



Case Study: The General Teaching Council for England



What our client said

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Ysanne Stiell-McNeill,
Web Manager,
GTC

The Challenge

The General Teaching Council for England (GTC) is the professional body for teaching in England. Its overall purpose is to work in the public interest to help improve standards of teaching and learning. Its role includes keeping a register of qualified teachers in England, setting out and maintaining standards for the teaching profession and providing policy advice to government and other agencies.

The GTC website provides teachers, parents, employers and government agencies with access to a wealth of information on teaching, policies, research, training, advice, guidance etc and a number of collaborative networks where members can share and exchange knowledge and research. As website numbers reached a plateau and keeping information updated became increasingly resource intensive, the GTC led by its Web manager, Ysanne Stiell-McNeill embarked on a project to re-design and launch a new higher performing, information rich website.

After a comprehensive competitive tendering exercise the GTC team selected Kainos. An existing partner of its corporate CMS system provider, Alterian, Kainos was a natural fit and one whose record of delivering CMS-based website projects was exemplary according to Ysanne. “Kainos came highly recommended and had a track record of delivering high quality Web projects. They demonstrated their ability to work in partnership with other suppliers and we settled down quickly to the fundamental evaluation of the infrastructure to support the new site.”

This important phase of the project proved essential to the project’s success. Kainos conducted an investigation into the website infrastructure with a view to recommending various improvements options including a complete overhaul. “This turned out to be very good advice and set the project off on a very sound footing, one that has contributed to its ongoing success,” adds Ysanne.

The Solution

Recognising that the challenge was as much about simplifying the content management process for GTC staff as it was about delivering an intuitive, engaging website to support teachers and members of the public, Kainos set about designing and configuring a website that could satisfy both aims. Key to that was the way in which the GTC could access the underlying Alterian content management system. The aim was to build capacity in the GTC without growing headcount. This meant that non-expert staff needed to be able to effect their own content updates with little to no support from the Web team. Kainos needed to sufficiently configure the Alterian CMS to deliver this business aim.

Ysanne explains, “To improve efficiency and ensure that information is easily updated by information owners rather than rely on the web team, we focused on simplifying the interface with our CMS and this has completely changed the way that we work. What was previously a complicated expert-only process has now been simplified to the point where our information owners can create and upload their own content.

Information is now available on the site quicker and this frees up the web team to use their expertise more appropriately across the GTC in the creation of rich content or the development of new applications, for example.”

With the CMS upgraded and the interface simplified, the team followed a ground up Website design; testing and configuring and managing issues along the way. This diligent approach to the project paid dividends,” Ysanne adds. “Sure, we encountered some difficulties along the way – what project wouldn’t? You are mixing people and technology after all! But it is the way that the issues are handled and how maturely each party deals with them that dictate success. Kainos was very good in this regard. The individuals make the difference in a project like this.”

Following close collaboration between the teams, rigorous testing and management, the new website went live in March clearly delivering on its goal of a robust, intuitive, information-rich, audience-focused, high performing website.

The Benefits

The new site seamlessly integrates GTC’s information sources and online applications under one website, has resolved poor performance issues and provides capacity for future growth. It is fully compliant with accessibility guidelines and has a modern, contemporary appearance to better attract its audience.

“The project has certainly delivered on our goals. Site performance is much improved, service availability is higher, complaints are now few to none, we have a consistent and reliable full search capability and the self service sign up is being rapidly adopted with more than 20,000 teachers signed up already.”

Crucially, the CMS interface is now simplified to the extent that non-experts such as the events team, press team, and publications teams are able to upload content and this makes for faster information availability.

The Future

GTCE has awarded its ongoing website support contract to Kainos, a decision that Ysanne says is testament to the quality of service and expertise that the Kainos delivery team demonstrated throughout the project.

“We now have a website with a supporting infrastructure that allows it to grow and mature over time and a partner in Kainos who will work with us to continually refine and improve the site and the service it provides for our users. We have indeed walked the walk.”

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