

## Content-rich Portal Prototype in 3 Months for a National Museum’s Ocean Exhibit

Prototype Site Positions Museum for Future Flexibility

### Business Challenge

A premier national museum was building a natural history exhibit, “Ocean Hall”, to increase public awareness and literacy of the oceans. Opening in September of 2008, the exhibit would be the largest of its kind ever. The museum needed assistance in building a beautiful and compelling web portal prototype for this highly visible flagship project. They needed to work with a partner that could fully engage a widely diverse audience in the prototype development process ranging from scientists to fund raisers, engineers, government workers, and museum curators as well as the general public.

The museum moved forward with the development of the website’s prototype in advance of the actual exhibit to secure the required funding for the exhibit. The prototype had to be scalable so that the portal would evolve with new technologies over the exhibit’s 30-year life cycle. The museum had to be able to manage dynamic updates of content pages and to support content input from diverse collaborators. Because they are dependent on federal support and private donations, the museum was facing hard and fast deadlines in order to get the proper funding in place. It cut the portal’s delivery schedule in half and worked with a tighter budget. People with potentially different expectations needed to communicate and work together efficiently – and quickly – in order to arrive at a unified, realized vision of the portal.

### The Solution

The Acumen Solutions team developed the prototype using an Interwoven TeamSite content management solution. The team took an enterprise approach and developed the implementation strategy to accommodate a variety of partner, collaborator, and scientific organizations. It led with user experience and information architecture before addressing requirements definitions. This enabled the museum to get an early understanding of the portal’s future appearance and navigation. Due to the aggressive schedule, the team made communications



a high priority. It established a secure working prototype website accessible for the posting of documents. Working sessions were held every two weeks to review progress, expedite decision making, and foster collaboration. The information architecture supported the fully-realized portal solution (beyond prototype) to provide for detailed taxonomies supporting scientific data. The team also created the site’s visual design, providing a lush aesthetic to the “look and feel.”

Since the client did not have a development environment, the team built the site at Acumen Solutions headquarters and then launched the finished product on the client's environment, thus saving the museum from investing in development infrastructure.

In a phased approach, the Acumen Solutions team developed and validated templates, established the development environment, and configured servers, using a methodology that defined the requirements so that the content would build visually in front of the client's eyes. The team was able to demonstrate logical flows, create wire frames and then mock-ups with imagery and fonts. This disciplined process took into consideration the different viewpoints of the client's constituencies located in dispersed locations.

The Acumen Solutions team documented the decision making process and the information architecture. It produced mood boards, visual concept mockups, template requirements, test scripts and results, and user guides. It also conducted an infrastructure assessment to provide the client with scaleable hardware, software, and operational and support recommendations for implementing the full portal solution.

Extensive coding and development were required to meet the project's detailed requirements. At the project's completion, the team conducted user training. Acumen Solutions also made recommendations for the full portal development to be aligned with the Ocean Hall exhibit opening and beyond.

Because the portal is programmed with dynamic navigation, when a content change is entered in one place, the meta data populates every other place that the content touches. Interactive video and audio resembling a video game and the ability to zoom into maps like Google Earth are among some of the specialized features developed for this project.

### **Business and Technology Expertise**

- Interwoven TeamSite software skills
- Information Architecture expertise
- Enterprise Content and Data Management expertise
- Website QA
- Strong Project Management Skills to bring groups to rapid agreement

### **Return on Investment**

Originally scheduled to be completed in six months, Acumen Solutions completed the project in three months and was significantly more affordable than competitors. As a result, the museum was able to present a working and scalable prototype to potential donors. With the portal's help, the museum will soon gain major commitments from potential donors. The architecture and tools used to develop the portal provided a very scalable platform which was easy to maintain by non-technical museum staff and saved hours of time in website updating.