GOVERNMENT WEBSITE MANAGEMENT …MADE EASY

Creating and maintaining accessible, efficient, content-rich websites in the public sector

RTSE USA

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Introduction

As websites become an expected means of government-to-constituent and employee communication, traditional means of managing website content have proven insufficient.

In traditional government website management, a bottleneck occurs as content contributors (committees, department administrators, staff members) funnel raw content (text, images, audio files, video files) to an IT department "webmaster" to be manually coded and uploaded to a Web server.

As this bottleneck worsens, even websites that were intended to be dynamic—with constantly changing content—end up being, in reality, static. The Web content becomes stale, and in many cases becomes less valuable.

What is needed is a new content management model for government information and constituent service sites that delivers:

- Accurate, up-to-date content
- Smooth workflow and workload distribution
- Consistent website look-and-feel
- Flexibility and expandability
- Cost-effective implementation

Public sector overview

Pressures to manage vast and increasing volumes of documents, maps, data, and information – in both paper and computerized formats – are a serious issue in both the private and public sectors. Automating these processes has helped the private sector increase productivity and reduce costs. Moreover, based on what the private sector now delivers to their customers, these consumer-constituents expect more sophisticated levels of information access and automated services from government organizations.

Here's how expectations are changing:

Your customer base is growing
From: Internal, technical, project- and data-focused
To Include: External (public), non-technical, information- and application-focused

The technology is morphing
From: Workgroup computing, isolated, constrained by dollar costs of data and computing infrastructure
To: Worldwide interactivity, integrated, constrained by time, imagination and data discovery

Public expectation of government is changing
From: Passive, irrelevant, unresponsive
To: Service-oriented, relevant, responsive

As a result, local, state, and federal governments are increasingly adopting new technologies to provide their constituents with timely information. Governments are using the Internet to provide:

- Points of contact and directories of people and services
- Departmental and program information
- Information about contracts and procurement
- Electronic copies of forms, permits, and licenses
- Public records and other documents
- Interactive and transactional online services

The cost of producing these services – especially for government agencies serving less than 100,000 constituents – can be significant. A recent national survey on e-government and technology implementation, by the National Association of Counties, listed these factors that limit deployment of Internet Web sites by counties:

- High initial costs
- Insufficient technical staffing
- Costly labor-intensive maintenance requirements
- Inadequate IT infrastructure

As a result, many government agencies have developed first generation, static, Web sites that provide basic information – but often are not kept up to date – and lack sophisticated applications for streamlining government processes. Stale websites often fail to meet the needs and expectations of customer-constituents, and do not provide a significant return on investment.

Content management solutions
Organizations that wish to develop, manage, and maintain more effective informational or transactional websites are increasingly moving to second generation technology systems, known as content management solutions. These systems provide content creators with the power to create, review, and maintain content on their Web sites without specialized programming skills. Content management systems can save up to 40% of the time associated with managing traditional web sites.

Content management solutions allow different departments in government organizations to flexibly maintain content on their websites, with proper quality assurance oversight, and without the need of technical programming staff. Here are a few ways that a city government, for example, might apply a content management system:

Parks and Recreation – Maintain information on recreation leagues; field and park schedules

Human Resources – Current job announcements can be developed, reviewed by a manager and then automatically scheduled to run from the opening date of the posting through the closing date for application

Mayor's Office – The most recent press releases can be set up to be viewed from the main page of the site and then stored elsewhere after a period of time

Moreover, with content management solutions each department within government can manage their own "sibling" sites. A "sibling" site runs from the same underlying database system as the "main" site, but allows departments to manage specialized content for their own constituents. Each department's "sibling" site can use centralized content, managed through the "main" site, to avoid duplicating efforts in each department.
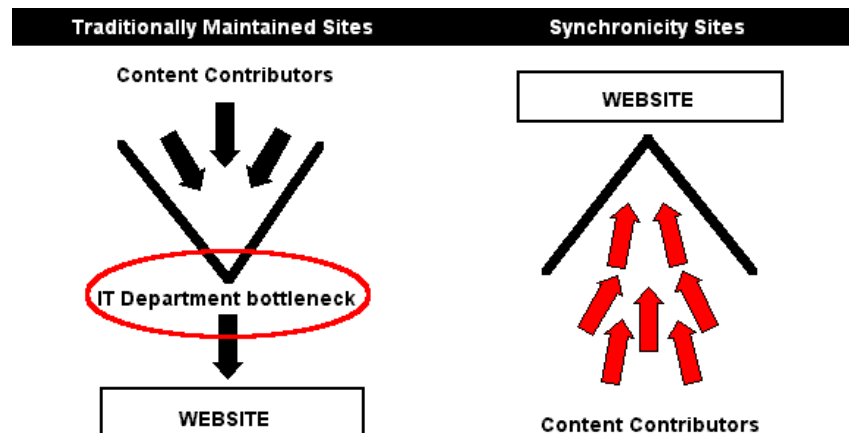
Synchronicity Content Management System

System architecture

The Synchronicity Content Management System is based on a metadata concept that is deployed to manage and administer the entire site. The majority of the site is stored as data in a SQL database, and the system is used to retrieve and present the requested information. The entire site, including its physical and logical organizational structure, is dynamic, and therefore is highly flexible.

Each page type ("template"), whether an e-commerce page, a form, or an in-depth article, is delivered dynamically. Rather than storing complete, static pages, the required layout and page content are stored separately in the system's relational database. Each of these Web page elements is associated with the other, as directed by the site manager, through the administrative interface.

From the single administrative interface, the site manager can choose and fully control the delivery and format of content.

> Multiple authors or contributors can collaborate on a website. A wide range of content, from multiple sources, in a variety of file formats, can be managed from a single administrative interface. This feature alone could save up to 80% of the Web team's time.

Benefit: Accurate, up-to-date content

With this system, content development and presentation on the website becomes dynamic, whether it is text, graphic-based, or specialized content, such as animations, sound, music, or video files, Adobe Acrobat (".pdf") files, or downloadable software.

Website managers can pre-set the dates that individual content pages will be made available to site visitors by specifying publication start dates and end dates.

Administrative Interface:
Add/Change Page

Benefit:
Smooth workflow and workload distribution

Non-technical staff can manage the website with ease. Content can be manipulated and modified without expertise in graphics, HTML, page layout or website design.

The site manager controls user log-on and passwords to manage multiple-contributor access to the administrative interface areas of the site.

Authorized contributors can access the administrative interface at any time and from any location through a PC and an Internet connection.

Contributors and designated managers can preview, review, and approve pages prior to publication on the "live site."

Administrative Interface:
Add/Change/Delete Users and Permissions

Benefit:
Consistent look-and-feel

Page layouts are template-based. New content pages will conform to any of the layouts that have been developed by the site manager. Contributors can select one of these pre-configured templates, then upload their new content files (text, graphics, etc.) for that page.
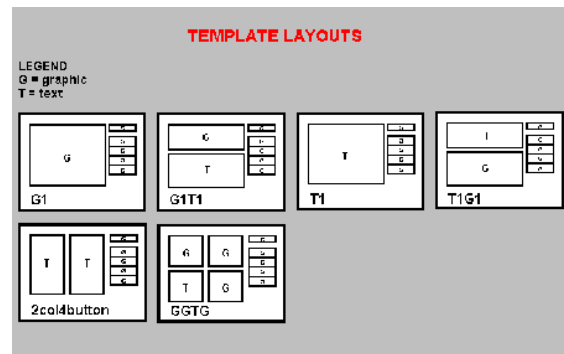
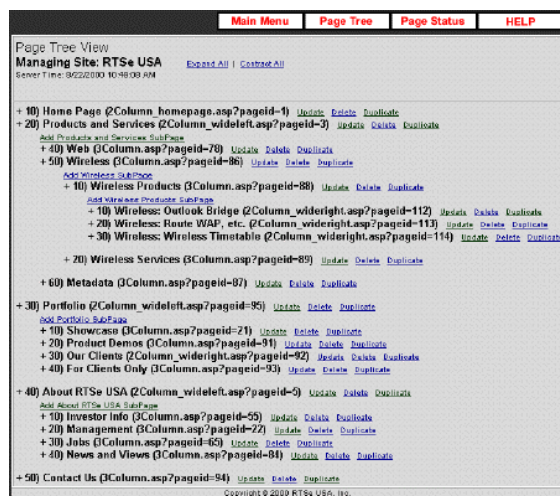*Administrative Interface:*
Template Layouts

Using automated templates for page layouts saves time. When website contributors can focus on the content rather than the format of the page, the savings can be as much as 40%.

Benefit:
Site flexibility

The Synchronicity Content Management System can handle multi-site content. It supports delivery of localized or individualized content to separate domain names, all of which share a common database of content and page layouts (and a shared administrative interface).

The "main" site manager can assign privileges to "sub-site" managers such as:

- adding a section or sub-section to a site
- duplicating or moving pages within an individual site hierarchy
- duplicating or moving pages across multiple sites that share the same database and administrative interface.

Administrative Interface:
Page Tree (site hierarchy)

Benefit:
Cost-effective implementation

New page layout templates can be added quickly, easily, and cost effectively. Changes to a very small number of template files can redefine the appearance of the site without affecting the content that is available for site visitors to use.

The system automates the uploading of images and documents and streamlines renaming and deletion of files, so site management is highly efficient.
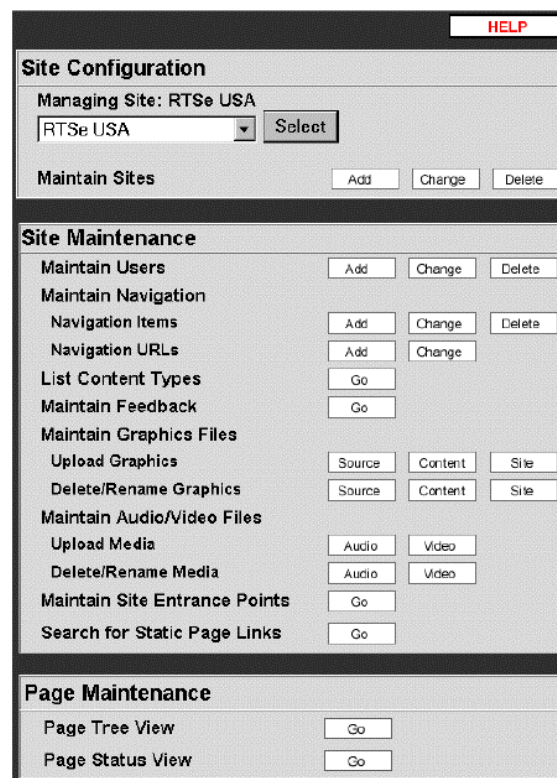
Administrative Interface:
Resource Management

Public sector sites using RTSe USA technology

U.S. BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

MECKLENBURG COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

CITY OF ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

Summary

Pressures to manage vast and increasing volumes of paper and information are a serious issue in both the private and public sectors. As the private sector delivers increasingly sophisticated levels of information access and service via the Internet, your constituents increasingly expect the same sophistication you're your organization.

Your biggest challenge? To identify the right technologies and best business practices to effectively deliver and manage better, faster, more accurate constituent services, now and into the future!

By leveraging existing employee skills and streamlining the publishing process, the Synchronicity Content Management System allows public sector agencies to manage their Web presence cost-effectively. With a website built around this system:

- Non-technical staff can easily keep the website accurate and up-to-date
- The "webmaster bottleneck" can be eliminated: contributors can directly upload content to the site
- The website's look-and-feel can be held to consistent standards
- New sections, new categories, and new pages can be added "on the fly"

As a long-term vendor to the government sector, RTSe USA brings years of industry-specific knowledge and experience to your organization. More than 400 government agencies and organizations worldwide currently use RTSe USA solutions in content, e-commerce and metadata applications, including:

Alaska State Government
California Department of Conservation
City of Indianapolis (Indiana)
City of Philadelphia (Pennsylvania)
City of Raleigh (North Carolina)
City of Redmond (Washington)
City of San Jose (California)
Los Angeles County Sanitation Dept.
Mecklenburg County (North Carolina)
Marin County (California)
Municipality of Anchorage (Alaska)
National Park Service, Golden Gate
Tennessee Valley Authority
US Army
US Army Corps of Engineers
US Army National Guard
US Bureau of Land Management
Washington State Department of Ecology
Washington State Department of Health
Washington State Dept. of Transportation

Our implementations range from simple departmental systems to complex, enterprise-wide solutions.

The Synchronicity Content Management System empowers our public sector customers to communicate quickly, efficiently, and effectively…and that's **the content management advantage.**

RTSe USA public sector financing overview

As cited by NACo in its recent survey on e-government implementation, the costs of infrastructure, software, staffing, and maintenance limit many counties' implementation of websites. To help with these issues, RTSe USA has provided flexible financing options for many of its government customers:

1. Purchase outright
- Purchase a license to operate our software on your server – the "traditional" model
- Purchase a license to operate RTSe USA software starting on our server, then transition to yours within a limited period of time

2. Lease-purchase
Finance a multi-year lease-purchase for software licenses[1], and operate the software on our server, yours, or plan a transition from ours to yours. Charges for RTSe USA design, implementation, and operating services can be included in an outright purchase or multi-year lease-purchase plan.

Purchasing outright and lease-purchase can provide these benefits:
- Operations on an RTSe USA server can reduce the difficulties of hardware and software procurement, contracting or hiring development and operations staff
- Multi-year financing allows for payment from within "normal" operating budgets, and alleviates the need for a large one-time appropriation request
- Lease-purchase or operations on an RTSe USA server can help avoid lengthy approval processes for software purchases or high internal charges by IT departments.

3. Application Service Provider model
The Application Service Provider (ASP) model limits up-front costs, allowing government organizations to cost-effectively implement dynamic, interactive Web sites.

The ASP model provides the hardware, Internet connection, software, and support, so government agencies can bring a website online rapidly. An ASP plan allows the customer to "rent" the RTSe USA applications, reducing the expense of:

- Hardware and operating system software license fees
- High speed internet connections
- Technical staffing to maintain the hardware and software

The cost savings with an ASP plan can be as much as $86,000.00 per year.[2]

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[1] For a period of two or three fiscal years, including a "non-funding" provision: no penalty in the second or subsequent fiscal years in the event of appropriations reductions, and a provision for low-cost purchase at the end of the financing term.

[2] Assumptions: Technical staff $70K annual salary; hardware and OS $20K; software $27K; high speed Internet connection $2K per month; three-year depreciation on hardware and software.