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DEPARTMENT OF
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OREGON.GOV

State Portal Redesign

Digital Government: Government to Citizen

State of Oregon

http://www.oregon.gov

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Executive Summary

Oregon.gov is the digital front door to Oregon and its government, for tens of millions of visitors. Oregon residents are among the most connected online in the country with 88% having Internet access at home. Oregon was also recently recognized by the United States Public Interest Research Group (USPIRG) as providing one of the best Transparency portals in the country. Since the last redesign of Oregon.gov over eight years ago, major advances in technology, social behaviors, and website usability best practices necessitated starting from scratch. Over the past year the State has been committed to bringing Oregon.gov in line with its web-savvy constituents and provide future value in online services.

This project vigorously engaged and sought input from the public to determine what they needed in a government portal. Starting broadly, Oregonian's were surveyed to determine what they wanted and needed in online services. Next, visitors to Oregon.gov provided input on why they visited and what would help them complete their searches and tasks more efficiently. Residents also provided important feedback and insight that was beneficial in selecting the new Oregon.gov logo. Finally, both in-person and online usability testing was conducted with residents to put the final touches on the portal redesign. In total, input from more than 2,400 Oregon residents proved invaluable and resulted in a portal *from* the people instead of *for* the people.

The portal redesign was guided by all levels of state government. Drawing its ranks from agencies across the state, the E-Governance Board worked through every step of the project, from defining project goals to final testing. Ideas and input were also drawn from the legislature, Electronic Portal Advisory Board, technology leaders, CIO Council, website contributors, and E-Gov User Groups. This work also included a collaboration with the Oregon Commission for the Blind that provided invaluable lessons in both usability and accessibility for those using assistive technologies. The wisdom and insight provided by all of these participants and groups touched every element of the new portal, from color contrasts to custom search indexing.

A project of this scale and quality achieved, might be expected to cost taxpayers both a significant sum in development as well as long-term maintenance, not so. Funding is structured through the E-Government Program and based on an innovative enterprise service model. What this means is that no additional costs to taxpayers were accrued in the portal redesign. In addition, the enterprise approach ensures that all future agency services, not just websites, will directly benefit from proven design features that emerged during this collaborative effort. This adds exponentially to the cost avoidance and value of future website redesigns, online applications, and eCommerce services for years to come.

Background and Situation

Oregon.gov was last revised in October 2006 and needed to be updated to reflect the current usage trends of Oregon residents. The web site is now being utilized by 22% through mobile devices—a 30% growth in mobile usage over the year before. The count of average monthly unique visitors to Oregon.gov over the past year has continued to grow to over 1,395,000, bringing the count of total unique visitors over the past year to an impressive 16.7 million. Oregon's E-Government Program was established through a Governor's Office Executive Order in 2001 and is administered by the Department of Administrative Services. The Oregon Legislature further supported the Program by enacting legislation in 2011 that established an Electronic Portal Advisory Board to advance the effectiveness and delivery of new online services to the public.

The Oregon E-Government Program is based on an enterprise service model that enables all Oregon government organizations (large or small) to improve public access to government information. For example, 165 agency websites are all implemented and supported through the state's centralized content management system (CMS), which is one of the largest CMS build outs on a centralized platform in the nation. This enterprise approach to E-Government services provides significant year over year financial and operational efficiencies to the state.

As a result of this project, the newly redesigned state portal was developed at no charge through Oregon's E-Government Program with the assistance of NICUSA, Inc., who is under contract to provide services. There were no additional costs to redesign the website resulting in an estimated $800,000 to $1,200,000 in cost avoidance to the state.

We learned through surveying over 1,200 Oregonians that they come to Oregon.gov looking for specific services (like trying to find a job or how to obtain a nursing license) but were having a hard time finding them. So we reorganized the content to focus on getting them to the services they needed quickly, by targeting the top 75% of what people are looking for when they search. All portal content was completely reconstructed from the ground up, with a mobile first content strategy that is all accessed via a drastically streamlined information architecture, and a powerful search centric design that drastically improves citizen access to information and services.

Barriers, Challenges and Opportunities

In any enterprise project, challenges arise around being maximally inclusive while understanding that success requires clearly defined goals. Projects that aim to enlist the depth of public input seen in the State Portal Redesign require a multi-pronged approach. This project included the following:

- 200 in-person and online usability tests on the prototype with Oregon residents.
- Telephone survey of a representative sample of 1,200 Oregon residents with a margin of error of +/- 1.7% on their perception of e-government in Oregon.

- Survey results from 957 visitors to the Oregon.gov website on their reason for visiting the site and what would make it more useful.
- Survey results from 100 Oregonian residents about the new Oregon.gov logo.

Challenges also arose around keeping representatives from different organizations engaged while performing their normal full-time work for their agency. Central to the success of this project were the 40+ members of the E-Governance Board. Members provided ideas, decision making input, tackled complex issues in focused Sub-Groups, and extensively used the state's enterprise collaboration website. IT leaders from across the state were also engaged through CIO Council presentations. Legislative members and online-service leaders also provided input and feedback on portal redesign progress, through the E-Government Portal Advisory Board. Finally, those on the frontline of web content management participated in E-Gov User groups, where they provided insight and feedback on progress.

Significance

The Oregon.gov mobile first redesign was built upon four essential principles: a task driven design, usability, accessibility, and a focus on continuous improvement. Each of these principles represent a leap from previous portal designs and required constant evaluation and attention as scope, resources and time were carefully balanced. A collaboration with the Oregon Commission for the Blind provided invaluable lessons in both usability and accessibility, especially for those using assistive technology like Screen Readers. These lessons were fully implemented in the Commission's website, passing rigorous testing against 16 disabilities, and will be implemented in all new website templates used statewide, thereby providing a benefit to all users of the Oregon.gov portal. The methods used, materials developed, and lessons learned are available to agencies and will be updated with each new E-Government project. Understanding what residents want to accomplish, how they use the web portal, and implementing accessibility best practices, ensures that all Oregonians will benefit from this project.

Task Driven Design

Departing from the popular trend of featuring a list of all online services, our usability studies revealed that actual Oregon residents didn't think about "Online Services". Instead, they think about a specific task they're trying to complete. Task-focused tiles and specific services delivered prominently in search results, now feature services in a way that makes sense to the residents of Oregon.

Usability

The new Oregon.gov's functionality is driven by data that produces real results for all users. Usability testing with residents is being applied to all agency sites within the Oregon.gov domain. Example sites include the Medical Board, Secretary of State,

Consumer & Business Services Insurance Division, and the Business Express Portal. Analysis of the data collected during this testing resulted in more than 25 iterations of the content and design for consideration.

Accessibility

Simply being accessible is not enough. Oregon.gov also strives for usable accessibility. Examples are provided below.

- Tested accessibility with blind employees at the Oregon Commission for the Blind to verify assumptions about accessibility best practices and real world use.
- Applied W3C ARIA roles and ARIA Live Labeling to enhance accessibility. (ARIA – Accessible Rich Internet Applications: a technical specification published by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) that specifies how to increase the accessibility of web pages.)
- Special attention was paid to features such as the task tiles, tweaking ARIA Live Labeling to notify screen readers when active.
- Removed the rotation of featured content areas – testing on screen readers demonstrated that these features, even with the proper ARIA roles applied, create frustrating endless reading loops for some screen readers.

Live Chat and Feedback

- Live Chat Help, Website Feedback, and Search Feedback help us engage with visitors to Oregon.gov and ensure that we *continually improve* and provide better services over time.
- Portal change requests and updates will be considered in conjunction with enterprise wide goals and principals, in collaboration with the E-Governance board on a continual basis.

This Oregon.gov redesign project also aligns with the 2015 NASCIO Priority Strategies, Management Processes and Solutions in the areas of Budget and Cost Control, Mobile Services/Enterprise Mobility Management, and Customer Relationship Management.

Benefits of the Project

What is most innovative about Oregon.gov is its laser focus on what matters to the citizens of Oregon. We've eliminated unnecessary "features" that usability testing revealed to be hindrances rather than assets. Visitors to Oregon.gov are now empowered to find what they seek to get on with their day, through a site that delivers content and information using an aesthetically pleasing design and flow. The innovative features that support this mobile first content strategy include the following.

Task Tiles
Surveys, analytics, and user feedback revealed that the four areas of particular interest to Oregon.gov visitors are Payments, Forms, Licenses, and Driver-related tasks. In

addition, prominent tiles allow content to be filtered, reducing the time it takes to find content in a list.

Search
What happens to a resident searching for "How much do I owe in taxes?" when the application designed to answer that question is named "My Account"? With thoughtful indexing and a constant feedback loop, Oregon.gov's dynamic search delivers relevant information and content described in a user-friendly manner.

Social Media
Oregon's open data portal data.oregon.gov, was leveraged to dynamically deliver agency social media links. Detailed filtering capabilities allow website visitors to focus on their own unique criteria and results. In addition, you won't find an Oregon.gov specific social media presence - feedback demonstrated that government social media is useful for following specific topics or individuals, but a single statewide social media presence provides no added value and just adds clutter.

Maps
Analyzing the top 500 search terms for Oregon.gov revealed a significant interest in three categories: DMV locations, Employment Centers, and State Parks. Maps feature and deliver a user-friendly way to locate these three relevant categories near your destination using geolocation. Additional data sources are actively being gathered to add to and expand this service.

Persistent Header/Footer
Keeping the data portal page header and footer visible ensures that the user always knows where they are and what options are available when searching.

Security and Privacy
Oregon is committed to securing private and sensitive data for all online services. Through the use of encryption, multi-tiered environments, firewalls, security cameras and authentication, citizen data is protected whether active or at rest. Oregon E-Government services undergo an annual independent security audit that checks over 400 controls, and conducts annual audits for compliance with Sarbanes-Oxley, SAS 70, and Payment Card Industry Data Security Standards.

Conclusion

Oregonian's are some of the most connected and web-savvy residents in the country. Understanding the need to align the state portal with exciting emerging technologies and best practices in web design, the E-Government Program reached out to residents and all levels of state government. What emerged as a result of this project is a web portal designed by those who use it, incorporating mobile first design with increased accessibility, at no additional cost.