
SITE MAPPING UTAH.GOV

Government to Citizen

State of Utah

SITE MAPPING UTAH.GOV

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The State of Utah has invested tremendous effort into providing information to its citizens via the Internet. In October 2006, the State began to develop a two year strategic plan for e-government to enhance the way it provided services and information to citizens. At the time, the Utah.gov domain received about 700,000 unique visitors each month. This measurement remained fairly static for two years, and Utah's e-government coordinators, under the direction of the CIO, were determined to find a way to increase the value of Utah.gov to citizens. By January 2007, the State published a new strategic e-government plan that included five primary initiatives. Site mapping became one of the featured initiatives, with the overall goal of elevating the value of Utah's investment in e-government for Utah citizens and businesses.

The Google search engine owns the largest market share in online search. Utah determined that because of its dominance in this area, a Google partnership made sense in helping the State extend its reach to citizens. Working with Google, the State identified two key components to the initiative that would have the greatest impact. By site mapping key databases that provided dynamic Web content, Utah could make vast amounts of data searchable by all search engines and, consequently, more accessible to citizens.

The Department of Technology Services coordinated the project with all State agencies through the State's Product Management Council, which included department-level personnel, each assigned with the overall responsibility for that department's online activities and Web sites. The State worked with Google to develop a shared online environment where all parties could track the progress of the initiative. By April, the initiative was announced to the world. Three other states were included in the Google partnership announcement as well.

The overall result of the site mapping initiative has exceeded State expectations in terms of providing deeper access to government information. Combined with the Utah.gov Custom Search Engine (CSE), the State has seen an increase of 34% in unique visitors, and significant comparative increases in breadth of keyword access, indicative of greater search penetration by users. Access to employment information for Utah job seekers can now be accomplished directly with a Google search because of site mapping the actual database. Online service adoption has increased substantially, largely as a result of site maps and the Google CSE.

DESCRIPTION OF THE BUSINESS PROBLEM

Although Utah.gov was a major destination for citizens in October 2006, traffic had leveled off. For two years, traffic to the State's Web site had remained fairly static. The same group of citizens continued to do business online with the State, but the State's e-government leadership realized that they had to do something new if they were going to capture additional users, because citizens had a growing list of options of what they could do during the time they spent online. They also realized that not all users were accessing the State's custom applications to find the information they were looking for. The site mapping project appeared to provide an opportunity for extending the reach of Utah.gov to citizens who were less accustomed to using its portfolio of online services.

This project was a unique partnership between four states, including Utah, and one of the Internet's most creative companies. The State of Utah was able to produce a high value, custom search engine for its citizens at almost no cost, while also vastly increasing citizen access to public data.

The project also included a unique, agile working process with a high-level of online collaboration between multiple State agencies and an offsite provider. The State's Product Management Council coordinated online training of the site mapping process with Google. Over 20 State agencies, and many local agencies, participated in this process. The State used Google's online spreadsheet to identify individual site mapping projects and share them with Google and State project leaders. Google also identified key data sources that could not be accessed by the search engine. Within a short time, a substantial list of achievable projects was identified with data sources that would be of most interest to citizens.

The collaborative management of these projects, and maintaining focus on a few high priority tasks, helped ensure the success of the project.

Solution Description

Google Custom Search Engine

The State of Utah custom search engine was developed as part of this project. The State has included 512 domains and sites in the custom search. Although the majority of content is specific to utah.gov, the search engine also covers local and federal agencies in Utah. For example, the US Forest Service and local school districts are all searchable through the tool, ensuring that citizens are able to access as much relevant content as possible.

Google Site Maps

The site maps vary depending on the agency and data. Those which are most critical to this project are site maps which have opened up new data and information to search engine users. Prior to this project, a citizen could only find specific job data by

accessing the Department of Workforce Services' job query service. Now, every individual job is searchable through a standard search engine.

Length of Time in Operation

The custom search engine and site mapped data was announced on April 30, 2007. It has been accessible now for over 13 months.

SIGNIFICANCE TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE OPERATION OF GOVERNMENT

In the year since this announcement was made, the State has measured growth in the number of citizens accessing a variety of tools, including Google Analytics, Quantcast, and Compete.com. By the end of 2007, unique visitors to Utah.gov had increased to over 900,000 per month. The e-government team set the goal of reaching over 1,000,000 unique visitors in 2008. This goal was reached in January 2008, as well as every subsequent month through April, when the domain was accessed by 1,178,468 unique visitors. Emphasis is on unique visitors vs. total visits because of the goal of bringing new visitors to Utah.gov via the search engine.

A major contributor to the growth of this metric has been the increase in relevant, useful content available to citizens through the State portal, much of which is directly attributable to the site mapping project. In October 2006, a generic Google search of the domain yielded just over one million results. By January 2008, the same generic search of the domain yielded over two million results, and by May 2008, the same search produced 3,120,000 results.

What caused this dramatic growth in searchable results? The major factor is the degree to which Utah implemented the site mapping protocol. Here is an example. Using an advanced search, it is now possible to find all of the jobs that were listed with the Utah Department of Workforces Services in the past 24 hours throughout the state. Prior to site mapping, the job seeker would have needed to find the job search application on the department's Web site and then specify these criteria. Now that information is accessible through whatever search engine the user may choose. Site mapping Utah.gov sites has demonstrably improved citizen access to government information.

BENEFIT OF THE PROJECT

This project has already yielded immeasurable benefits to the citizens of Utah. Large quantities of information that were previously difficult or, in some cases, impossible to find on the Internet are now readily accessible. Examples of data accessible through the project include the State's job database, Utah burials, State Library publications, oil and gas production data, and workforce statistical data.

Key benefits of the project can be summarized as follows:

- **Better Access to Employment Data**

Jobs that are created in Utah and reported to the Department of Workforce Services become searchable by Yahoo, Google, and other search engines the day that they are entered into the jobs database. As mentioned earlier, Utah recognizes that these search engines are the preferred job search instrument for millions of job seekers in and out of Utah. Because of its importance to citizens, making this data more accessible was a priority of the project.








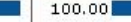
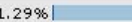

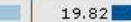


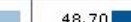






- **Direct Access From Search Engines**

As already mentioned, the jobs database was only one of many sources that were made more accessible. Government Web developers and programmers throughout Utah are now much more aware of what it takes to make their data reachable by larger numbers of citizens.

- **Greater breadth of Keyword searches**

The Web analytics service, Compete.com, identifies top keywords that drive traffic to Web sites. Compete reveals that there are 3,978 top keywords driving traffic to Utah.gov compared to 1,120 for Az.gov and 706 for Colorado.gov, two nearby states with much larger populations. It is believed that the Utah site mapping project has made Utah.gov much more searchable.

Keyword effectiveness as measured by Compete.com

| Volume Rank  | Keyword  | Site Share  | Keyword Engagement  | Keyword Effectiveness  |
|---|---|--|---|---|
| 1 | utah jobs | 1.41%  | 100.00  | 100.00  |
| 2 | utah recovery service | 1.29%  | 21.67  | 19.82  |
| 3 | utah dmrv | 1.18%  | 58.53  | 48.70  |
| 4 | utah.gov | 1.01%  | 91.97  | 66.05  |
| 5 | utah state parks | 0.89%  | 39.94  | 25.08  |

This table shows how effective the keyword “utah jobs” is on for the period March-May 2008, according to Compete.com. Site mapping has had a major impact on increasing the effectiveness of search engine keywords.

- **Increased Number of Unique Visitors to Utah.gov**

Utah has long been a leader in putting services and information online. Because of the potential for these services to reduce the overall cost of government, Utah has looked for ways to increase traffic to the domain and increase the adoption rate for individual online services. Unique visitors to the domain in April 2008 were up 34% over the previous year.

- **Increased Adoption Rates of Utah.gov Services**

In addition to a large direct impact on overall domain traffic, the State has experienced large increases in the adoption rates of many key services over the past 13 months.

- **Utah's Unemployment and Job Creation Rates Lead the Nation.**