

The OmniUpdate Advantage

A white paper addressing the unique technological advantages
OmniUpdate offers its higher education customers resulting in
dramatic tactical, strategic, and financial benefits.

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Introduction

We all realize that Information Technology budgets are under pressure. Doing more with less has become absolutely necessary in every corner of the budget. Compounding the problem further, budget cuts, limited IT resources and today's focus on larger system requirements (e.g., ERP and automated administrative processes) have left core Web sites and their critical information with insufficient systems, tools and manpower to fulfill their basic mission.

The Web has grown more quickly than any other medium of communication in the history of mankind. The number of sites continues to increase and the users of the Web are becoming more demanding. Key to success on the Web is an attractive (sticky) site that contains current, well-managed content. With these demands, every institution faces challenges and choices in managing their Web sites.

The college Web site is unlike other business and consumer oriented sites. Its responsibilities include recruitment, teaching and learning, public relations, advancement, and a host of other functions that ensures the mission of the institution's Web site is fulfilled: communication that supports education.

The cornerstone of a successful Web site strategy is efficiently managed messaging and content. As the need to provide timely information through the Web site has taken hold, and institutions move more processes online, the demand has risen for a solution to relieve the pain-points of IT maintenance bottlenecks.

The issue is singular – how to update Web content and assure that visitors have timely information available. However, there are multiple choices in Web site management, and each choice has its own set of requirements and consequences. Below are the major possibilities:

- Maintain the status quo
- Invest major financial resources in high-end content management systems
- Develop Web content management systems from scratch
- Choose OmniUpdate

This paper examines Web site management options and their consequence. When compared with the alternatives, you will see that OmniUpdate has many near-term, long range, and financial advantages. By better understanding the OmniUpdate advantages, you'll learn why other institutions have found OmniUpdate to be not only the "smart choice", but the "safe choice" and "contemporary choice" for addressing their Web content management needs.

Following are the options which are generally considered for content management on the Web. We will evaluate each option and compare it to the OmniUpdate advantages. The OmniUpdate solutions will also be explored, and we will draw conclusions from the comparisons.

Status Quo Maintenance

Many institutions are resigned to maintaining their Web sites with the tools that they have been using for many years. This method is generally characterized by:

- Having a centralized individual or group manage all changes and updates to the site.
- Having individuals manage the institutional standards for content and formatting
- Having difficult-to-manage software that requires knowledge of programming
- Having to submit change requests and get in queue for a time slot to have your update considered.

And all of us remember this method of maintaining the Web site. For many years, it was the only alternative. The individuals responsible for managing the Web site were generally highly skilled designers, Web administrators or other IT staff. Some institutions have even abdicated the fate of their site to any person who volunteers to take over the task.

The problems associated with this methodology are many:

- Backlog. Regardless of who is chartered with the maintenance of the site, under this method, there is always a bottleneck associated with having a limited number of people responsible for making Web site changes. Most changes are taken either on a FIFO basis or on some policy-based set of priorities.
- Costly resources being dedicated to making changes on the Web site. In fact, making very simple changes may require programming changes. The associated costs include programming personnel, expensive applications, lost opportunity, and the costs associated with misinformation due to imperfect information transfer.
- Limits the ability to scale the Web site because increasing the size, scope, and content of the site is dependent upon scaling resources, largely human, to deliver services.

And there are the qualitative challenges associated with postponed changes and incorrect information on the Web. There are disappointed people who cannot get their changes made in a timely way, lowering the overall internal satisfaction in the way the Web site works and gets updated. Then there are challenges with the public and students using a site with outdated information.

To help your organization move beyond legacy methods for maintaining your Web site, OmniUpdate provides the following:

- OmniUpdate shifts the burden of maintenance from your organization's technical staff to the general staff. It allows authorized staff members, usually with vested interest in the currency of the content, to easily maintain your Web site with an intuitive, browser-based Web page editor.
- Control is built into OmniUpdate's powerful multi-stage workflow/approval system where authorized reviewers ultimately approve content that is to be published to the Web site.
- OmniUpdate also provides commensurate levels of access, roles, and security. This provides access by multiple individuals to their own content. In addition, as many people as are appropriate can manage their content or serve as final approval for changes that have been recommended.
- OmniUpdate is designed to deliver this level of distributed maintenance service across multiple platforms. Its browser-based interface and zero client-side footprint

requires only a browser (Microsoft Internet Explorer or Netscape Navigator) and is otherwise platform agnostic.

OmniUpdate solutions distribute the responsibility for Web site maintenance. This is an empowerment technology that gives content creators the ability to organize, control, transform, and manage Web content on any platform, from anywhere. It is cost-effective and relieves technical staff of tedious Web site edits that require a presence in the daily updating process and it frees organizations from the time constraints of waiting for high-priced resources to maintain the site's currency and accuracy. OmniUpdate motivates better Web site currency and accuracy by holding individuals with vested content interests responsible for these factors.

High-End Content Management System

Another potential solution to solve the problems of content management for institutions is the purchase of a high-end content management system. These solutions are the Swiss army knives of Web and document management systems. They typically offer a centralized method for storing and managing a wide variety of content in a stripped down format, then provide output formats for use in print, Web, and mobile devices.

The requirements for a system of this type are:

- A very large budget
- A clear and long planning horizon
- High clarity on project requirements and application function.

By definition, these enterprise content management systems are designed to do much more than manage Web content and as such, carry with them the overhead and extra cost which puts them at an inordinately high price point.

It is important to realize that these high-end systems are driven by proprietary systems that present a high cost of deployment as well as high startup and switching costs, should your needs change or should the company providing the system go out of business. The Swiss army knife approach to solving your content management problem is very much like putting all your eggs in one basket. The scalability appeal of these systems is often lost in the high startup and switching costs associated with moving into and out of a proprietary system.

OmniUpdate addresses these issues by providing the institution with a relatively low-cost solution. More important, OmniUpdate works well either in a short-term or long-term planning horizon. OmniUpdate provides the institution with the kind of flexibility and adaptability that helps to maintain Web site accuracy in both the short and long term.

Home Grown Web Content Management System

Another approach that's often considered is designing and programming an in-house Web content management system. Due to the growing popularity of open source code and the availability of readily available Web components, this approach might at first seem attractive. The ability to customize a system to your specific needs and eliminate some licensing costs makes this option additionally compelling to many organizations. However, it's important to

realize the real costs associated with this approach and compare the many technical and financial advantages gained using the OmniUpdate solution.

This solution raises the following issues:

- Cost of creation. The entire process of creating a technology solution contains costs at every level from conceptual discovery to final launch. When approached from the standpoint of return on investment, a company can afford to develop a “product”, but individual institutions very rarely have the unique requirements that mandate the cost of all stages of product development.
- Time of creation. Most solutions of this magnitude require a great deal of time that actually robs the institution of access to the solution and delays the eventual benefits that will be delivered.
- Cost of maintenance and continuing development. The cost of creation is only a fraction of the ongoing maintenance of the in-house solution. Every solution is not 100% solid on its first day of existence, and every technology solution eventually reaches the limits of either its scope or architecture.
- Limitations of future development flexibility. Many solutions are developed for the present technology and very rarely look beyond the technology horizon. This creates technology challenges in the future and may require the institution to re-design periodically to keep up with demands. Most notably the proprietary approach may force an expensive and time consuming migration process that will potentially lock your organization into a system that will be equally expensive and time consuming to move away from, should your needs change in the future. Such a migration also shares the downside problem of changes to the base URL structure of your Web site making your visitor’s bookmarks and other links to your Web site invalid.
- Ongoing development and maintenance may be hindered because of future funding of the project (which never really ends) and because of the turnover of personnel who wrote the code and requirements specification for the project. With one of the key problems of higher education IT being turnover (Casey Green, Campus Computing Project Report 2002.), few programmers and technicians offer the staying power to maintain a proprietary system.
- The institution is responsible for every level of system and end-user support. Presently, users require immediate support. The Internet and the ability to use the Web effectively is an assumed service to deliver to all interested users.

Selecting OmniUpdate as the solution over creating an institution-specific application from scratch delivers the following advantages:

- It offers immediate gratification and benefits that would otherwise be delayed for months or possibly even years. The OmniUpdate system has been used successfully by tens of thousands of users worldwide to update nearly 1 million pages on independent Web sites over the past three years. It’s a robust, proven system that’s backed by a strong support team and a company with an 20 year history in the computer software industry.
- OmniUpdate is time-tested and proven to be exceptionally reliable. Building a content management system could take years before it matured to be reliable enough to offer similar benefits to OmniUpdate.
- OmniUpdate is in constant development to maintain functionality and features.
- OmniUpdate assumes all financial risks for creation and continued development. The cost of maintaining the product is distributed among all clients, rather than having one institution take the full financial burden.

- OmniUpdate can provide all system and end-user support as a part of the subscription to the service.

A self-built proprietary system will also require that your organization procure and maintain the system and provide end-user support. Should those who built your system leave your organization, new programmers will need to be fully trained to understand it to provide support it in the future. OmniUpdate has the advantage of offering your organization a flexible solution backed by a company with the experience and know-how to offer first class support and training. And OmniUpdate is supported by a team of professionals who have focused on the unique challenges of internet and Web content management since the mid 1990s.

OmniUpdate Advantages

OmniUpdate provides key advantages over any other methodology that is presently on the market. It was designed with the following parameters in mind:

- Ease of use that encourages adoption and frequent use
- Cost containment and cost efficiency
- High level of reliability and uptime
- Turnkey solution that provides end-user and system support

WebsiteASP, with its OmniUpdate products, has defined the next generation in Web Content Management with higher education in mind. Weaknesses in legacy systems, high-end content management systems, and home-grown systems have been identified and these issues addressed with products that deliver straightforward, quality Web site design, creation, and maintenance.

While most Web Content Management systems were designed to satisfy the needs of the masses, or the needs of specific vertical markets such as finance, e-commerce and publishing, the OmniUpdate OU Campus system was designed specifically for higher education. Not surprisingly, OU Campus customers have played a direct role in the development of the product over the past five years; ensuring new features translate into specific institutional benefits!

Most importantly, OU Campus was designed with the understanding that the most effective tool is the one that's usable – and actually used. The college environment is characterized by a population of staff, faculty, and students, with an extreme diversity of computer skills and knowledge. OU Campus was designed by people who understand people – and most importantly, people who work to support the college Web site.

The OmniUpdate line of products delivers the following benefits:

- **Easy to use**
OmniUpdate provides an interface that is as simple as browse-point-and-click. Fundamental, everyday application knowledge is all that's needed to create and maintain Web pages. Most users will find the interface completely intuitive and be able to create and maintain Web pages with minimal instruction. This also provides an advantage to the institution because extensive training resources do not need to be deployed to get individuals up to speed.

- **Reduces maintenance implementation time and frustration**
 When individuals and departments want changes to their Web pages, they want those changes completed quickly and without delay. With 24/7 browser-based accessibility, OmniUpdate allows staff and faculty to update their own Web pages as needed and on their own timetables, not a Web site administrator's.
- **Cuts costs**
 Utilizing IT staff to update the Web site is very costly and inefficient. De-centralizing the work and empowering staff and faculty not only saves precious IT dollars; it saves hours of coordination and production time. The burden on your IT staff and need for additional technical personnel is reduced.
- **99+% uptime**
 OmniUpdate has a reputation for operating with greater than 99.9% availability. This gives you and your staff a reputation for delivering solid technical services.
- **Saves resources**
 One of the most heavily stressed organizations on a college campus is the IT department. There are never enough resources to maintain all of the systems on campus, much less maintain changes on Web sites. OmniUpdate reduces the need to staff resources for Web site maintenance. With faculty and staff maintaining their own Web pages, resource constraints for your Web site can be a thing of the past.
- **Requires no additional hardware**
 By taking advantage of the outsourced capability of OmniUpdate, no additional hardware is required. However, if a campus or department requires their own onsite solution, OmniUpdate provides a turnkey solution of hardware and software that can be up and running on campus in under two weeks.
- **Requires no additional software**
 OmniUpdate requires nothing more than an appropriate version of a standard browser to access AND maintain a Web site. This satisfies requirements for software that addresses security, firewall, maintenance, content management.
- **Provides a marketing advantage to the institution**
 In today's higher education market, new competitive pressures are constantly arising. One of the most critical is recruitment of top students to the campus or department. And one of the decision factors used by many incoming freshmen today is the level of technical development on campus. Prospective students are also looking for additional technical capabilities, such as having their own Web site. This can help build a personal reference on the Web that they can maintain and keep prospective employers aware of their progress. This gives the student an advantage in a competitive employment marketplace.
- **Improves Consistency**
 Customized page templates, designated controls, and a robust approval system help maintain standards and Web design integrity. Also, automated prompts help compliance with ADA section 508!
- **Quick and Seamless Implementation**

OmniUpdate works with your existing Web sites and systems so that seamless implementation can occur in as little as a few days. There are no hidden costs for additional software, capital equipment, or installation. Easy to implement, maintain and support.

- **“Academic Freedom”**

As a stand-alone system, or as a supplement to existing courseware systems, OmniUpdate’s OU Educate solution gives non-technical faculty the freedom to build their own Web-based teaching tools that don’t have to comply with the pre-existing restrictions or limitations imposed by other systems. OU Educate allows free creation and doesn’t force faculty to fit their content into pre-determined formats. Templates are available and customizable, but are not mandatory.

Conclusion

In summary, the financial and technology environments for higher education are very demanding and are becoming more so daily. However, technology solutions do not necessarily have to be more expensive and complex. As demands increase, technology has also advanced in terms of complexity to address them. Technology, however, has also developed in a parallel area concerning ease of use. Thus complexity and ease of use are not mutually exclusive. Add self-service use that conforms to institutional standards and you have a nearly ideal environment.

WebsiteASP, Inc., has developed OmniUpdate with exactly these requirements in mind. With a 22 year history of providing quality products and service at affordable prices, OmniUpdate stands out as the Web content management system of choice for higher education nationwide – used to update over 200 college and university web sites. Based on a technology that assures flexibility, ease of use, and scalability, OmniUpdate offers unmatched power and functionality at an unbeatable price.

OmniUpdate includes features that are typically only found in content management systems costing an order of magnitude higher including: workflow/approval, multi-user content check-in and check-out, controlled role-based administration, multi-site use, browser-based WYSIWYG editing for all modern browser including Microsoft Internet Explorer and Netscape Navigator running on Windows or Macintosh, support for virtually all Web architectures including static HTML, ASP, CFM, JSP, etc, audit logs of person and time of editing, both static and dynamic content editing, and much more.

OmniUpdate’s technical advantages will benefit your institution’s content contributors as well as your financial situation. OmniUpdate holds a unique position in the Web content management space by assuring dramatically increased quality, quantity, and timeliness of Web site communication at a comparatively low cost. It achieves this by offering an affordable, flexible system that no other product or service can equal. OmniUpdate provides a focused solution that fulfills Web content management needs without additional, costly special purpose features.

OmniUpdate is the safe choice and the smart choice compared to the alternatives of maintaining the status quo, buying a high-end content management system, or building an in-house custom system. OmniUpdate is designed to adapt to your existing organization,

Web architecture, and Web hosting method. And OmniUpdate offers a range of licensing models designed to fit virtually any budget and scale to grow with institutional needs.

For more information on how OmniUpdate can improve your institution's Web site, please contact an OmniUpdate representative today.

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