

Client



Company:

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

Headquarters:

Stockton-on-Tees, England

Industry:

Public Sector - Local Authority

Size:

Local Government website with over 20,000 pages serving 186,000 citizens

Solution:

Alterian Content Manager

Results:

1. Content Manager enables the publication of relevant and timely information pertinent to local citizens.
2. The implementation of Content Manager led to a more streamlined and coherent publishing process for the Council's communications team.
3. The content authors now have direct access to edit, manage and upload new content, with IT now in a facilitation role, rather than as sole practitioners of website changes.

"Stockton Council exists to ensure that the people of Stockton-on-Tees receive services which benefit and improve their lives. We needed to cut the bespoke code from our website, streamline our site structure and content publication process. Alterian Content Manager was ideal to help us create a customer-led website which had the technical robustness to support our 100 content authors, our extensive content repository and our ambitions to improve the delivery of services online."

Neil Atkinson, Principal ICT Systems Development Officer, Stockton Borough Council

Creating a Citizen-led Website with Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

Synopsis

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, in the North-East of England, employs over 8,000 people to serve the 186,000 inhabitants of the Tees Valley area, providing them with vital services from maintaining local infrastructure, to advising and enabling business investment and growth, teaching and learning, leisure and tourism to libraries and social services.

The Challenge

Stockton Borough Council website www.stockton.gov.uk aims to provide citizens, businesses and visitors to the Stockton-on-Tees area an online platform through which to investigate, become informed and initiate action with the essential local services in the region.

Stockton was looking to improve the ease of publication for its internal authors. To achieve this, the council wanted to remove much of the 3rd party developed bespoke authoring technology in place, which was inhibiting content authors from uploading and maintaining content without the intervention of the IT team.

Neil Atkinson, Principal ICT Systems Development Officer comments

'Stockton Council exists to ensure that the people of Stockton-on-Tees receive services which benefit and improve their lives. As increasing volumes of services can now be accessed online and citizens increasingly wish to interact with the council in this way, we began looking at how to make the process easier. This covered not only the publication and availability of content online for visitors to www.stockton.gov.uk, but how easy it was for content authors to generate content. It turned out our main barriers to improvement were the general design of the website but more importantly, the publication process itself - a bespoke authoring method that was outmoded and required removal.'

In addition the implementation of the new website was prompted by an internal shift in accountability. Changes in the responsibility for the production, publication and maintenance of new content had shifted to reside with the Communications team rather than IT.

Concentrating primarily on the functional improvements necessary for the publishing process, the secondary objectives were to streamline the structure of www.stockton.gov.uk. With a complex navigation design and a dated look and feel, the site was suffering from a

non-citizen-led approach as Neil explains;

'The website was a confusing place for citizens. Mirroring the internal structure of council departments, it required website visitors to understand the council's method of categorizing content. That refuse collection, for example, came under the 'care for area' section of the 'regeneration' department.'

Having successfully evaluated the issues, Stockton-on-Tees Council committed itself to creating a simpler, more straightforward website that concentrated on delivering to fit the needs of the customer.

The Solution

As the redesign extended further than a simple 're-skinning' of the old website, Stockton Borough Council's ICT team, led by Neil Atkinson, undertook an extensive consultation process. Seeking the advice and opinion of not only the public, but also internal departments and content authors, Neil and his team decided upon a design which would more easily answer the needs of the citizen and using Alterian Content Manager gave Stockton a strong infrastructure on which to base the new design of the website.

After honing in on the real drivers of the website, Stockton built the homepage around the content most regularly requested. This commitment to fresh, demand-led content is echoed throughout the website, where up-to-the-minute content is created to reflect the current needs of its visitors. For example, in December and January, carrying information about extreme winter weather and local schools admission processes.

In order to maintain the responsiveness of the content, www.stockton.gov.uk uses Alterian Content Manager to employ multiple different types of content, from images, documents and online forms, to dynamic feedback sections on every page. With more than 20,000 pages to monitor, Stockton discovered that the value of the invited feedback, combined with site analysis, means the ICT team can constantly evaluate the success of each page. The analysis is then used by the Communications team to enable the production of accurate information which is useful, time relevant and easy to find.

'The functionality of Content Manager has been a substantial improvement for www.stockton.gov.uk. It has enabled us to implement a simple navigation structure and a coherent publishing process that means the website is significantly more user friendly. The new

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Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

website is built on smoother internal processes that have had an obvious impact on the quality, relevance and accessibility of content for our citizens.'

The improvement in usability is reflected by the separation of the internal structure of the website from the content. Alterian Content Manager enabled Stockton to separate the technical plan of the site from the content so content could be created and stored in a central repository, then seamlessly published in a number of different web pages. In doing so, Stockton has reduced the reliance of Communications on IT, so IT acts as the conduit to the website, rather than the practitioners.

Further savings have been made in the content generators themselves. Using the Content Manager web client interface, Stockton Council now has around 100 content authors who regularly create and publish new content to the website. Providing direct access to those who create content regularly has resulted in authors who are more confident using Alterian Content Manager, further reducing their reliance on the IT team.

The Future

Stockton-on-Tees Council is looking forward to building on the robust infrastructure of Alterian Content Manager, with more of the same content improvements. But the council is also looking to advance its use of social media to engage with citizens and visitors further. Already using Alterian to power a councillor blog, the council is excited to explore the potential to deliver alternative social media tools such as Twitter within the existing design of the Content Manager-driven website.

Neil Atkinson concludes,

'Our use of Content Manager means we are technologically prepared for the future. We already use Alterian to run councillor, mayoral and readers' blogs, but we know this is a potentially big growth area for anyone transacting online. Although at present we don't really know how citizens want to communicate with their council via social media, we are confident that, due to the power of Alterian, the technology is already in place, ready for us to tap into it at a time when its appropriate for us to do so.'

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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