

Web Renewal Initiative

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Organisation: Service Canada Employment and Social Development Canada

Country: Canada

Level of government: Central government

Sector: General public services

Type: Communication, Digital, Partnerships, Public Service

Launched in: 2013

Overall development time: 3 year(s)

Link to the innovation's website

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Description

The Web Renewal Initiative (WRI) was initiated to consolidate social media account management and active web content from over 90 government institutions to a client-centric, single website (Canada.ca) delivered on an outsourced cloud based Managed Web Service (MWS). Canada.ca is organized by theme rather than by department and provides easy access to the most frequently searched for information and services. Accessible across all devices, including mobile, Canada.ca effectively integrates social media and is easily updated, providing more consistent messaging on a government-wide basis. It is more secure and resilient than websites that the vast majority of government institutions would be able to build and maintain on their own. WRI represents a strong foundation upon which the Government of Canada (GC) is transforming the digital service delivery approach to be client-first. Although there are some similarities in what the Government of Canada is doing through the Web Renewal Initiative and web modernization strategies in other jurisdictions we have taken a more aggressive approach to delivering on a modern digital platform for our users. The extensive use of best in class outsourced solutions combined with a strategy that brings all of our Web and social media content into a single site and tool makes our initiative unique and innovative. All of this has been done while ensuring that a continuous approach to validating and optimizing our work takes place with real users of the system. An undertaking of the breadth and depth of the Web Renewal Initiative is unprecedented.

Why the innovation was developed

- Online or digital service delivery has become a critical channel for public services to efficiently and effectively deliver upon program and policy commitments to their constituents. Consultations undertaken by the Government of Canada (GC) confirmed that users found it difficult to locate the information and services they are searching for and are not consistently able to complete simple tasks online, obliging them to refer to more costly assisted channels more often. In addition, the GC web presence was not consistently optimized for mobile access nor was our social media presence integrated with our websites. While the GC continuously published new content and refreshed individual websites, online communications did not achieve the full impact they could because of the lack of a coordinated strategy supported by an effective web publishing model and a standardized web platform.
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Objectives

Enhance public trust, Enhance transparency, Improve access, Improve effectiveness, Improve efficiency, Improve service quality, Improve user satisfaction, Increase citizen engagement

Main beneficiaries

Businesses, General population, Government bodies, Government staff

Results

Effectiveness

- The Web Renewal Initiative (WRI) improves effectiveness through a number of innovations. In particular it greatly improves the effectiveness of social media staff to manage and track their interactions with users across multiple platforms through a consolidated dashboard and enterprise tool. The WRI also provides the web publishing community of the Government of Canada (GC) with a simple and easy set of tools to develop, publish and then conduct performance measurement. These make it simpler and easier to provide a consistent and measurable web presence that meets the needs and expectations of our users.
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Service quality

Accessibility:

- The WRI has greatly improved accessibility with our managed web service provides publishers with components that have been developed to be compliant with the Web Content Accessibility Guideline by default. There is no longer the potential for error when coding for the technical elements of WCAG and this has greatly improved the consistency in regards to accessibility for users with special needs. We have also improved the accessibility of our services online by offering a single web site for users to find the services and information they need. Using a strategy and tools that render Canada.ca in a mobile accessible format by default also ensures that our users can access our services anytime and with any device (PC, tablet, smartphone) while receiving an optimized user experience. Lastly, WRI provides an improved social media account management solution that makes it easier to manage a coherent digital communication strategy that better links our social media and web content.

Responsiveness:

- The WRI has greatly improved our responsiveness in a number of ways. First, it provides for improved social media management that leads us have preapproved messages ready for the most frequent questions while also allowing for communication on time sensitive issues to be coordinated in a streamlined manner across multiple accounts and platforms with a minimal amount of effort. Secondly, the Managed Web Service (MWS) provides a state of the art content distribution network that provides quick access to Canada.ca regardless of where a user is accessing our site. In addition the site can easily accommodate peak loads for time sensitive content on the fly such as communications during times of crises. Thirdly, with improved performance monitoring tools and strategies the WRI has been quick to respond to the needs and expectations of users. Measuring task completion and assessing client feedback has resulted in real changes to the site that better meet the needs of our users.

Reliability:

- The WRI provides a number of improvements in the area of reliability. The new MWS leverages best in class technology that provides a high availability web presence with improved security that actively defends the site from cyber threats such as denial of service attacks. Since the launch of Canada.ca on the MWS in December of 2015 the site has been available 100% of the time for users with no degradation in performance. The same reliability exists for GC employees using both the MWS and the social media account management solution. Access to an improved suite publishing and performance measurement tools has let to improved reliability in delivering timely, accurate and reliable content and information on the web and over social media.
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User satisfaction

- The WRI has led to improvements in user satisfaction. Feedback captured through the site has shown that users feel the new site both reflects the GC well and that it is well organized and easy to find what they need. Ongoing usability testing had been used to track the usability of our organizing principles and design for common templates across some of the top accessed tasks offered by the GC. These have shown regular improvement over time as we continuously measure, assess, and improve our web site.

Development

Design

The Web Renewal Initiative was designed and developed after extensive consultation with users, frontline staff and with industry. A business plan was developed using information gathered from various stakeholders and was presented to a Cabinet committee for approval and support. Upon approval of the objective and overall approach an extensive governance structure was established to engage across a wide range of institutions to ensure that the requirements of their organizations were reflected in the overall approach and that they were fully engaged in the steps needed to plan and eventually execute upon the Web Renewal Initiative. Design time: 8 month(s)

Testing

- The Web Renewal Initiative (WRI) has gone through extensive prototyping, piloting and testing as part of the implementation of the solution. Site tree testing has been used to validate our structure and Information Architecture with 38 separate tests with over 23,500 participants looking at over 550 tasks scenarios and generating over 188,000 task trials. In addition extensive usability testing has been conducted with 13 tests including over 200 participants looking at over 170 task scenarios and generating over 2,375 tasks trials. As the suite of enterprise tools and solutions have been configured and deployed as part of the WRI a significant amount of effort has been put into testing including regression testing and user acceptance testing to ensure the functionality of the platforms meets the needs of the internal users while ensuring quality output for users.
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Implementation

Tools used:

- The Web Renewal Initiative relies heavily upon a suite of outsourced tools and services that are hosted in the cloud. A primary focus during the early stages of the initiative were on competing for and acquiring the best in class tools to meet the web publishing and social media account management requirements of the Government of Canada. Some level of customization has been required for these outsourced tools and an agile development process is being used to ensure that the tools are improved quickly and continuously to meet the needs of users.

Resources used:

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Implementation time: 4 year(s)

Challenges and solutions

- A number of challenges were encountered as part if this initiative. Notably the three most significant challenges were procurement delays, our original estimates on the scope of content to migrate were lower than reality, and the configuration of the Managed Web Service has taken longer than expected. Despite these challenges to the initiative the project has adjusted by using an more effective sequence of activities to onboard content. Institutions are being supported by a centralized team that has the experience and expertise to support them during onboarding. In addition a number of automated tools are being leveraged to reduce the amount of manual effort required to migrate content and this is using repeatable processes to ensure we use our resources effectively and efficiently.

Lessons Learned

Lessons Learned

- Moving to a new suite of tools was cost effective and provided us with effective solutions. We benefited from the knowledge of suppliers who have worked with other clients. Although our initiative is unprecedented in scale and scope we still benefited from the experience of others. You must measure and assess the level of complexity of your current web presence before undertaking an initiative of this scale. We underestimated the size and complexity of the work to migrate from our existing collection of sites to Canada.ca. The GC Web had evolved over a 20 year period and included hundreds of different technologies with little adherence to standards. Focus is required on change management. Despite transitioning to better solutions it represented a significant change in how institutions managed the web and SM functions. This required the WRI to focus on regular engagement with stakeholders and to ensure that internal users were sufficiently trained for the changes in process and tech.
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Conditions for success

- An important factor is ensuring support and a clear mandate. The WRI benefited from a mandate that came from the highest levels of the government and was fully supported by central agencies. WRI succeeded with active participation and interest from the upper hierarchy. WRI leveraged investments in technology that the private sector had made over the years. By acquiring best in class tools we minimized our overall investment. Strong governance ensured timely decisions and corrections. We faced a number of challenges but solutions were only realized through clear governance structures that streamlined management support and engagement across a wide range of stakeholders. The WRI is based upon delivering a modern digital service presence for the GC. Public service is about governing effectively and ensuring citizens receive what they need in a simple and cost effective manner. The WRI embraced those values and everyone worked collegially to deliver an improved experience for our users.
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Other information

The WRI has been both a challenging and rewarding undertaking. It has required a multidisciplinary approach that has actively engaged communications, information technology and program delivery functions across 90 institutions. We are proud not only of the improvements we have made for public servants and end users but also for the foundation we have built in the online channel upon which we can now define and deliver a more complete service strategy for users. Most jurisdictions agree that a reliable and simple digital channel is needed to support a broader service strategy that is both responsive to changing user needs and expectations but also one that is cost effective. With Web Renewal we believe we have achieved what many other jurisdictions have imagined in needed to transform the way the public sector delivers information and services online.

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