

A **White Paper** by Percussion Software, Inc.



WEBINAR:
Edu Strategy—Four Key Issues to Overcome

Keeping up is hard to do, get started now!

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Executive Summary

Percussion recently hosted a roundtable discussion with two prominent schools titled Web and Content Strategy in .edu. The discussion focused on how Lancaster Bible College and Georgia Southwestern State were addressing key web strategy issues and provided a look ahead to some of the new technologies on the horizon. Both Vince Johnson, Associate Vice President of Information Technology for LBC and Stephen Snyder, Director of University Relations for GSW engaged the audience for a full hour describing why they set about to address their web content marketing initiatives, and how they went about reaching their objectives.

As part of the registration process, we asked attendees what issues they were grappling with. Read on for a summary of those pain points and suggestions on how to address them effectively.

Webinar Wrap Up

Many thanks to our panelists for their insights on how their web strategy has evolved over the past year. During the hour long and engaging discussion, two key themes emerged:

- 1. Commercial software vs Open Source frameworks:** Both LBC and Georgia Southwestern State chose a commercial solution rather than building upon an open source framework. For these schools, the business problem they were solving focused on enabling their end users, long term support of the application and the overall cost of ownership. In their evaluation, an open source solution would not have addressed these critical requirements.
- 2. Flexibility to Address Future Web Needs:** Both schools run relatively small teams and their web development personnel were constantly handling escalations from the marketing team. As a result, marketing was not able to effectively leverage the web to reach prospective new students and the technology team was constantly handling routine requests. Deploying new web content management software provided both marketing and technology teams with the required flexibility to launch new web campaigns, improve infrastructure, and optimize resource deployment.

We were also curious what YOU were struggling with. When attendees registered for the webinar we invited them to share their top pains to make sure we were addressing the areas that they wanted to hear about most. We included these as the “wild card” questions in the formal session before opening it up to questions.

About the Webinar

From student recruiting to alumni relations to courseware, colleges and universities are under pressure to deliver an updated web experience that serves these divergent needs. Further, the advent of social media and the overall speed of web advances creates new opportunities for colleges.

This roundtable discussion explored the following key challenges and provided insights from our distinguished guests on how they solved them:

- Business web strategy
- Students + Social Engagement
- Technology constraints

Watch the replay of the webinar here: [Web and Content Marketing Strategy in EDU](#)

After reviewing the respondents answers, we distilled these pains into the following four areas:

1. Keeping up with the “web rate of change”
2. Short staff, short budget, demonstrating value
3. Using the Web to attract students
4. Technology and process roadblocks

For each of the four areas, we share additional details on the pain, and our notes on how best to mitigate them. If you are interested in viewing the entire webinar, the full archive is available for download here: [Web and Content Marketing Strategy in EDU](#).

Top pain #1 Keeping Up!

Not surprisingly, this was expressed a number of different ways by several attendees. One notable response was simply: “Keeping UP!” There are so many changes across social media, evolving standards, channels, audiences etc that it can be truly overwhelming at times.

The reality of the web rate of change however, is that it’s impossible to actually “keep up.” In fact, what does “Keep Up” even mean in the larger context? Just a few months ago nobody had heard of Pinterest, Google + was launched less than 12 months ago, and the iPad is only 2 years old. The only constant is change.

As a result, the only way to keep up then, is to not try. It’s hopeless. Instead, attempt to manage change carefully. Develop a flexible plan that can be adjusted as the next new thing comes out. Examine your technology, your processes and your organization and make sure you can adapt to the unknowable. Don’t spend months or years developing and deploying the perfect “system” because by the time it’s deployed, everything will have changed again.

Pain Management

For the panelists, one way they take on change was by empowering their marketing organization to own much of their content requirements. Now, the marketing team is able to directly manage their own content without requiring intervention or assistance from the technology team. This in turn allows the technology team to focus on advancing other areas of their web and technology strategy.

Top pain #2 Short Staff, Short Budget and Demonstrating Value

No matter how big or small your school is, teams are stretched to the max. It is also clear that for many schools, it’s hard to justify additional investments to break free from current technologies or processes. So even though the web master or lead web developer is performing many manual processing activities or fielding marketing and departmental requests, making a change to technology or process is hard to sell because the site “still runs.” Because your band aid approach continues to work, the change process often slows down as well as you move through all the required justifications and explain why improvements are needed.

Don’t spend months or years developing and deploying the perfect “system” because by the time it’s deployed, everything will have changed again.

Both of our panelists reported significant improvements in performance and utilization after deploying their new web content management software. LBC has indicated that roughly half of their web development manager's time has been freed up to work on other pressing projects because the marketing organization is now empowered to handle many tasks that he was previously required to perform. Georgia Southwestern State had a similar experience in substantially reducing the number of "escalations" that required interventions from the web team.

Pain Management

Nobody wants to hear that you need to spend money to make your job easier, that isn't a winning strategy we are sorry to say. Instead, use these kind of success stories from LBC and GSW to paint a clear business case for making a change. Show how you can reduce costs, or create efficiencies that free up staff for other projects to justify the expense. Connecting change to a clear business outcome is the surest way to have a productive dialogue on why your investments are needed.

Top pain #3 Using the Web to Attract Students

Clearly, using the website as a new student recruiting tool is front and center at every institution. Integrating new forms of social media both into your site and finding ways to engage your prospective student community is in all of your plans. Though its priority may vary against other pending initiatives, this was a hot issue.

Getting dynamic and engaging content up on the site in a timely fashion is clearly one challenge. The second involves repurposing that content to engage with prospective students in their communities of interest, whether that is Facebook, Google +, mobile apps, or "the next new thing." The more the entire online experience is connected, the better prospective students can connect and engage with the school, no matter which channel they start from.

Pain Management

For both LBC and Georgia Southwestern State, the ability to empower the marketing team became their ultimate priority. By enabling their teams to manage much of the web site content updating and functionality directly, marketing was given greater flexibility to address these pressing challenges. Now, IT is no longer the roadblock to the process and marketing can address the opportunity as part of their normal workflow.

Top pain #4 Technology and Process Challenges

Not surprisingly, the audience was struggling with their current technologies. From a "hard to use CMS," to "training content contributors across multiple departments" attendees continue to fight their technologies and processes. While the solution may seem clear (deploy a new CMS, streamline processes, empower contributors etc), the path to that solution is clouded by the issues noted in pains one through three.

LBC and Georgia Southwestern State's stories however provided attendees with a way to move forward. Though each school had different reasons for embarking on their web infrastructure overhaul, both now have better technology, better processes and have

empowered their organization. LBC has also shown significant financial and business benefits to the school in the form of improved uptime (from around 80% to 100%), greater efficiencies, and reduced costs.

Pain Management

Too often institutions jump right into a technology project expecting that the technology will address all of their challenges. Unfortunately, this often simply leads to new challenges of a different type. Approach each initiative with a careful analysis of what you are trying to achieve as a unit, then address the technology, process and people components holistically as you build your requirements. That way your new technology will address specific needs, while enabling a better process to ensure success.

Three Things to “Do Now”

Do these four area of pain resonate with you? To help make this webinar actionable, we include the following three “Do Nows.” These are action steps you can start taking today to help alleviate many of the pains noted in the webinar.

1. Audit your technology processes and personnel strategy to ensure that you have identified gap areas and that your strategic initiatives are aligned to address any deficiencies.
2. When proposing change, be sure to concretely connect the change to the needs of the organization. Identify and showcase cost-savings opportunities as well as efficiency improvements that will help the organization better meet its goals.
3. Become more flexible by strategically adopting technologies that enable and empower your extended organization. This will allow the team to manage their activities with little oversight from the technology organization. Removing the roadblocks that prevent the marketing team from adapting to new web opportunities will free technology resources to address other priorities.

Contact Percussion today to learn more about how Percussion is empowering the Marketing teams at Lancaster Bible College, Georgia Southwestern State, and many other schools and universities.

www.percussion.com

About Percussion Software

Percussion Software publishes a family of Web Content Management (WCM) solutions, CM1 and CM System, that help businesses simplify their web content management processes to increase traffic, drive conversion, improve personalization, and build community. Percussion's solutions' decoupled architecture uniquely allows business users across the organization to take control of content and presentation, provides unparalleled control over how web content is used and distributed across channels, and enables IT organizations to freely integrate third-party, delivery-side applications without restriction. Percussion's WCM solutions are used by Travel and Tourism corporations to generate online results, including Hotwire.com, Vegas.com, Princess Cruises, and Discover America.

To learn more, visit percussion.com.

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