

ITD Internet: Executive Summary

The Idaho Transportation Department launched the new Internet web site in July of 2004. The goals for the new site included a new look and feel, easier navigation of site content, and the addition of several technical enhancements with which to better manage the site and provide better service to the public.

The new site has a better look and feel than the old site but more importantly employs significant technical advances behind the web pages. Content management techniques are now more fully automated.

The old site consisted of static web pages which required a significant amount of labor to maintain. Any time some content changed it usually required that numerous pages be updated to reflect the new changes. There were no intelligent functions built into the old site.

The new site offers visitors 3 ways to view the content

1. Full graphic version which is the default view
2. The Reader-Friendly version which meets the ADA Section 508 guidelines and is formatted on-the-fly in real time from the single content pages into the text only version.
3. The Printer-Friendly feature works the same way. When someone clicks on the Printer-Friendly button the page is formatted from the original content by the Internet application and is optimized for printer output.

Trying to provide 3 unique views of the content using previous technology solutions would have meant building and maintaining 3 unique web pages for every bit of content and would have been much more labor intensive. The new design requires that only one simple HTML page be built and if there is a menu that one menu page is built. Every page is then formatted automatically to each view that the visitor selects.

The site automatically adds all navigation menu items to each page so content owners only have to edit their content and maintain a simple menu list. Everything else is produced by the site.

Project Description:

The ITD Internet site was several years old and needed to be redesigned with considerations for content management, ADA Section 508 compliance, and improved efficiencies in design using the latest technological advances.

The new Internet web site utilizes open source portal technology for core functionality. The site is built on a cascading style sheet (CSS) design and Active Server Pages (ASP).

One consideration was to make the content pages easier to edit for the owners and easier to maintain for the web site administrators. This was achieved through extensive use of ASP and CSS. Now each web page is very basic and when a visitor clicks on a link the various parts of the page, menu, navigation bar and date stamps are added from a script to the basic content and the entire page is built on-the-fly in real time.

Pages are not stored over and over again with copies of the same graphics and static menus but built from pieces.

The CSS allows the site manager to change layout considerations for the entire site in a matter of minutes. Fonts, colors, global navigation, and the entire layout can be changed in a few files and the entire site will be updated automatically.

The Internet web site can be accessed at: <http://itd.idaho.gov>

Improvement to Operation of Government:

Our previous site was comprised of pages that were static in nature. Each page was maintained as a separate document. In the past if someone had 25 pages of content to manage and needed to make a change to their navigation menu the change had to be made to every page individually. Our new pages are actually built dynamically from several component files so that same menu change is made to one XML file and is applied automatically to all 25 pages.

Content owners only need to maintain the content files and the menu file. They no longer have to add code to their pages to manage navigation or other site specific items like fonts and colors. The global navigation and other page attributes are added to each page as they are requested making the entire site easier to update or modify.

Under the old design this would have meant building and maintaining 3 unique web pages for every bit of content and would have been labor intensive. The new design requires that only one simple HTML page and a single simple menu file be produced and maintained. This is a significant savings in labor.

Benefits realized by Users:

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Each of these views offer the user or visitor expanded usability. Pages print better and users with certain disabilities can experience our site content with ease.

Our employees that produce and maintain content only have to maintain the basic content pages and a simple menu file and the site handles the formatting and navigation for them. The site is easier to maintain and users report it is easier than ever to find the information they are looking for.

Cost/Benefit Analysis:

It is hard to calculate the numbers of hours spent in maintaining the old site content. During the conversion from the old site to the new – 10,000 web pages were rebuilt. That would have to happen every time someone wanted to change the site if the pages had remained entirely static.

The new site design allows the entire site design to be changed in a matter of hours by changing only a few pages. This will be an incredible time and cost savings in the future.

The new site content is much easier to maintain and takes less time.

This site presents a good argument for ROI (Return on Investment) but is hard to calculate what the actual savings will be.