflect this.

Vision Australia also wanted to implement a new Content Management System (CMS) that would help overcome frustrations relating to permissions-based content editing, integration between multiple systems, and a new ecommerce and donations platform.

Challenge

Vision Australia and Websilk set out to deliver a highly engaging and professional design, leaving no stone unturned in their quest to break down barriers in web accessibility.



Websilk selected Progress Sitefinity as the CMS to be used on this project due to its core accessibility compliance and extensibility for developers that enables them to create custom controls that seamlessly integrate with the CMS.

The enormity of the project was clear to all from the very beginning. But the combination of Sitefinity, Websilk's product knowledge and expertise and Vision Australia's accessibility knowledge formed a powerful alliance capable of achieving these ambitious goals.

Moreover, Vision Australia was responsible for three websites: the main corporate site, a website for seeing eye dogs, and its own radio station. Each required a different look and feel while still achieving extremely high levels of accessibility.

The accessibility challenge would require strict adherence to WCAG 2.0 AA guidelines, which covers a wide range of recommendations for making web content more accessible for people with disabilities, including blindness and low vision, deafness and hearing loss, learning disabilities, cognitive limitations, limited movement, speech disabilities, photosensitivity and combinations of these. Previously this meant drab and boring designs, and Vision Australia's Digital Access team wanted to demonstrate that engaging and beautiful design creativity could co-exist with accessibility compliance.

Finally, the site needed an ecommerce component to handle retail transactions for the purchase of products and services (which included integrating with Vision Australia's current POS and inventory systems) as well as donor contributions, a major component of the site.

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Robert Pascale
Technical Services Director, Websilk.

Solution

Websilk is a technically driven web agency that thrives in mission critical and high-stakes online projects. They have worked on some of the most complex technical projects in Australia, and because of their capabilities, was the clear choice for Vision Australia on this project.

When determining the right approach for the Vision Australia website, the Websilk team immediately engaged Sitefinity CMS. “As Sitefinity Platinum Partners we have been working with the team at Sitefinity for some time. We have a deep understanding of the technology and were confident it could handle the customizations as well as have the flexibility for a large scale project,” says Robert Pascale, Technical Services Director, Websilk.

The project kicked off in February 2012 and the Websilk team embarked on a journey that would lead to the development of an incredible 200+ custom Sitefinity controls. Throughout this time Sitefinity developed an intimate working relationship with Websilk, which enabled them to provide the skillset and tools to get through the compliance hurdles in a timely manner. “Over time we’ve built and perfected processes based on our knowledge of Sitefinity. Now, having gone through the compliance process, our skillset is more robust and we are able to help other organizations meet the requirements for WCAG 2.0 AA. This project has opened up a lot of opportunity for us, and we could not have achieved this without the support we have received from Sitefinity,” says Robert.

Through Sitefinity, Websilk was able to segment each page of the site (and sections within each page) with the appropriate permissions for content editing. “We needed to ensure some areas of the site were in total lock-down because accessibility could easily be broken with even the most basic editing. I don’t think any other CMS vendor offers the breadth and depth of segmentation that Sitefinity was able to provide and that was essential to our success,” says Robert.

In addition, Websilk implemented a more effective ecommerce engine to support online retail and donations. Websilk leveraged Sitefinity’s ecommerce platform in conjunction with developing a custom-built payment gateway. The donations journey was

“Websilk and Sitefinity have exceeded all expectations we had of them. Vision Australia has achieved all of our website project goals and highly value our partnership and future relationship with Websilk and Sitefinity.”

Aimee Sanderson
E-communications Manager Vision Australia

also completely redesigned to guide donors through an interactive donation experience. It too is integrated into the ecommerce engine, making purchasing a completely integrated process. As part of the project Websilk also created a mechanism for more effective order fulfilment.

Benefit

The new Vision Australia site went live in November 2012 and feedback has been enormously positive. Vision Australia’s 50,000+ customers now enjoy a revolutionary online platform to interact with Vision Australia’s services.

Sitefinity’s content editing tools have enabled more than 50 content contributors at Vision Australia to harmoniously and effectively work together to maintain the site. The new Sitefinity ecommerce platform has been a huge success, as its integration has all but eliminated manual data entry and reconciliation errors. It has also been the powerful backbone for the new shopping cart and product search engines which has resulted in increased sales and customer satisfaction.

In fact, with the launch of the new site all but complete, Websilk took the opportunity to build a special section of the site for Vision Australia’s annual “Carols by Candlelight” event. Carols by Candlelight is one of Vision Australia’s biggest fundraising events as it is a national TV broadcast highlighting some of the country’s biggest

stars singing holiday favorites. Donations previously have been primarily phoned in. However, with the launch of the new site, Vision Australia was able to promote online donations and this year, and reported triple the amount of online contributions than in years prior.

“The Carols by Candlelight project was not even part of the original plan, but we knew that we could get it done. We built the section of the site within a few weeks and gave Vision Australia an opportunity to drive online donations that was not possible with the previous system,” says Robert.

Websilk also delivered the entire platform on a full responsive design. Again Sitefinity delivered on their needs enabling powerful yet simple tools for this implementation. Websilk’s responsive design ambitions were easily accommodated with Sitefinity.

“We are very pleased with the resulting website and our partnership with Sitefinity. In addition to providing an excellent technology, the team offered us unparalleled levels of support to ensure our project was a success.”

Robert Pascale
Technical Services Director, Websilk.

About Vision Australia

With more than 50,000 clients, Vision Australia is a not-for-profit provider of blindness and low vision services in Australia.

About Websilk

Websilk is a Sitefinity Platinum Partner specializing in the creation of user centric websites and web applications designed to achieve the highest level of user engagement.

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A CMS Solution for Any Mobile Strategy



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