Best Practices in Web Content Management

Presentation for E-Gov 2001

July 9, 2001

Introduction

Overview

- **The View from Inside – challenges, best practices and lessons learned at HUD**

- **The View From Outside – challenges, best practices, and lessons learned from the perspective of an international observer of e-government**

- **The View Across Agencies – panel of Federal web content managers, sharing personal challenges, best practices, and lessons learned**
- **The View Down the Road – some thoughts about the future of government web sites**

Session objectives

- Plant seeds

- Share real-life experiences

- Present different points of view

- Inspire you to find at least one thing new to try

What we won't do

- **No cookie cutters, magic beans, or guarantees**
- **There is no "right answer"**
- **You need to figure out what works for you/your organization**

What is "web content management"?

- ## Running a web site is much like running a newspaper

- ## Content manager = "editor in chief"

  - ### Focus, writing, layout, design, marketing, performance

  - ### Makes sure the product delivers

One more thing: Federal Web Content Managers Group

- **Meetings listed at:**
http://www.hud.gov/library/bookshelf15/webcontentmgr.cfm

The View from Inside – HUD's Story

Intro/Overview

- **Our products, roles, services**
- **What's next?**
- **Challenges**
- **What we did right**
- **What we learned the hard way**
- **Keys to success**

The View from Inside – HUD's Story

Our Products

- **HUD's Homes and Communities internet site**
  - **Audience: citizens and HUD partners**
  - **Purpose: clearinghouse of information/services about homes and communities**

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- 2 million unique visitors in last 5 months; 5.4 million visits
- More than 75% are private citizens - most want to buy a home
- 25% return more than once
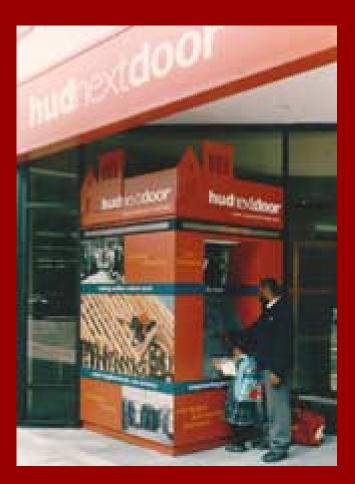- More than one million pages, in hard copy

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- **HUD's intranet (hudweb)**
  - **Audience: HUD staff**
  - **Purpose: communicate; educate; provide services, references, and tools employees need to do their jobs**

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- ## HUD's Kiosks

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- **94 touch-screen kiosks – going to 110**

- **Located in shopping malls, grocery stores, other public places**

- **Purpose: bring HUD to the people – reach citizens we wouldn't reach**

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- **Offers basic information about HUD programs (about 100 pages of web site)**
- **20,000 visitors each month**

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- ## HUD's Answer Machines

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- **Public use computers located in every HUD office**

- **Purpose: provide free access to HUD's web site**

- **1,300 visitors each month**

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- ## Web Clinics for HUD Partners
  - ### Free training sessions for HUD partners
  - ### Purpose: build bridges to citizens – help partners create sites that deliver services HUD funds
  - ### 32 clinics: more than 1,100 participants from 800 organizations

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Our Roles

- **Writers/editors/communicators**
  - **Editor-in-chief of the web sites**
  - **Determine focus**
  - **Decide on look and feel**
  - **Organize content**

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- **Write the segues**
- **Edit content to make it audience-friendly**

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- **Entrepreneurs**
  - **Stir the pot**
  - **Create business for the web**
  - **Understand managers' problems and goals**
    - **Help them figure out how to use the web to address them**

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- ## Advocates
  - ### Listen to our audiences – citizens, partners, employees
  - ### Conduct focus groups, monitor e-mail, collect the stories
  - ### Learn what they want/need – make sure our web products deliver

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- **Marketers**
  - **Go out/tell audiences what HUD has to offer**
  - **Distribute brochures**
  - **Go to public events: state/local fairs, home and garden shows**
  - **Demo the web site at conferences/trade meetings**

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- **Teachers**
  - **Show staff how to use the web in general…**
    - **…And our web site, in particular**
  - **Train them so they can help customers use the site successfully**

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- **Visionaries**
  - **Look to the future**
  - **Think about new ways to use the web to serve audiences**
  - **Inspire creativity in others with our own passion for what we do**

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Our Services

- **Briefings**
  - **Tell managers/staffs about HUD's web products and how to use them**
  - **Explain what it means to be "citizen-centric"**

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- **Consulting**
  - **Suggest ways to use the web to accomplish management goals and provide better services to citizens**
  - **Help managers create special pages around special initiatives**
  - **Advise managers on the content of web pages**

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- # Training
  - ## Conduct web clinics for grantees/partners
  - ## Teach staff how to sue and market HUD's web products

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- **Outreach**
  - **Set up online discussions**
  - **Conduct focus groups**
  - **Schedule webcasts**

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Goals this year

1. Connect people with people

- **Real time housing counseling**

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2. Connect people with government

- **Government "of" and "by" – not just "for" the people**

- **Citizens as partners**

- **Town halls, virtual teams, talk shows**

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3. Do what we're doing – better

- **Make HUD's site accessible to everyone**

- **Make the web site more efficient**

- **Expand reach of the web clinics**

- **Improve web management**

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Challenges

- **Overcoming organizational culture**
  - **Do managers value citizens as customers?**
  - **Do managers value results that can't be quantified?**
  - **Do managers "own" e-government?**

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- **Overcoming fears**
  - **About internet's impact on organizational structure**
  - **About impact on long-standing processes and relationships**

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- **Overcoming bureaucracy**
  - **Doing "right thing" takes patience, time, perseverance**
  - **Staying focused on innovation, in face of laws/regs**
  - **Resources**
  - **Changes in administration**

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- **Keeping everyone going in the same direction**
  - **Keep efforts concerted – not competitive**

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What Works at HUD

- ## Organization
  - ### Web team structure/roles
- ## Content development process
  - ### Content "matrix"
- ## Management support
  - ### Mentors and enablers

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- **Audience focus**
  - **Know them**
  - **Listen to them**
  - **Organize for them**
- **Personal customer contact**
  - **Boilerplate responses to e-mail**

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- **Marketing strategy**
  - **Go to the audience**
  - **Leave a calling card**
  - **Listen to the audience**
  - **Educate the staff**

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- **Tell the story**
  - **Praise contributors**
  - **Explain "successes" to citizens**
  - **Success begets success**

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- **Boldly go where no one has gone before!**
  - **Look for voids/opportunities**
  - **Don't wait for invitations**
  - **Be a leader – not a coordinator**

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Lessons Learned

- **Management strategy**
  - **Consensus didn't work**
  - **HUD strategy: gain external validation and use band-wagon effect**

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- # Consistent look and feel
  - ## "MacDonald's approach"
- # Use new technologies when they make sense

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- **Don't get distracted by "hot stuff"**
  - **"Urgent" can distract from the "necessary"**
  - **Deal with them – but keep your eyes on the prize**

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5 "C's for success

- **Clarity**
  - **About who you serve**
  - **About where you want to go**
  - **About what's right for your audience**
  - **About your purpose**

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- **Creativity**
  - **Develop innovative products that help your audience do things they want to do**

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- **Communication**
  - **Listen**
  - **Educate your audience**
  - **Brag about those who help you**
  - **Share your vision – be a prophet!**

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- **Courage**
  - **Risk disagreements/failures**
  - **Look for flexibilities in laws/regs**
  - **Don't be afraid of the unknown**
    - **Shape it or it will shape you**
  - **Go out on a limb**

Best Practices in Web Content Management

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- **Commitment**
  - **Energy, passion, resolve to carry you through hard times**
  - **Enthusiasm to startle, provoke others**

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And one more…

…the most important one of all…

…Common sense!