

SITEFINITY TRANSFORMED IC GROUP'S BUSINESS MODEL, SAVING 90% ON DEVELOPMENT TASKS

Client

 ic | group™

Challenge

In an increasingly crowded market, IC Group needed to create a more agile delivery model in order to remain competitive.

Solution

IC Group leveraged Sitefinity to create a common platform where customized solutions can rapidly be created to meet individual customer needs.

Benefits

- Fast, flexible development environment with reuse of common elements
- Project turnaround reduced from 6-8 weeks to 5-10 days
- Up to 90% savings on development and QA time

Faced with increasing competition in a changing market, promotions specialists IC Group needed to reengineer its business processes in order to stay ahead. IC Group found the perfect partner in Progress. Leveraging Progress® Sitefinity™ extensibility and developer-friendliness, IC Group created a web publishing platform tailored to its unique needs, making its business more agile and competitive than ever before.

Background

Everybody likes the idea of winning big. For marketers, million-dollar prizes are a great way to cut through the clutter and drive interest. However, tying up large amounts of cash in prize funds is expensive, even if nobody wins. Prize-giving at this level is out of reach for most marketing budgets.

IC Group was founded to solve this problem. “When Todd Pluchinske founded the company in 1989, he set out to use insurance underwriting to create a low-cost, low-risk way to deliver huge prizes for high-profile promotions,” says Paul M. Lacap, Director of Product Innovation & Marketing Services at IC Group. “Our prize insurance made it possible to offer a million-dollar prize without having to pay out a million dollars if someone won. This got us a lot of attention in the industry.”

Starting with hole-in-one challenges for golf tournaments, IC Group was soon underwriting big-money prize pools for competitions in every major sport—anything from center ice slap shots in hockey to half court free throws in basketball. And sport prizing was just the start. IC Group rapidly developed products to support all kinds of promotional activity, from promotional scratch cards to major marketing campaigns.

It was also natural to extend the business beyond insurance. “If you’re buying our prize insurance, it’s natural for us to do your prize fulfillment, and that leads to other services such as legal, tech support, customer support—and of course creative design and print. Over time we outgrew the insurance side and became a full service promotions agency. We’ve been interactive since the late 90s, and today all our work involves some kind of online experience.”

IC Group is now backed by Lloyds of London and has worked with Fortune 500 corporations including Del Monte, McDonald’s, Disney and Kimberley-Clark. To date, the company has delivered more than 5,000 projects in 24 countries and paid out over \$100 million in cash prizes.

The Challenge

Most promotions run along the same lines. However, client expectations meant that IC Group was often tasked with custom coding every solution, even though they might be very similar to each other.

This made IC Group’s offering increasingly expensive. At the same time, new competitors were putting the business under pressure, “Our pricing had been pushed up beyond what the market could support. Competitors were taking business away from us. We needed to act.”

“Sitefinity has changed the way IC Group does things. We have reinvented the way we go to market. We are no longer just a specialist vendor serving marketing agencies – for many of our clients we are now a leader in the marketing strategy.”

Paul M. Lacap, Director of Product Innovation & Marketing Services, IC Group

A Flexible Platform: How Sitefinity Adapts To Your Needs

In the modern world, every organization needs its CMS to connect to existing infrastructure. Often the CMS needs to talk to external systems. Sitefinity makes it easy to create custom solutions that are perfectly adapted, whatever the requirement.

Sitefinity integrates easily with existing infrastructure. Using the Provider Model and supporting multiple providers, Sitefinity pulls in data from disparate sources, while making its own data easily accessible through its fully-exposed API and RESTful Web Services. Its use of Open Access ORM means that multiple database options are supported. Its support for Windows Workflow Foundation means it aligns seamlessly with business-critical processes such as mandatory pre-publication approval.

Out of the box, Sitefinity Connector for SharePoint can be used to expose corporate documents and content assets through a secure public web presence layer.

Many Sitefinity Partners specialize in creating integrations with CRM, ERP and other business systems. Find out more about the Sitefinity Partner Network at www.sitefinity.com/partners.

The Solution

IC Group set out to create a common platform for all projects. However, they could not find a content management system that offered the right combination of security and creative freedom. “Typically, we found the security and technical quality would be acceptable,” says Paul, “But when it came to creative freedom, we found ourselves unacceptably constrained—and the creative is where we tend to add most value.”

Then IC Group heard about Sitefinity. “We first looked at Sitefinity in 2011. We discovered that it was secure, that it was extensible, and that it could integrate with our existing infrastructure. But the most exciting promise was that its easy-to-use interface would give us the creative freedom to make our designs as great as we wanted them to be.”

Pilot Project

Inspired, IC Group management created a pilot project to evaluate Sitefinity. From the beginning the project team was given freedom to touch every part of the business, from infrastructure to architecture to processes. “The scope widened as the project developed,” says Paul, who led the project. “It started with Sitefinity, but it went way beyond Sitefinity.”

“Progress have engaged with us in a way that is totally different to other vendors we have worked with in the past. Progress customer services and support is one of the best things we've seen. For us, being a Sitefinity Partner is a real partnership.”

Paul M. Lacap
Director of Product Innovation & Marketing Services
IC Group

Initially, however, the project faced internal skepticism. Many in the tech teams had seen it all before. “People felt that they had tried doing this with other products or in-house, and they knew it wasn’t going to work.”

Knowing that the project would only succeed if IC Group fully understood Sitefinity, Paul called on the Progress Services team. “Progress Services helped in two ways. First, they advised on solutions architecture. Second, one member of the Services team worked with us throughout the project and we hired a new developer to partner with him so we could capture the knowledge internally.”

.NET From the Ground Up: How Sitefinity is Built for Developers

Sitefinity feels instantly familiar to .NET developers because it is based on standard and widely understood ASP.NET technologies, including .NET controls, MVC views, .NET data providers, Master Pages and Themes.

Further, Sitefinity supports MVC and Razor. It is the only CMS that can switch freely between Web Forms and MVC. Sitefinity’s MVC implementation is fully aligned with Microsoft’s, meaning existing MVC code works ‘as is’.

Even within Visual Studio, Sitefinity helps out with Sitefinity Thunder, a plug-in that enables developers to access websites—as well as numerous helpful tools—without ever leaving Visual Studio.

The Sitefinity Module Builder also saves development time and effort by automating the creation of modules, freeing developers to focus on crafting the business logic.



The Result

The pilot project was delivered successfully and within deadline. “The pilot project proved that it was doable,” says Paul. “By the time the project ended, everyone was on board with Sitefinity, even the sceptics.”

Adopting Sitefinity has radically changed the way IC Group works. Whereas in the past all web projects required participation by high level technical resources—HTML developers, .NET application developers and the database team—now an entire site can be deployed by non-technical end-users, such as designers.

This has been achieved by creating custom controls and widgets which can be dropped straight into the page without resorting to code. These provide the complex functionality required to drive a sophisticated promotional site. They include data collection controls that feed customer data straight into IC Group’s proprietary databases, non-visual controls which meet regulatory requirements for tracking and audit, and controls which provide game functionality on the page.

IC Group’s in house development team is creating new controls and widgets at the rate of 50-100 items per quarter. “We are trying to push everything through Sitefinity. We have some catching up to do, but we are on the way.”

The Benefit

For IC Group, the benefits have been dramatic. Development timelines have been slashed. Before, a project would typically take 6-8 weeks. Now a website can be up and running 5-10 days after completion of creative design. Where once development and QA might have run at 60-80 hours, this has been greatly reduced—in some cases by up to 90%.

“We have seen huge savings and immediate gains in speed to market,” says Paul. “We are more agile and more innovative. We can respond to changes in the online environment more quickly. When a new social media channel emerges we can deploy to it immediately, or when new devices appear we can adapt our designs quickly.”

The success of the pilot project triggered the creation of a new area within the IC Group. This team focuses on innovation and business processes, building on the success of the Sitefinity adoption.

“Sitefinity has changed the way IC Group does things. We have reinvented the way we go to market. Instead of repeating the same user experience, we are now moving up the value chain. We have the resources to do our own R&D and innovate. We are no longer just a specialist vendor serving marketing agencies—for many of our clients we are now a leader in the marketing strategy. This has led to a shift in our relationships and the way we do things.”

The Verdict

“When we were evaluating Sitefinity and other products, 50% of our evaluation was on security and data integrity, and 25% of our evaluation was on price and how this fit with our business model,” says Paul. “The other 25% was on the relationship available to us from the vendor. Here, Telerik and Sitefinity have exceeded our expectations.”

“Progress has engaged with us in a way that is totally different to other vendors we have worked with in the past.

The Services team was fantastic but that was just the start. We have met all the key stakeholders in Sitefinity all the way up to top management. We have met the Sitefinity developers and we exchange ideas with them. Telerik customer services and support is one of the best things we’ve seen.”

“We have enrolled in the Sitefinity Partner Program. For us, being a Sitefinity Partner is a real partnership.”

About IC Group

IC Group delivers award winning regional, national, and international interactive promotions, marketing customer relationship management, and loyalty rewards programs to the world’s top companies, brands and agencies. Since 1989, IC Group’s performance-based approach has created the very best in online promotions and proven marketing solutions that activate sales, lower the cost of customer acquisition, and grow customer lifetime value. IC Group also provides insurance and risk management services that mitigate risk and allow clients to create big impact securely. www.icgrouppl.com

About Sitefinity

Progress® Sitefinity™ is a content management and marketing analytics platform designed to maximize the agility needed to succeed in today’s rapidly changing digital marketplace. It provides developers and IT teams the tools they need to support enterprise-level digital marketing, optimizing the customer journey by delivering seamless personalized experiences across different technologies and devices. Progress is a trusted source for the digital marketing innovation needed to create transformative customer experiences that fuel business success. Go to www.sitefinity.com. Call us +1-888-365-2779. Email sales@sitefinity.com

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Digital Marketing Maturity Evaluation Guide



About Digital Factory

Visit Website

www.icgrouppl.com

About Progress

Progress (NASDAQ: PRGS) is a global leader in application development, empowering the digital transformation organizations need to create and sustain engaging user experiences in today’s evolving marketplace. With offerings spanning web, mobile and data for on-premise and cloud environments, Progress powers startups and industry titans worldwide, promoting success one customer at a time. Learn about Progress at www.progress.com or 1-781-280-4000.

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