



Publication Company Builds Online Revenue Streams through Improved Website Functionality

SMBology's client is a publication company matching buyers and sellers through highly localized classified ads and services.

To establish more of an online presence, the publication firm needed a website that represented its core values and was able to be edited/updated by non-technical users. The development of a more effective entry system for ads (both for print and online) was also required. Moreover, the firm wanted to expand its online product offerings to advertisers.

A custom-branded website was built using a sophisticated Enterprise Content Management System. Making the publishing process more efficient, an online portal was developed for inserting orders which automatically routed ads to the firm's internal database for publishing. In addition, custom software was developed to allow richer advertising placement options.

Results

- ▣ Improved online web presence
- ▣ Increased efficiency of content editing and site maintenance
- ▣ Developed effective order entry system for both print and online ads
- ▣ Established new line of revenue

Technologies Used

- ▣ ASP.NET 3.0
- ▣ Barracuda Load Balancer
- ▣ C#
- ▣ Lucene
- ▣ SiteCore v. 6
- ▣ SQL Server 2005
- ▣ Windows Server 2003

Company Overview

SMBology's client is a publication company matching buyers and sellers of various goods and services through classified ads/services. Founded in 1970, the firm's core business has been based on a printed paper which is produced weekly and distributed in zones around the city. Operating in five core markets--Houston, Austin, Dallas, Fort Worth and Phoenix--the publication's core value proposition is that it offers highly localized content. Each major city is divided in 10-20 zones, each of which gets a slightly different version of the paper with classified ads/services specifically customized for that locality.

Business Challenge

With the Internet deemed the future of publishing, the firm's business model was not suitable for continued growth, as it was heavily weighted towards print. While SMBology's client had an existing website that allowed customers to post and browse classified ads, it suffered from several shortcomings which needed to be addressed in order to be successful online.

Lacking a strong online presence, SMBology's client was in need of a new website with a distinct look and feel that accurately represented its unique brand and core values. In addition, the firm's current site was built on custom code and not backed by an enterprise content management system, making it difficult for non-technical users to update the company's web content.

Furthermore, with its content consisting mainly of classifieds, the company's current website did not allow for placement of its full range of ads—i.e. many configurations of ads that were available in the print publications were not available to be displayed online, decreasing an ad's total reach. A common interface for inserting ads was also desired so that each ad could be entered once in the firm's internal system and show up in both online and print mediums (assuming the advertising customer purchased both options), leading to increased efficiency. To further emphasize its online initiative, SMBology's client sought to expand the range of products sold online to advertisers, including premium products such as banner ads and keyword placement.

SMBology Solution

SMBology implemented an iterative, phased solution addressing the full range of the publishing firm's business challenges. First, to understand the current publishing environment and better establish its unique offering, a study was conducted and gaps in the marketplace were noted. Based on the results, recommendations for core areas and themes to focus on were provided.

To leverage the firm's position in the publishing industry, the company underwent SMBology's

A custom system was developed to support and organize the classified ads on a community/regional basis for online advertisers and visitors, as this continues to be one of the firm's main differentiators among other publishers.

Functionality of the website was enhanced, including a new effective entry system for both print and online advertisements.

Archetypal Branding process to drive both the look and function, as well as ensure a consistent experience throughout the website. Implementing SMBology's process, designs were created for each of the firm's key site pages. During this creative phase, SMBology's team made certain that the look and feel for each page, down to the configuration pages for user accounts, considered the site's overall branding, design, and usability philosophy.

Wanting to use the website as a marketing tool, SMBology determined the need to build out the site on a sophisticated Enterprise Content Management System (CMS) that incorporated enterprise search. Based upon the client's requirements/needs analysis, Sitecore v.6 was the CMS solution of choice with Lucene used for enterprise search, both of which were based on a redundant and scalable server infrastructure.

All orders were entered/recorded (online and/or print) either by external customers or internal employees through a secure portal on the publication firm's website which required login access. These ads were automatically directed to the client's internal database for proofing, approval, and then published to the selected medium. For the firm's employees, an enhanced Single Sign On (SSO) module was built to authenticate any employee accessing the website internally from the firm's network, eliminating this extra step.

To best manage the publishing firm's online ad placement/configuration needs, custom software was developed and built on top of Sitecore's CMS, providing for richer advertising placement options, such as banner ads. Additionally, to fulfill the firm's value proposition, a custom system was developed to support and organize the classified ads on a community/regional basis for online advertisers and visitors, as this continues to be one of the firm's main differentiators among other publishers.

Results

SMBology was able to successfully improve the client's Web presence by implementing an Enterprise CMS that accomplished the firm's desired goals. Efficiency of content editing was increased while, at the same time, a consistent user experience was maintained throughout the site. Functionality of the website was enhanced, including a new effective entry system for both print and online advertisements. Moreover, extending the site's online advertising options, SMBology helped establish a new line of revenue.

SMBology, Inc. is a growth-oriented IT firm offering strategic consulting, user experience design, and custom application development. Clients benefit from our focus on easy-to-use technology, a deep understanding of the human user, and keen business acumen. This focus, paired with our deep technical expertise and broad service offering, enables us to take your company further than you ever imagined.

