

Client



Company:

Northumbria University

Website:

www.northumbria.ac.uk

Headquarters:

Northumbria, UK

Size:

3,500 members of staff and 32,500 students

Solution:

Alterian Content Manager

Results:

1. 99%+ uptime for the University's website
2. No longer a need to produce a printed prospectus due to the site's sophistication
3. Reduced admin costs through online fees payment
4. Strong personalization capabilities means site visitors enjoy an optimal online experience

"The flexibility of Content Manager means that we are not contained by the limits of our technology platform, which in turn means there are no limits imposed on how we evolve our website."

Nigel Bradley
Web Team Manager

Personalized Education from Award Winning Northumbria University and Alterian

Profile

Northumbria University in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UK, creates and applies knowledge for the benefit of individuals, communities and the economy. Through excellent research, teaching and innovation, its goal is to transform lives, making a powerful contribution to cultural and economic development and regeneration, in its city and region, nationally and globally.

The University's aspirations are supported by an innovative application of technology extending to its web communications. www.northumbria.ac.uk is the primary communications channel at Northumbria for its 3,500 staff, 32,500 students and 2.7 million unique visitors per year.

Underpinning all of Northumbria University's activities are the values of equity, diversity, collegiality and a concern for the ethical behavior and welfare of individuals and society.



The Building Blocks of an Award Winning Website

Several years ago, Northumbria University began a restructuring of its web presence that would eliminate the volume of personal servers in use to significantly reduce costs and management time involved with maintenance and ensure consistent branding and navigation. As part of this initiative the website www.northumbria.ac.uk would be consolidated under the control of IT Services and the Web team, but ideally retain the flexibility to enable content population direct from editors and authors all over the university. Jed Woodhouse, IT Services Director and Nigel Bradley, Web Team Manager reviewed the Content Management market for a solution that would enable them to create this single unified and controllable platform.

As Jed Woodhouse, IT Services Director explains;

"We were looking for a solution that would fit in with our plans to change the way Northumbria University's website was structured. Our goal was to differentiate Northumbria through innovation and the application of solutions that enabled the University to process, communicate and engage with prospects and students in a way that was new to any educational establishment in the UK. At this time, the CMS (content management solution) market was polarized into Document Management providers or web presentation solutions with management plugged in. We chose Content Manager from Alterian, as it fit perfectly between these extremes, offering the best of both worlds without sacrificing quality of service."

And it was this quality of service that Jed and Nigel later came to rely upon when, in 2007 the decision was made to move onto a virtual server infrastructure.

"A couple of years ago we decided to migrate onto virtual servers. We were unsure of how this would work but Alterian was pleased to support us, working with us to help deliver our new vision for the website on a system which was new to them too." Jed continues.

A Virtual Solution for Digital Enhancement

Driven by the desire to deliver even greater interactive services to the staff, students and prospective students of Northumbria University, the IT team, headed by Jed Woodhouse, made the decision to implement virtual servers across the campuses. By segmenting each physical server computer into multiple servers so that it has the appearance and capabilities of running on its own dedicated machine, Northumbria University has been able to increase the performance and flexibility of its IT systems. With each virtual server running as a fully-fledged operating system Northumbria has been able to make genuine savings.

Jed Woodhouse explains;

"Moving to virtual servers has afforded us significant cost savings, but in addition we have seen a massive impact on the deliverables of our websites. We can boost web servers on the fly so on critical mass days such as Clearing, our website can benefit from the addition of extra processors to create further resources. For our

Alterian Case Study

Northumbria University

customers, i.e. staff, students and prospects, it has meant we can do fixes in minutes, swapping services around to deliver a consistency of service, speed and reliability that is unparalleled."

Unparalleled Innovation

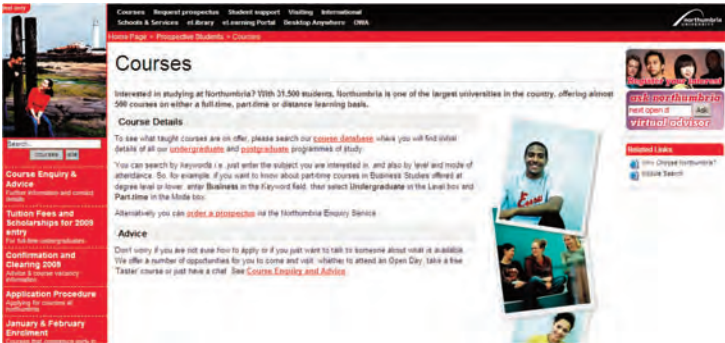
Northumbria University has a passion for bucking against traditional ways of working by putting online communications and services at the forefront of its policy for attracting new students. With 93% of all enquiries coming in through www.northumbria.ac.uk it is the university's most vital communications tool and as such, has become a platform for ground-breaking new innovations including online fees payment, an interactive library system and personalized, intelligent course search profiling. But to get to this point, Nigel Bradley and Jed Woodhouse needed to revitalize the way the website worked.

Northumbria redeployed the website on Alterian Content Manager with new university branding on top whilst under the covers laid a complete structural redesign.

Re-launched with a customer focus that was the first of its kind in the UK education sector, www.northumbria.ac.uk adopted a more commercial and strategic sales approach to the website, looking at how, where and when visitors accessed information. Through the monitoring of site traffic the web team were able to determine that over 90% of page views were directly related to the course information. This demonstrated that the website is essential to the university applications and enrolments.

The website is however more than an information provider. Visitors can create a personalized prospectus based on their own preferences and viewing history. They can build and print off a choice of over 450 undergraduate and 100 masters' courses for an entirely personal introduction to Northumbria University.

In fact the web and IT services team has delivered these innovations so successfully that unlike other Universities, Northumbria's website is so efficiently targeted the University no longer produce a traditional printed prospectus, but rather an editorially driven lifestyle magazine for students that gives a real feel for life at Northumbria and in Newcastle.



MyNorthumbria

Part of the award-winning changes on Northumbria University's website included the introduction of MyNorthumbria which gives students access to personalized information relevant to them from the University's administration systems.



Northumbria University aims to deliver research of international standing, providing problem-solving capacity for business, industry and the community, and exploiting innovative and multi-disciplinary approaches. Research-driven excellence is crucial to our mission; the successful results of the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise represent a strong endorsement of the strength of the University and its capacity to build achievement in the future.

Built with applets working with Alterian Content Manager, MyNorthumbria provides individuals access to choose information that is particularly relevant to their own needs. Personalized intranet access providing information on housing, individual library account and services, online timetabling, references for past exam papers and, not least, online fee payment. This last interactive service welcomed, in its first six weeks live – the online payment of fees totaling £21million - all without any additional administration costs or time lost for students queuing to make payments.

Nigel Bradley comments;

"At Northumbria we want our students to be able to concentrate on the task of studying and living at our university. To help achieve this we implement solutions that save students and staff time, money and resources. As a result within the IT department we are constantly looking at commercial web offerings and thinking 'how can we do that for our visitors?' An example is how we took the idea of associated search suggestions and made it part of our solution i.e. 'you looked at medical sciences courses, so you may also be interested in these related subjects and/or areas of campus, clubs etc.' The flexibility of Content Manager means that we are not contained by the limits of our technology platform, which in turn means there are no limits imposed on how we evolve our website."

It is this philosophy of no limits that enables www.northumbria.ac.uk to make some definite moves away from the traditional remit of a university. As the first university to introduce the use of Google maps, Northumbria are already establishing their position as an authority in education by enabling visitors to access information on competitive universities and colleges and in doing so, are seeing even more traffic through the pages of their own website. See www.northumbria.ac.uk/browse/unimapper

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Northumbria University

The successes of the IT Services and in particular the Web Team at Northumbria have been applauded outside of the University with www.northumbria.ac.uk the recipient of several awards including:

HEIST Award for Education Marketing

The Journal Business Awards 2007

Computing Award 2006 to date – Most IT Enabled Organization

Helping to deliver these outstanding and award-winning services is Jed Woodhouse, IT Services Director with Web Services Manager Nigel Bradley and his team of four developers, two editorial staff from PR and Communications and 150 content contributors based from all over the university.

“Content Manager lets us push out the day to day maintenance and content responsibilities of the website to the people who understand and write the content. For the contributors and the visitors to www.northumbria.ac.uk it means every page is fresh and relevant. For our web team Alterian affords us the freedom to concentrate on the tasks of developing new website functionality that will cut the time and resources, both financial and staff, related to the processes of selling Northumbria as THE place to study.” Nigel Bradley explains.

Northumbria – the Personalized University

The implementation of Content Manager and the introduction of virtual servers have given Northumbria University a strong and stable foundation on which to

build in the future. Since the move to virtual servers, issues have been rare and consistently experience 99%+ uptime. With a reliable working base, Northumbria are already looking at the next innovations that will see an even more targeted and personalized approach to course sales and provision.

Due to demand, staff at Northumbria University will soon be benefitting from the innovations of MyNorthumbria as Jed Woodhouse and Nigel Bradley will extend its service to include a secure intranet portal for University personnel. Serving a significant Human Resources function, the staff version will feature employment history, directory of staff, information on training courses and an online expenses and payslips facility.

The public website will also continue to be driven by the needs and behaviors of their target customers, or future students, Northumbria is busy shaping its website strategy for the next few years as Nigel Bradley concludes;

“We have identified that visitors don’t necessarily view pages in the way we thought but instead tend to jump through the site looking at pieces of information on all aspects of the University at once. Our objective is to make sure we keep them engaged with our courses and services by offering a one-stop approach giving them a single point of entry for everything they need to make Northumbria University their first choice for study.”

Alterian

Alterian (LSE: ALN) empowers marketers with an integrated marketing software platform combining database, online and operational marketing applications on a shared data infrastructure. The Alterian Integrated Marketing Platform makes it practical and cost effective for marketers to use actionable insight to execute an integrated marketing strategy across online and offline channels.

It is the unique integration of analytics, content and execution through our industry leading tools, such as the Alterian Messenger email platform, and the award winning Content Management solutions, which enables marketers to drive a seamless, multi-channel customer experience.

Alterian’s analytically-led software is delivered to approximately 1,000 marketing departments, across 26 countries, and an international network of more than 100 business partners, including marketing services providers, agencies and systems integrators. Its partners, such as Accenture, Acxiom, Allant Group, Cap Gemini, Carlson Marketing, Experian, Epsilon, InfoUSA, LogicaCMG, Merkle, Ogilvy One and Euro RSCG Worldwide, deliver Alterian software alongside their own domain and services expertise to help market leaders such as Princess Cruises, General Motors, Zurich, Astra Zeneca, HSBC, Limited Too, AEGON, Avis, Worldwide Wrestling Entertainment, Dell, Amnesty International and Vodafone integrate marketing processes and drive competitive advantage. For more information about Alterian, products within the Alterian Integrated Marketing Platform or our Partner Network, please visit www.alterian.com.

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test only

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Home Page > Browse > Why Choose Northumbria?

Why Choose Northumbria?

"I've always felt Newcastle was a nice sized city to go to university in - not so small that you'll be sick of it by the end of the first year, but not so large as to be totally overwhelming when you first arrive."

Things you'll love about Northumbria
- from our excellent city centre location, to our student support, there are many reasons why you should Choose Northumbria!

Life at Northumbria
- for information about Students' Union, sport clubs and facilities, Newcastle and the surrounding region etc.

Simply the best
- don't take our word for it, our results speak for themselves.

Radius 5
- key attractions within a 5 kilometre radius of City Campus.

Talking Heads and Northumbria Friends
- video interviews with some of Northumbria's staff and current students.

Cash Back
- enrol with us and receive up to £1,000 per year.

