



# **8 AMAZING DRUPAL LAUNCHES**

**STORIES FROM TOP DRUPAL AGENCIES & DEVELOPERS**

# LAUNCHING WEBSITES IS DECEPTIVELY COMPLEX.

Perhaps that's why 60% of projects launch late. Sure, scope creep and last-minute feature requests share some of the blame. But let's be honest: building and launching websites is hard, and the status quo for tools to do it isn't nearly good enough.

Beyond trying to meet feature requirements for the site itself, companies are left holding the bag when it comes to workflow, developer collaboration, and of course getting the final product online in a secure and scalable way. This creates stress and confusion, diverts resources, and all too frequently leads to blown deadlines and project delays. This clearly isn't the future.

What if launching Drupal sites could be less labor, and more love? That's why I teamed up with top Drupal thought leaders in website infrastructure and built Pantheon.

**Our customers say Pantheon completes Drupal.** It's the fastest, most efficient way to build, launch, and manage Drupal sites. Not only do sites built & launched on Pantheon finish on time-but they're beating the clock.

In this book, a few top agencies and developers share their launch success stories.



— Zack Rosen, CEO and Co-Founder of Pantheon

# 8 AMAZING DRUPAL LAUNCHES:

## 1. OPEN ME

Design & build a mission-critical website in 2 months, start to finish.

## 2. ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

2,000+ sites, all hosted and supported by ASU

## 3. FORUM OF REGIONAL ASSOCIATIONS OF GRANTMAKERS

Launched 17 websites on a single distribution—without using Multisite.

## 4. ZICASSO

Migrated 1,000,000 nodes from Drupal 5 to Drupal 7 with zero hiccups.

## 5. THE NEW REPUBLIC

Seamlessly delivered 100,000,000 page views on launch day.

## 6. SCRANTON GILLETTE COMMUNICATIONS

Managing 20+ branded sites with a true-cloud infrastructure.

## 7. B.R.I.D.G.E. TO DATA

A 10-hour migration freed them from AWS, IT infrastructure support, and old-fashioned-hosting-based headaches.

## 8. MUKURTU CMS

Designing an open-source platform to reach a worldwide user base.



## OPEN ME

### DESIGN & BUILD A MISSION-CRITICAL WEBSITE IN 2 MONTHS, START TO FINISH

*Ilya Pozin is a columnist for Inc.com, Forbes, TNW, and LinkedIn. He's a gadget lover, investor, mentor, husband, father, and "30 Under 30" entrepreneur. He's also the founder and CEO of Open Me, a web application that makes it easy to find and send the perfect digital and physical greeting card. Open Me is one of dozens of web applications built by Ciplax, a Drupal and Magento shop whose teams rely on Pantheon for their development environments. Here are Pozin's thoughts on Pantheon.*

#### THE CHALLENGE

I've always been the kind of guy who bought greeting cards because I had to—not because I wanted to. As I got busier with work and family, I started getting in trouble with my wife for not being as thoughtful as I should be. I placed the blame on the inconvenience of going to the store and trying to find a card that wasn't terrible. I knew there could be an easier way.

I happen to be in the same entrepreneur group as the founder of Threadless, so I pitched him on an idea for a new kind of greeting card company. As it turns out, the traditional card industry is declining at 5% a year, while the online segment is growing at 20% a year. The market is shifting toward convenience.

#### THE SOLUTION

Threadless crowdsources amazing designs from 200,000 artists around the world. We partnered with them to use their designs in our cards. Our system allows you to order ecards for free, and ship printed cards to a recipient for \$4. Our Web app spares you the inconvenience of buying a stamp and a card, filling out the card, adding a photo, and dropping it in the mail.

***We decided to use Pantheon's Drupal platform solution because it was out-of-the-box and ready-to-go, built for the environment we would be launching with.***

#### WHY WE LEFT A \$10,000 HOSTING CREDIT ON THE TABLE

An incubator offered us a \$10,000 Amazon hosting credit, and even though it would have knocked a year off of our hosting costs, we decided not to use it. Here's why.



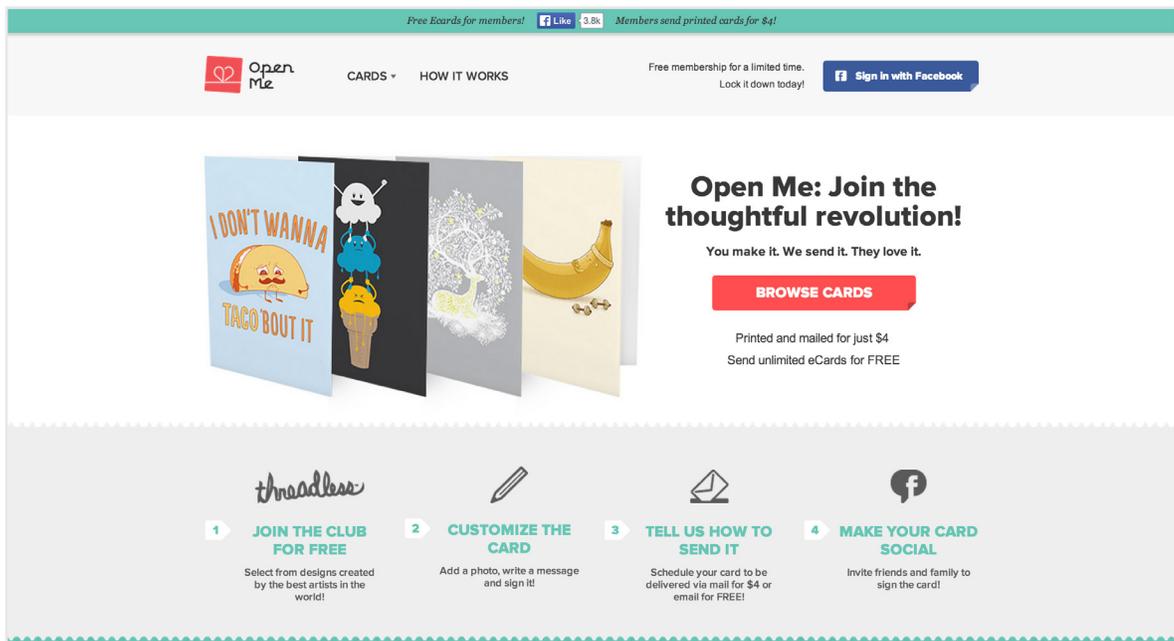
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I asked Amazon if they had an out-of-the-box Drupal environment to customize for us. They said we could run a script to build the environment ourselves, but the script required a substantial amount of configuration from our developers. So I had to make a choice: Should I take resources away from building our site to set up a hosting environment? Is that \$10,000 credit worth the opportunity and development costs?

After a cost analysis, we found that Amazon would be less cost efficient, even with the \$10,000 credit. We decided to use Pantheon's Drupal platform solution because it was out-of-the-box and ready-to-go, built for the environment we would be launching with.

## A CORE PRODUCT BUILT IN 2 MONTHS, FROM START TO FINISH

The site was built fast—in 5 weeks with 5 full-time people. From start to finish, the entire core product was done in less than 2 months. I credit our speed to Pantheon and to CipleX's agile process of not taking on more than one project at a time. The entire team was able to focus on our launch. Pantheon's dev-test-live environment made the transition to live a no-brainer. In the end, we barely used our own team for system administration and other setup.



The screenshot shows the 'Open Me' website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with the 'Open Me' logo, 'CARDS' and 'HOW IT WORKS' menus, and a 'Sign in with Facebook' button. Below the navigation, a gallery of four cards is displayed: a taco, a cloud with a stick figure, a tree, and a banana. To the right of the cards, a headline reads 'Open Me: Join the thoughtful revolution!' with a sub-headline 'You make it. We send it. They love it.' and a prominent red 'BROWSE CARDS' button. Below the button, it states 'Printed and mailed for just \$4' and 'Send unlimited eCards for FREE'. At the bottom, a four-step process is outlined: 1. JOIN THE CLUB FOR FREE (Select from designs created by the best artists in the world!), 2. CUSTOMIZE THE CARD (Add a photo, write a message and sign it!), 3. TELL US HOW TO SEND IT (Schedule your card to be delivered via mail for \$4 or email for FREE!), and 4. MAKE YOUR CARD SOCIAL (Invite friends and family to sign the card!).



### **BEST PRACTICES FOR OTHER FOUNDERS:**

#### **1. Design and build for viral social growth**

We wanted our business to grow organically—not via PR. Our group card feature is designed specifically to generate that kind of viral social growth. We'll be rolling out more viral features shortly.

#### **2. Give non-tech people equal rights to updates**

Our Head of Product is not a developer at all. With Pantheon, he's working through the environment like he is. Pantheon is very clear, well-built, and user-friendly.

#### **3. Focus on the business—let Pantheon sweat the small stuff**

Now that the **Ciplex** team is done building the site, it's great to have a solution with people who pro-actively check in, rather than us having to create tickets. For example, we got stuck with an SSL certificate we'd bought, and Pantheon pretty much took care of everything. This freed us to focus on the business rather than on little stuff. Pantheon's Head of Support gave me his direct phone number. That never happens, ever. The trust from my perspective is 100% there. I know Pantheon will be there to support us.

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### **MORE ABOUT OUR PARTNER:**

*Ciplex is a full-service interactive agency that helps clients succeed online by creating award-winning digital solutions. Our talented team of dedicated professionals will bring together your vision and ideas into reality with creativity, technology, and marketing. Ciplex has been involved in diverse types of design and development projects including content management, social networks, and ecommerce implementations.*

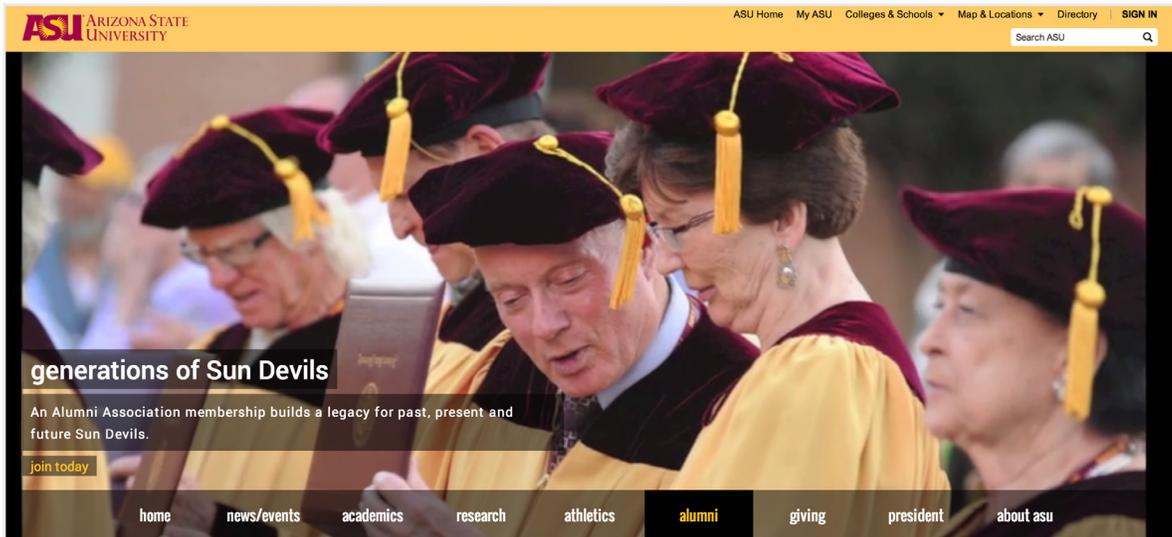
[www.ciplex.com](http://www.ciplex.com)



# ASU ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

## 2,000+ SITES, ALL HOSTED AND SUPPORTED BY ASU

*The central IT Web development and hosting team at Arizona State University recently transitioned 2,000+ sites from self-hosting to Pantheon One. Three members of the University Technology Office—Daniel Garcia-Mont (Web Application Developer Lead), Ron Page (Senior Director of Applications & Design), and Ryan Clemens (Director of Web Applications)—share their story below.*



## THE BACKGROUND

Everyone at the University Technology Office (UTO) is a Drupal advocate. More than half of the 2,000 departmental, faculty, and personal sites hosted for free by the UTO are Drupal installations. It's always been easy for ASU employees to request a new site. In the beginning, even students could get them. Quite a few of these sites now sit abandoned.

## THE CHALLENGES OF HOSTING ON OUR OWN ENVIRONMENT

**Not scalable.** With dozens of virtual machines, each hosting 80-100 sites, the system was never meant to handle high-traffic situations. A few years ago, President Obama came to our commencement. As soon as he started speaking, the ASU news site crashed. So did every other site on that host.



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After that, we built a dedicated rig for the high-traffic library and news site, which still took 2-3 full-time employees to maintain.

**Security issues.** Sites weren't being kept up to date, so there were lots of vulnerabilities. Drupal was too complex for a non-developer to maintain. People would switch over to WordPress and their sites would get hacked.

**Support demand > supply.** It was in our best interest to get out of the hosting business. Each department is responsible for maintaining their sites, fixing vulnerabilities, and paying for development. But in real life, people call central IT when they need help. We help when we can, but we are not staffed to give people the kind of service they ask for.

## **CHOOSING A FOCUS: DRUPAL**

So many customers, so many needs. We got caught up in analysis paralysis at first, as we tried to find a hosting solution for all the different technologies of web sites. In a moment of clarity, we decided to start with Drupal. After all, UTO had already standardized on Drupal as a development/CMS platform. We reasoned that finding a great solution for our Drupal customers would be the best starting point for meeting others' needs, too.

***Rather than helping people keep their sites running, we'll be able to concentrate on helping them make effective websites.***

## **EVALUATING THE OPTIONS FOR A DRUPAL HOSTING SOLUTION**

In evaluating our options, a few factors were most important to us. Here are the reasons we chose Pantheon:

**A turnkey solution.** A lot of our requirements come from Drupal newbies. We needed to make it easy for them to get started. Pantheon provided a customized Drupal start state, called Open ASU, that makes it easy for non-developers to build Drupal sites.

**Easy to maintain.** The original goal of providing Web hosting for the university was to get people to stop hosting their own servers under their desks or in utility closets. With centralization we succeeded in keeping the O/S up to date, but we found that many of our customers did not keep Drupal up to date. Pantheon makes it easy for customers to keep their Drupal sites patched and secure.



**Single sign on, out of the box.** Pantheon was the only solution that could provide basic-level sites that came with integrated SSL and SSO out of the box, without relying on third-party modules.

**A cost-effective way for us to ramp up.** We still needed to transition all 1,100 sites away from self-hosting, so we needed a cost-effective way to ramp up. Pantheon gave us a path. We could start slow, without paying large amounts up front. That was a big help.

*Our developers are universally excited. People actually came up and told us what a great decision we'd made. No one ever says that!*

#### **THE SOLUTION: ASU-BRANDED SITES OUT OF THE BOX**

Open ASU gave us a responsive, ASU-branded site out of the box. We call it the WordPress killer. Now an entry-level person can flip through a couple of options and spin up a turnkey website. They don't need extra funds or technical knowledge. Keeping sites up to date is easy, too.

#### **PUTTING PANTHEON ONE TO THE TEST: A REAL-LIFE FIRE DRILL**

Recently our housing site came under so much traffic that our environment couldn't handle it. We decided to switch that site over to Pantheon. It took about 15 minutes. Pantheon's dev-test-live workflow really helped us out. We also liked the one-click ability to move up and down between plan levels so we could meet temporary traffic spikes. And the New Relic add-on is now giving us info about the site's performance that we didn't have before.

*Pantheon's commitment to the customer and to making things right has really stood out. They're pretty hands-on when working to meet our needs.*

#### **SURPRISE—RESPONSIVE SERVICE**

Pantheon is a young company. Initially, we feared they might not be quite ready for production. While a few small things have come up, Pantheon's commitment to the customer and to making things right has really stood out. They're pretty hands-on when working to meet our needs. We weren't given a cookie-cutter solution.



### **PANTHEON ONE DOES THE WORK OF 2-3 FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES**

We're still working to deliver the final distribution on time. But there's a light at the end of the tunnel. When we're finished, we expect to free up the equivalent of 2-3 full-time employees.

Rather than helping people keep their sites running, we'll be able to concentrate on helping them make effective websites.

### **WELL-RECEIVED BY OUR OWN DRUPAL COMMUNITY**

Our developers are universally excited. People actually came up and told us what a great decision we'd made. No one ever says that!

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# FORUM OF REGIONAL ASSOCIATIONS OF GRANTMAKERS

## CRM INTEGRATED ACROSS 34 ASSOCIATIONS

*Here Sean Larkin shares how he and the ThinkShout team developed and launched an integrated CMS/CRM solution for The Forum of Regional Associations of Grantmakers. Read on to see how ThinkShout saved more than 100 hours of development time and launched 17 websites on a single distribution—without using Multisite.*

## THE CHALLENGE: TO BUILD A FLEXIBLE, INTEGRATED CMS AND CRM

The Forum of Regional Associations of Grantmakers, a national network that supports regional associations in their promotion of effective community philanthropy, consists of 34 geographically-based professional associations, each staffed by 1-20+ people. 17 associations share a common technology platform. The Forum wanted to move away from a custom content management solution and CRM to something more open and flexible. The associations chose **Drupal** for CMS, Salesforce for CRM, and **ThinkShout** to build the distribution, including the integration code for syncing Drupal with Salesforce.

## WHY WE CONSIDERED DRUPAL MULTISITE—BUT ADVISED AGAINST IT

Initially, we did consider going with **Multisite**. Two things kept us from recommending it for this particular client: it's hard to customize and risky to update. Ultimately, we recommended the Pantheon One platform.

***Without Pantheon One, we'd need to do another 100 hours of custom development operations. There's nothing else on the market like it, period.***

## WHY PANTHEON ONE?

**One shared distribution.** Pantheon is the only solution that allows a network of nonprofits to roll out a shared Drupal distribution. And Pantheon's managed distribution tools are unbelievable. Without Pantheon One, we'd need to do another 100 hours of custom development operations. There's nothing else on the market like it, period.



**Ease of updates and spinning up new sites.** It's also easy to merge specific distribution updates with custom work on a given instance.

**High value.** The out-of-the-box performance is really high compared to other offerings. Also, the pricing is significantly more competitive. The total cost of ownership on these sites is lower, too, because of the infrastructure Pantheon provides.

**Responsive service.** Pantheon One comes with a top-notch service level agreement. Other providers don't always respond if you're not on their highest-level plan. I've noticed that Pantheon treats their nonprofit clients the exact same way they treat everyone else. They've always been accessible and open to our feedback.

**Easier to customize.** As a development shop, our goal is to build really custom, beautiful sites that are unique to each client. Because we have a lower-level feature set, all our clients need customizations, and we need Pantheon One. Pantheon One allows us to easily merge new features and custom code in and out. It's better than anything else out there.

***Pantheon One allows us to easily merge new features and custom code in and out. It's better than anything else out there.***

## **THE SOLUTION**

**An out-of-the-box Drupal distribution.** We built a robust Drupal distribution offering significant functionality out of the box to every regional association, significantly reducing customization costs. Now each regional association has a common starting point and feature set, which can be extended to meet any unique needs.

**Salesforce integration.** Anyone with site-building skills can sync any Salesforce object with any Drupal entity. The distribution has a starting point for mappings, which are easy to change and customize. If an association wants to use the tools in its shared Salesforce template, it can roll out a version of the Salesforce package, spin up the distribution on Pantheon, then work with us or any other vendor to customize the package.

**A distributed resource library.** Having Pantheon allowed us to build a distributed resource library so each regional association can share resources for grantmakers directly with their colleague associations. The Forum anticipates a resource library of more than 4,000 pieces of content that will grow over time.



## ANY HICCUPS?

Our client knew they were early adopters of Pantheon One, and they were the first non-developers to deploy sites on Pantheon One. There have been some bumps along the road, but it's easy to accept that things are new when Pantheon has such a high level of accountability. The team at Pantheon has been very attentive to our feedback, and quick to make reasonable changes to the platform to meet our client's needs.



## THE OUTCOME: INNOVATION MADE SIMPLE

Pantheon is the only tool that allows our clients to roll out websites one at a time by themselves, without needing to rely on us for feature and site deployments. If an association decides to launch, it has all the tools in hand to do that, without touching any code. That's pretty unique.

Each regional association can also manage its own customizations or pull in new innovations to give back to its distribution. For example, three regional associations can team up to develop and build a new feature, to be shared with all the other associations.

The Pantheon One architecture makes it easy for us to take the code that powers new features, and roll it back into our distribution. Once we're ready to push these changes upstream into the



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Pantheon One git repository, regional association website managers can log in, pull down the new functionality we've built, test it using Pantheon's development workflow and tools, then deploy with two clicks. The interfaces for managing the three environments are very intuitive. It was easy to train our clients on how to manage code through the admin console.

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**MORE ABOUT OUR PARTNER:**

*At **ThinkShout**, it's not about the technology. Don't get us wrong, we're geeks - big geeks with lots of heart. But what makes us special is our commitment to producing sustainable, open source solutions for people who are making lasting social change.*

[www.thinkshout.com](http://www.thinkshout.com)

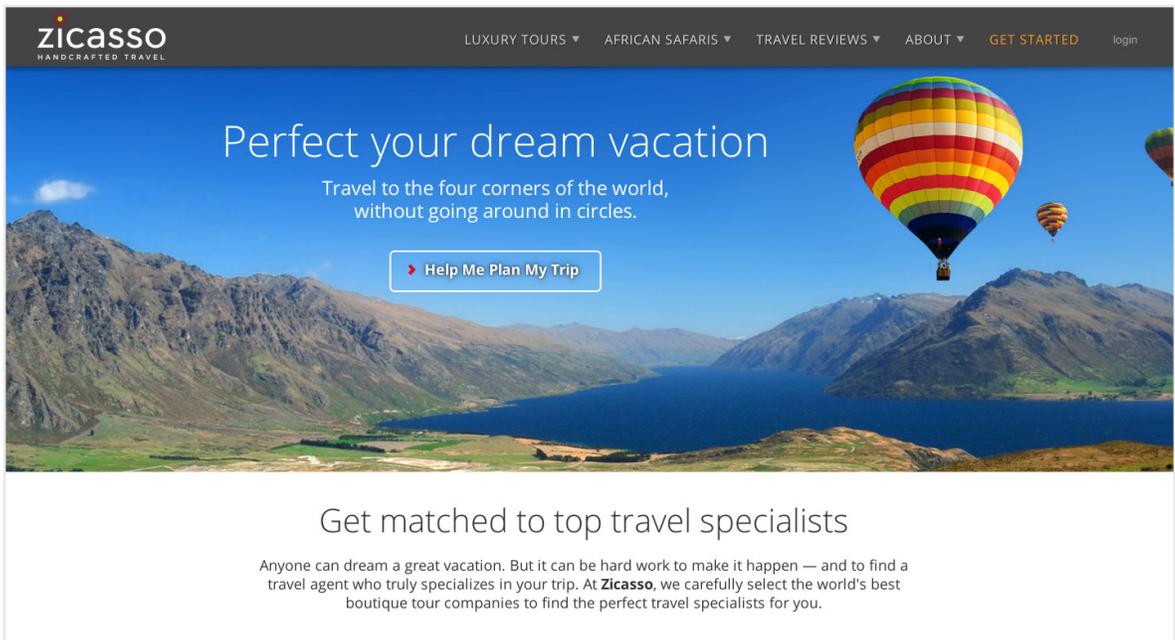




# ZICASSO

## A LUXURIOUS WEBSITE FOR A LUXURY TRAVEL COMPANY

Brian Tan is Founder and CEO of *Zicasso*, a free travel service that connects discerning travelers with the industry's top 10% travel specialists. When Zicasso engaged *Hook 42* to port their website from Drupal 5 to Drupal 7, the one-year process evolved into a complete website redesign. This guest post by Brian Tan and Hook 42 CEO *Aimee Degan* details how Hook 42 migrated more than 1 million nodes without any hiccups.



### DESTINATION: DRUPAL 7

Zicasso offers handcrafted, luxury travel planning from top travel specialists. So many travel planning sites and booking engines focus on giving you the best deal. Our approach is high-touch, with travel specialists who take care of everything luxury travelers need for their destination.

As we moved up market, we realized our website needed an overhaul. Our website is the cornerstone of our business. And in travel, especially luxury travel, visuals make a big impact. The site needed to reflect the experiential nature of travel itself.



## **TRAVEL PLANNING IS COMPLEX. SO IS WEBSITE MANAGEMENT.**

When we started out on Drupal 5, our engineering team made some hacks to the core modules to speed our time to market. In the five years since, we focused our resources on developing new features rather than on cleaning things up. The site had been working well, but it was time to make things more efficient.

In transitioning to Drupal 7, we also needed to migrate five years of data, from trips booked to travel reviews. In the **African safari** business, which is our major market segment, we regularly send travelers to see the **Great Migration**, in which a couple million animals migrate through Kenya and Tanzania annually--a truly spectacular scene. However, we were quite concerned about the spectacular challenge of migrating more than a million nodes. That's a whole other animal!

In November 2012, we engaged **Hook 42** to take on this challenge, porting the website from Drupal 5 to Drupal 7. But once we started working together, we realized we needed to rebuild the entire website from scratch.

## **MARGIN FOR ERROR: ZERO**

Many of our travel specialist partners get 80% of their business leads from our site. At the end of the day, the rollout needed to happen without a glitch. Invoices needed to run and people needed to be able to book trips. And once the migration was complete, the site needed to look good, without going down in a traffic spike.

***Pantheon allowed us to offload systems admin overhead off both our team and the part-time systems administrator.***

## **THE ALTERNATIVE TO A SYSTEM ADMINISTRATOR**

Zicasso had a part-time system administrator with a job and a family. As they began developing in earnest, they approached us about whether we'd considered Drupal hosting solutions. They needed an environment to coordinate changes to lots of content from a large database. Developers couldn't keep all that beautiful imagery on their local machines. It uses up too much disk space.

## **WHY PANTHEON?**

Hook 42 was pretty pleased to find out we'd already heard of Pantheon. The timing was perfect, and Pantheon was a natural fit. We look for the best in our business, and vet our travel agents heavily.



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We went through the same process with the Pantheon team. Their engineering team talked to our engineers. It was wonderful for them to educate us and our team about what they could do. Everyone agreed that Pantheon would be a fit for our business growth.

***With more than a million nodes to migrate, you might expect our website launch to have had some hiccups along the way. From departure to arrival, the Hook 42 team was able to keep the hiccup count at zero with help from Pantheon.***

#### **HOW WE DID IT: AN ITINERARY**

**Rethinking workflows.** (THE WEBSITE IS MORE THAN JUST A PRETTY FACE.) We use the website to automate, curate, and manage all of our business processes and workflow rules, from how travelers request a trip, to how we match them to travel specialist partners, to invoicing and messaging. Hook 42 analyzed all of these business processes and recommended how to structure the site to move our business forward.

**Implementation to the 10th power.** At one point, 10 developers from Hook 42 worked concurrently in the Multidev environment, each doing focused features work. Multidev was an order of magnitude more efficient than doing it on the servers. Without Multidev, we would have had to maintain the infrastructure for all those people. Moreover, not everyone who updates the site is a heavy programmer. Hook 42 had designers, graphic artists, and others. Multidev gave them a UI so they could easily interact with git.

***Our team has much more freedom to make updates, thanks to Drupal 7 and Pantheon.***

**System Administrator keeps his day job.** In the past, the more we interacted with the systems, the more we stressed them. Systems on our team would then need help. Pantheon allowed us to offload systems admin overhead off of both our team and the part-time systems administrator.

**Million-node migration.** Pantheon's engineering team worked with ours to identify how to set up the environment on Pantheon to support a large migration with a million nodes. Multidev allowed three people from Hook 42 to work on migration testing without stepping on each other's toes. Through Pantheon Enterprise, they spun up another site with the old database on the Pantheon platform, so everyone could connect to the same data source and use the same code without impacting the Zicasso production servers.



**Automated tools.** Hook 42 took an aggressive approach to keeping things error-free and easy. Terminus helped with that by letting them automate things. (Terminus is a command-line tool extending the Pantheon platform with Drush.) Some of the harder-core developers use Terminus to pull down their backups to run locally. It cuts the setup of their database and their environment by 10 minutes. They also used tools to make sure they switched from SFTP mode to git mode, so graphic designers could upload files in CSS. And, they did some scripted work to avoid merge conflicts.

**Freedom to make updates.** A combination of SEO-supportive modules, content types, and URL naming conventions make it easy for our team to target specific travel content, from African safari itineraries to Italian food and wine tours. We can really customize and make the imagery stunning. Our team has much more freedom to make updates, thanks to Drupal 7 and Pantheon.

### **THE OUTCOME? A SUCCESSFUL GREAT MIGRATION (AWAY FROM THE HASSLES OF TRAVEL PLANNING)**

With more than a million nodes to migrate, you might expect our website launch to have had some hiccups along the way. From departure to arrival, the Hook 42 team was able to keep the hiccup count at zero, with help from Pantheon. We also hit our launch target of mid-November.

The new website is built for growth—to attract, convert, and maintain repeat luxury travel clients. It's simple, seamless, beautiful, elegant, and easy. Just like the experience of luxury travel itself. Complex business processes on the back end make things simple on the front end. We can easily add new tours and imagery. It's such a massive difference from the old site.

Conversion means a lot in our business. Our travel specialists handcraft detailed itineraries, involving many hours of work. The new site will inspire the right clientele to submit requests and book their trips.

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#### **MORE ABOUT OUR PARTNER:**

We're *Hook42*, a team of web developers in San Francisco and Santa Cruz, CA. Grab a cup of coffee or tea, and let us explain a little bit about how we do what we do.

[www.hook42.com](http://www.hook42.com)





# THE NEW REPUBLIC

## 100,000,000 SEAMLESS PAGE VIEWS ON LAUNCH DAY

*A completely new website for millions of people with a launch date set in stone and zero room for error? No problem. Here Matt Johnson shares how he and the Alley Interactive team pulled off The New Republic's flawless website launch, which handled more than 100,000,000 page views on launch day.*



### PLANNING THE LAUNCH

The New Republic (TNR) came to us with a business requirement that the site launch on a specific day. The print magazine redesign, the PR campaign, and the website all needed to happen at once. Publisher Chris Hughes was set to appear on all the morning talk shows. On this one day, we'd yank off the red curtain and voila!

Clients assume that as a developer, you can make anything happen. No one thinks of project management as a separate discipline. You're the computer guys and gals, and you make everything work. That's a lot of pressure, which is exactly why we suggested Pantheon in the very first meeting with our client.

When you're launching a small project with a single stakeholder, you may not need a solution that



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supports layered complexities and requirements. But a big site like TNR involves a long chain of people. Our team, the editorial newsroom, business executives, multiple stakeholders. Each team needed to focus on different things. For example:

- **The tech team needed to ensure user functionality and theming were to spec.**
- **The editorial team needed to oversee the node form and content curation tools.**
- **The business team focused on launching an acceptable website on Jan 26.**

We also needed to manage a huge number of subsystems and interlocking development processes and tasks. In our case, we had to plug live HTML and Javascript assets from designers into the back end. For all of these reasons, we needed Pantheon. It gave stakeholders instant visibility, so they could see and test changes without slowing things down.

## **ONE PLATFORM FROM DAY ONE**

In a project like this, you don't have time to shuffle around development servers. We needed to focus on working through our enormous pile of dev tickets. So on day 1, we spun up the dev site on Pantheon. We never hosted anything on our own server at all. Working off Pantheon from the start also meant we didn't have any "it worked on my server" moments, which tend to happen when your production cluster isn't where you've been doing development and QA.

Without Pantheon, we would've needed to run our own dev sites on our servers or on the client's internal servers. And launch day would have brought some nasty surprises. Pantheon's continuous platform let us deploy with confidence.

***Pantheon's pull-submit workflow was instrumental in letting us continue to work on the site as it was, so our clients could train their editorial people. We never had to interrupt our development workflow and mess up the code to test.***

## **HOW WE MANAGE OUR WORKFLOW**

Close to launch, we had to do two things simultaneously: Train the editorial department on the new tools, and maintain a breakneck pace to build the features. We were furiously committing code to the Pantheon dev branch, while maintaining the test and live branches at 3 different stages of completion. Alpha, beta, release. Pantheon's pull-submit workflow was instrumental in letting us



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continue to work on the site as it was, so our clients could train their editorial people. We never had to interrupt our development workflow and mess up the code to test.

### **HOW IT PERFORMED**

The launch date had been etched in stone. It was a race to the finish line, and we made it. The site was up and running at 2 a.m. The performance on launch day was great. It could have crashed and burned horribly in about 18 ways, but it did not, despite 100 million page views. The infrastructure was one thing we never had to worry about. That kind of traffic glut would have been a big problem for a conventional hosting cluster.

***They were right there in the trenches with us, and it was clear how important our project was to them.***

Throughout the process, our team at Alley Interactive had two developers and another partner working nights and weekends, going above and beyond. We also had high-level team members at Pantheon putting in serious time on this. They were right there in the trenches with us, and it was clear how important our project was to them.

Alley has built a reputation around our can-do attitude, our ability to come through under pressure, and our long experience in having done so in the past—often on short notice. That’s why we use Pantheon. It just works. It gives me all the access I need as a very technical person. But it abstracts away all the obnoxious, repetitive crap. The result has better uptime and reliability than anything I’d have built on my own.

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### **MORE ABOUT OUR PARTNER:**

*We are a team of experienced web developers who tackle the most complex challenges facing top publishers. We build big websites using open source technology, including Drupal and WordPress, for leaders in media, entertainment and higher education.*

**alley**interactive

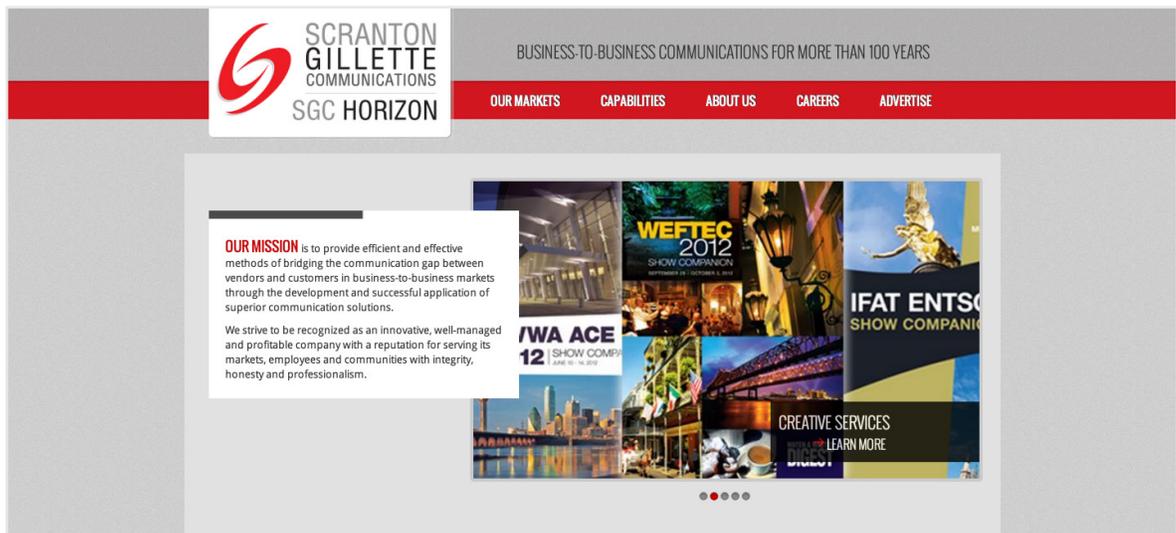
[www.alleyinteractive.com](http://www.alleyinteractive.com)



# SCRANTON GILLETTE COMMUNICATIONS

## MANAGING 20+ BRANDED SITES WITH A TRUE-CLOUD INFRASTRUCTURE

Joel Hughes is SVP of eMedia & Information Technology at *Scranton Gillette Communications*, a fourth-generation family-owned business-to-business communications company, named by *Folio* magazine as one of the 40 fastest-growing companies — and an “All Star” in the magazine industry.



## B2B PUBLISHING IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Scranton Gillette is a 100-plus-year-old B2B publishing company with about 15 brand publications in 9 vertical markets. Each brand has a website connecting buyers and sellers in the B2B market. We also produce newsletters and print titles. While print continues to be extremely important, the digital side of our business is becoming more important every day.

## HOW IT & EDITORIAL PARTNER TO CREATE DIGITAL BLISS

We’re big believers in using internal resources. Our in-house editorial team focuses on really good content, so our IT team—including programming—supports the business. We’re structured in a way that allows us to deliver exceptional digital content:

**A kind of hybrid super-IT department.** Usually you’ll have departments for IT people,



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programmers, and designers. We have it all under one roof. I'm at the top of all things digital, from company infrastructure—like internal networks, web hosting, and all the web dev—to client websites and infrastructures.

**A Drupal-friendly editorial department.** Because editorial strategy underlies everything we do, the editorial team has a great deal of ownership over our websites. They use Drupal directly every day to enter in all the stories and the content. Marketing also has a hand in strategy, and delivers reader based and advertising-based promotions.

*After I brought the dev team in to tinker around with the dev environment, there was buy-in right off the bat. They were really excited once they saw the back end.*

#### **THE PROBLEM: A CLOUD THAT WASN'T VERY CLOUD.**

With 20 websites to manage, we're always looking for more efficiencies in how we do things. And the way we were doing things wasn't very efficient. Even though we were using the cloud, it wasn't true cloud.

Here's how our old way was inefficient:

**Scaling was hard, slow, & expensive.** Because all 15 sites shared resources, it was hard to tell how much work each particular service instance was doing. There could be up to 30 minutes of down-time while you up-sized the server. You're waiting for it to unmount the storage device, make the AMI more powerful, and then remount it back on. And then you've got to downsize it. So we were paying to scale up, and then to scale back down again. Even though it was "cloud," the servers themselves were not abstracted. Only the hardware. Pantheon abstracts the servers away, too, because you're using virtual site instances instead.

**A focused point of failure.** Each instance could have up to 10 doc roots on it, and we never knew at an instance level where we were with resources. If one instance went down, that's 7 sites down. We weren't fully cloud, and didn't have a clear picture of performance.

On top of that, we also had some very complex support subscriptions.

#### **WHY PANTHEON?**

When a friend told me about Pantheon, I decided to start small with a personal website. I just loved the clean interface. Even as a free subscriber, I noticed the support was really good, too. I was getting



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instant responses to questions. The architecture made sense. But I didn't want to switch over all 15 sites unless I knew we'd really get the efficiencies. After I brought the dev team in to tinker around with the dev environment, there was buy-in right off the bat. They were really excited once they saw the back end. It wasn't hard to get everyone on board.

### **THE OUTCOME (SUCCESS FOR 20+ SITES)**

So far, we've moved over 20 sites to Pantheon Enterprise. I believe there are 3 more to come.

Here's what we love about managing all our sites on Pantheon Enterprise:

**Easy migration to Pantheon.** We already had Drupal sites running, so migrating to Pantheon was easy. All we had to do was pull the backups, files, and code.

**Efficiency FTW! Interface saves 5+ hours a week.** My team is saving at least 5 hours a week total in clicks and wait time, compared to before Pantheon. We love being able to download the files, code, and DB backups with one click on any of the backups. Git comments showing in the interface is great, too. The entire user experience is more efficient. Team communication is higher than it was before. Now we can apply more time to moving the company forward.

***We had multiple guys from Pantheon working on the site immediately. Within an hour, they were able to tell us exactly what was causing the problem.***

**Deep-dive support when it counts.** We recently launched a new website, and were having some performance problems. You think, What could it be? Is it a cache thing? Is it Pantheon? Where's the issue? After the site went down, I hopped onto the emergency pager. We had multiple guys from Pantheon working on the site immediately. Within an hour, they were able to tell us exactly what was causing the problem. "This view is causing the problem because it's designed in this exact way. But if you configure it this other way, the query will be written much more efficiently, and the site will work." I mean, someone took that deep of a dive. I don't care how slick the interface is, or how many efficiencies are created. At the end of the day, we need to know the team is behind us. And now we've got the Batphone.

**Best-practice workflows.** Being forced into the workflow (e.g. you cannot commit straight to production) is great and helps prevent disaster. The ability to very easily spin up websites is great, too. You can get a website running but with a Drupal install in minutes. That's crazy cool. I could



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even start a free account for a client and just hand it over to them. “Here’s your website, and by the way, put your credit card in and here’s Pantheon. If you have any trouble, talk to them.” It’s an easy handoff because it’s actually cloud.

**True cloud makes it easy to scale up.** Everything from support through to the site itself is all one to one. If we need to scale up on Pantheon, they’ll automatically increase our drops.

#### **ADVICE FOR SOMEONE SWITCHING OVER MULTIPLE SITES?**

If you want to get your team on board quickly, start with a free instance. Let everyone bang around on it. Once you’re ready to make the switch, don’t do your hardest site first--as tempting as it may be. Give yourself a quick victory early on and do an easy site. Then you can proceed to a medium site and a hard site. At that point, you can call on Pantheon’s Launch Concierge to help you take it live.

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## B.R.I.D.G.E. TO DATA

### **A 10-HOUR MIGRATION FREED THEM FROM AWS, IT INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT, AND OLD-FASHIONED-HOSTING-BASED HEADACHES**

*James Raddock is the Director of Operational Strategy and Finance at DOOR3, a full-service consultancy that designs and builds enterprise business applications for web, social and mobile media.*

*DOOR3 has been around a long time, and we've been doing Drupal for quite a while now, too. As a full-service consultancy with a team of 50-60 people working on 55 active projects for 41 active clients, we do a decent amount of Drupal business.*

*But Drupal isn't the main reason people want to work with us. People come to DOOR3 looking for a meeting of the business minds. Our clients know they can have a focused conversation with a principal consultant who understands their actual business problem. We then fit the technology solution around that.*

#### **TOP DRUPAL WEBSITE PROBLEMS:**

Even though every client comes to us to solve a unique business need, most share the same specific problems when it comes to Drupal sites & hosting:

1. "We don't have a hosting company."
2. "We're using traditional hosting for an old Drupal site."
3. "We have no IT staff at all."
4. "We don't want to dilute our core business."

Before Pantheon, we had to build a custom Drupal infrastructure to solve these problems.

That's what we did for **B.R.I.D.G.E. TO DATA** in 2009.

#### **A CLIENT STORY: HOW WE BUILT A DRUPAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN 2009**

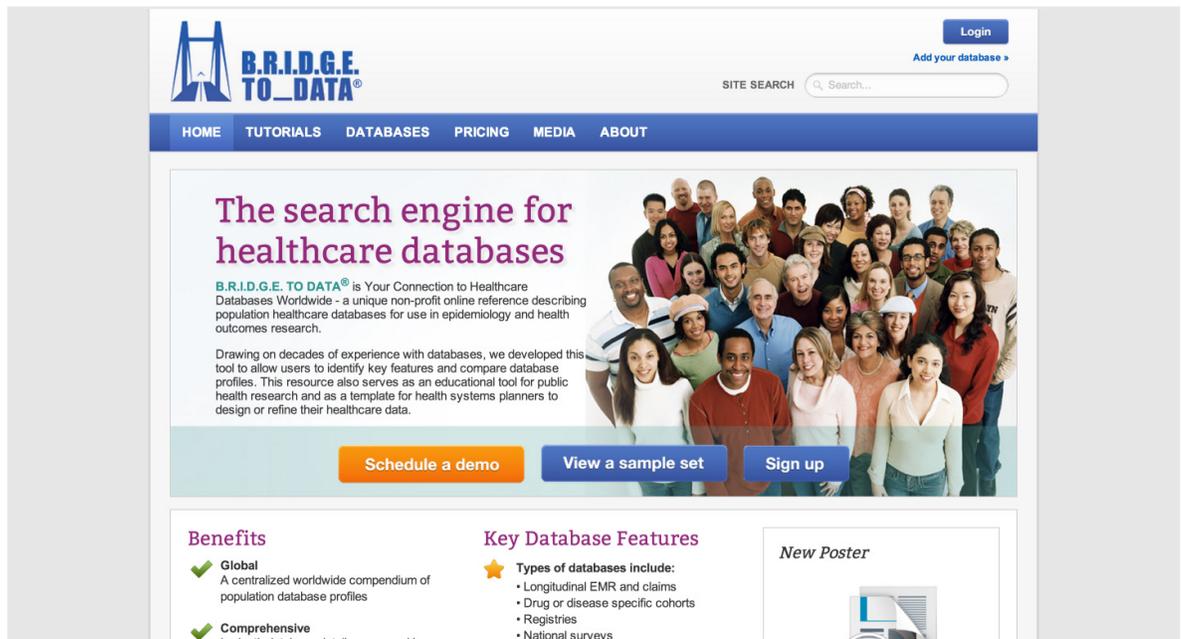
When we built the website for B.R.I.D.G.E. TO DATA, Pantheon didn't exist. Your options for hosting and infrastructure were pretty limited then. Even Amazon Web Services was new. As a result, we had to create a custom infrastructure.



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So we spun up a production instance and a web instance on AWS. The client was paying a reserve instance charge, plus the monthly usage charges for those instances. We helped them get their bill down to \$200 a month, but it was still a pretty brittle infrastructure.

A couple years later, they called us. “Help, our site is slow, and we basically just can’t use it.” Performance had degraded because the instances hadn’t had any attention in years. The sessions table had never been truncated. The Drupal database was getting huge. Scripts weren’t performing properly.



*It will take care of your Drupal core updates for you, too. And if you guys need to scale up because you have a major marketing event, they can scale you in software -- without any downtime. It's a win-win."*

## **OH, HELLO AGAIN. MEET PANTHEON.**

We told our client. “There’s this new thing called Pantheon now, which is a web development and hosting platform. It has a lot of features you guys would benefit from, like truncating your session



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tables. It will take care of your Drupal core updates for you, too. And if you guys need to scale up because you have a major marketing event, they can scale you in software -- without any downtime. It's a win-win."

### **A 10-HOUR MIGRATION.**

After doing a bit of database cleanup, we migrated their entire site in under 10 hours.

Now the client is no longer tied to AWS, no longer has these old-fashioned-hosting-based headaches, and is no longer paying us for IT infrastructure support.

### **WHY WE CHOSE PANTHEON FOR THIS PROJECT:**

**No more IT overhead.** Pantheon is great at cutting down IT overheads. They're the product owner's partner on the IT side, so the business can use those dollars to drive growth.

**Drupal projects deserve a Drupal hosting environment.** That's why we often use Pantheon in development for Drupal projects that start from scratch. Since we've already developed in Pantheon, at the end of the cycle, it's easier to use Pantheon in production.

**No more paying for production support.** When people choose a non-Drupal-specific hosting environment over Pantheon, it creates more work for us. We tell clients, 'We can put you on a Rackspace server and get you set up, but we're going to charge you a high rate for every hour we use to touch your stuff. Or, you can just pay Pantheon and let them take care of it.' That's the pitch.

***Pantheon is a Drupal-specific hosting environment that's source-control-driven—so we no longer need to build custom Drupal infrastructures.***

**Old Drupal infrastructure vs. new hosting environment.** Smart agencies don't want to do production support—especially not for a smaller website. If there's a problem with whatever service provider you're using, you're stuck. Pantheon lets us bucket all that work and hand it over. While "old Drupal" required custom infrastructure, Pantheon is a Drupal-specific hosting environment that's source-control-driven—so we no longer need to build custom Drupal infrastructures.

**Changes the conversation.** My role here largely focuses around the finances of the company, and making sure we meet operational KPIs for utilization, yield and other important metrics. I also used



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to work as the Director of Engineering. Pantheon changes the conversation from our perspective. I don't have to talk about instances, binding elastic IPs, or provisioning s3 storage. We can focus on their mission and their business objectives. How can we build a solution to satisfy your business needs?

Like DOOR3, Pantheon solves real business problems for our customers. That's why we recommend it to anyone with a Drupal website. The more clients get on Pantheon, the easier our job becomes.

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**MORE ABOUT OUR PARTNER:**

*DOOR3 designs and builds enterprise business applications for web, social and mobile media.*

*We offer service line expertise in Digital Strategy, User Experience & Design, cross-platform Application Development and code-level Maintenance & Support.*

[www.door3.com](http://www.door3.com)





## MUKURTU CMS

### DESIGNING AN OPEN-SOURCE PLATFORM TO REACH A WORLDWIDE USER BASE

*Michael Ashley is Chief Technology Officer at [The Center for Digital Archaeology](#), a non-profit that helps people and organizations preserve and share their digital memories.*

#### TO SAVE A CULTURAL HERITAGE, JUST HIT COMMAND S?

You are a member of an indigenous community and you have in your possession a reel-to-reel tape. It's a recording by your grandfather, the last living speaker of your native language. How do you preserve it?

*We hear these questions more often than you can imagine.* The problem is complicated because it's not just about the tape or the conversation. Who gets to listen to it, under what conditions? When you think about it, there are all sorts of protocols that should be thought through before we say 'just digitize it and put it on the web.'

So saving digital culture is a bit more challenging than just hitting command-s. But then again, what isn't? In a world where terms of service can be 30+ pages long, how do you know your stuff is really safe, secure and yours?

*Mukurtu CMS* was built to deal with these concerns. Project Director *Kim Christen* sparked the first version over 6 years ago as a means for communities to manage their content in their own terms. Many grants later, Mukurtu CMS was born, but would it have a future?

#### OPEN SOURCE TO THE RESCUE: IF IT'S NOT USABLE OUT OF THE BOX, THEN IT'S NOT SUSTAINABLE.

We built Mukurtu CMS as an open source platform with the needs of indigenous communities at its heart. Over the last few years, Drupal has proven to be the ideal platform, not only because it's awesome as a CMS, but because the community 'gets it.' The platform itself must grow and improve if all the amazing apps and mods that have been built under its umbrella are going to persist. Moving to Drupal 7 was the best decision ever for Mukurtu CMS. But if we want to reach a worldwide user base, a distro of Drupal wasn't going to fly.

#### HOW CAN WE SUPPORT A CAST OF THOUSANDS?

Let's rewind, say, two years. Best practice says we develop an open source distribution, stick it



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somewhere like GitHub and sing hallelujah, we've done our part. Just download Mukurtu and you're good to go, right? Not exactly. The reality check is that preservation and sharing of digital memories, like the last recording of your grandfather (or the birth of your child) is really not trivial. And the communities we serve are out there, as in, not in downtown SF local, but rural, with limited access to internet and budget. We need bomb-proof, iron-clad, reasonably-priced, and awesome.

***The idea was you could stop fretting about the platform and focus on the soft parts. We took this seriously and built Mukurtu CMS to be optimized for Pantheon***

### **ENTER PANTHEON ONE**

Back in 2010, Matt Cheney **introduced Pantheon** as a single source of Drupal web development and hosting goodness. The idea was you could stop fretting about the platform and focus on the soft parts. We took this seriously and built Mukurtu CMS to be optimized for Pantheon. Software as a Service (SAAS) was already done well, but it had a not-great reputation. We knew Matt and his crew would overcome the obstacles. Meanwhile, we learned an awful lot about the needs of indigenous communities worldwide, from Canada, to Australia, to New Zealand, to Africa, and throughout the U.S. Many (most) organizations have been skeptical about 'letting go' of control and management of their heritage. They wanted the hosting to be local, on servers they could control. But we know now just how hard this is for a small staff to pull off in a secure and sustainable way.

Now in 2013, we're on the edge of a truly one-click install. Thanks to the great efforts of many, many people and companies--Civic Actions, Quilted Coop, Chacha Sikes, Mirabot, Pantheon, Map2App, CoDA, WSU--coming in 2014 you can fill out a simple web form and try out Mukurtu CMS on Pantheon One in a few clicks. This is just amazing. But here we are.

### **WHY WE KNOW IT'LL WORK: THE MIRA CANNING STOCK ROUTE ARCHIVE**

Mira: Canning Stock Route Project Archive represents the culmination of the award-winning Canning Stock Route Project. Developed by FORM in Western Australia and the Center for Digital Archaeology at UC Berkeley, Mira is a groundbreaking tool for preserving and sharing the Project's invaluable cultural heritage with both participating communities and where culturally appropriate, the general public. FORM's "**Canning Stock Route Project**" spent seven years documenting stories from The Canning Stock Route. This historical route of wells bisected Western Australia and provided water and a place to rest as people herded cattle from one end to the other. The route, its drovers, and wells impacted more than 30 indigenous communities.



Mira contains a vast trove of materials including nearly 40,000 unique items, amongst these more than 250 oral histories, including audio and filmed interviews and translated and transcribed documents, approximately 7,000 clips of raw film footage, around 150 short films, over 20,000 photographs, historical records, curated materials and other research.

Working in partnership with the [Arts Law Centre of Australia](#) through its Artists in the Black program and Herbert Smith Freehills, FORM has developed an extensive best practice framework of agreements to protect the Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property and copyright of Aboriginal participants, and allows commercial benefits to be returned to communities. This approach to licensing and the distribution of benefits continues the best practice approach and ethical ambitions of the Project.

Mira, powered by Mukurtu and hosted by Pantheon, is an exemplar of how indigenous archives can be built enterprise-strength, with innovative interfaces and revolutionary sharing capabilities. Pantheon One guarantees the site will be up around the clock and around the globe. We can all sleep better at night knowing it's there. A project this special deserves no less.

***In 2014, we'll release Mukurtu CMS as a one-click installation on Pantheon One. We think it'll be simply the best way for indigenous groups, schools, projects and communities to preserve and share their digital heritage.***

#### **WHAT MAKES MIRA DIFFERENT**

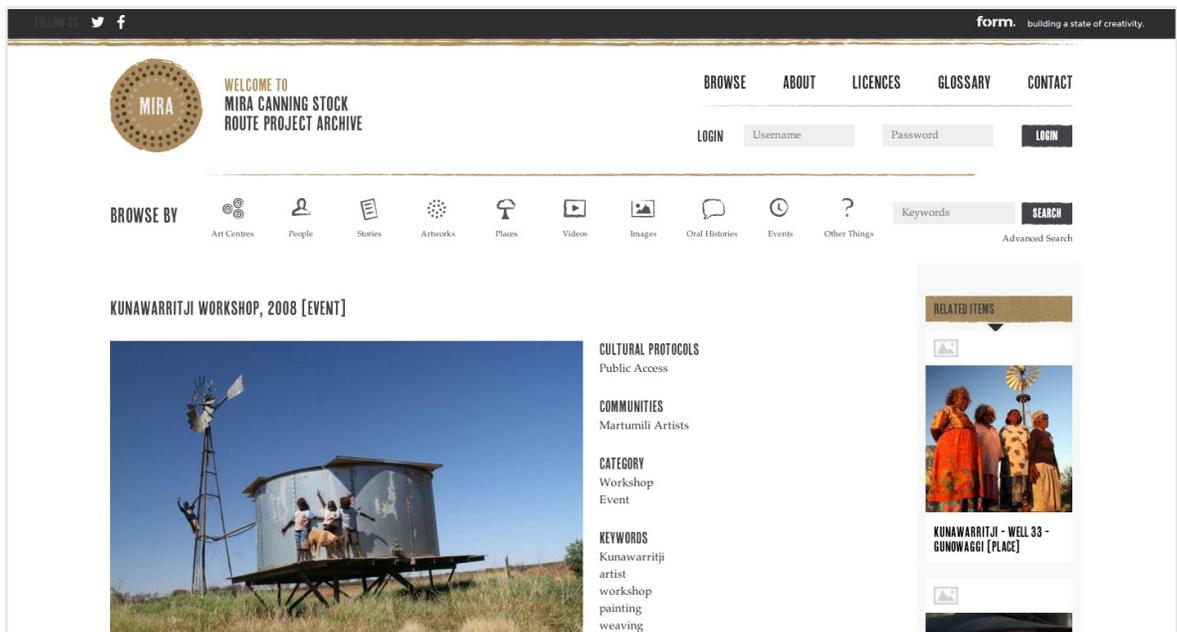
Mira was designed as a web-interfaced archive to bring the combined efforts of Australian artists and curators back into the hands and the homes of the people of the Canning Stock Route; the people who brought forth the stories, artworks, and oral histories upon which this project was built. The goal: that these stories and artworks are not lost to time, space, or political boundaries, but can be shared and preserved for future generations.

About 20 indigenous artists participated in a public art project. They all agreed to make much of their content publicly accessible... but not all. Mira uses the platform of Mukurtu to control accessibility of these items by using cultural protocols and community sharing practices. These protocols are important to indigenous groups because it allows them to choose what they share: sensitive stories and content can be viewed by just their community, while other material can be shared with the public.

The map is generated from nodes we call digital heritage items. The overall archive will have 40,000+ digital heritage items of people, places, stories, artworks, oral histories, and events.



Each page becomes its own mini-site. Here you can see a combination of place descriptions, traditional knowledge, plus all sorts of incredibly awesome metadata like dates, media formats, and field notes. All originals, archives, and representatives are stored safely in the **iVEC super-computer** in Perth, Australia. Terabytes of content--peoples' lives, images, artworks, and stories--are mirrored and stored for generations.



**Currently, more than 115 organizations are waiting for the launch of Mukurtu.net to take their sites live.**

### THE PRESENT FUTURE: MUKURTU.NET

This is awesome for a single project, so now what? In 2014, we'll release Mukurtu CMS as a one-click installation on Pantheon One. We think it'll be simply the best way for indigenous groups, schools, projects and communities to preserve and share their digital heritage. It's been years in the making and it's really exciting.

Over the past 4 years, hundreds of organizations have shown interest in Mukurtu, but recognize how hard it is to support and sustain any platform, especially one as complex as Drupal. Pantheon One takes so much of the guesswork out of the mix. We can focus on the community's questions and



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needs, which have less to do with technology than with how to organize, manage, and share content in culturally significant and sensitive ways. Currently, more than 115 organizations are waiting for the launch of Mukurtu.net to take their sites live. It's just a little bit overwhelming.

We can't imagine how Mukurtu CMS could flourish without Pantheon. The days of downloading an app and hoping for the best must end, at least when it comes to our most precious content, our cultural memories. Mukurtu CMS will always be free and open source, just like Drupal. Pantheon just makes it possible to spin up sites in moments, so these memories can persist for years to come. It's game-changing, disruptive and totally satisfying.

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# HOW TO HAVE YOUR OWN AMAZING LAUNCH STORY IN 5 EASY STEPS:

## 1. GET YOUR FREE ACCOUNT.

Visit [www.getpantheon.com](http://www.getpantheon.com) to get started.

## 2. START USING DRUPAL POWER TOOLS.

Pick an easy site that's still in development. Soon, you'll want to put Pantheon to the test with your harder sites, too.

## 3. GET HELP FROM DRUPAL EXPERTS.

We're waiting to answer your questions. Go ahead and send us a message if you have any trouble getting started or set up.

## 4. SHOW THE BOSS THE ROI.

Share the differences between DIY hosting, traditional hosting, and a Drupal-specific hosting environment. Visit [www.getpantheon.com/resources/pantheonvalue](http://www.getpantheon.com/resources/pantheonvalue) to download this one-sheet. And don't miss this cost-benefit analysis.

## 5. SHARE YOUR SUCCESS STORY WITH PANTHEON READERS & SUBSCRIBERS.

Email me at [zack@getpantheon.com](mailto:zack@getpantheon.com). We'd love to add your entry to our gallery of Amazing Launch Stories.