

# Empowering Health Care Professionals



## Deploying Self-Serve Drupal Sites at Florida Hospital

### Company Summary

- Organization: Florida Hospital
- Industry: Healthcare
- Type of Drupal Site: Intranet
- # of Drupal Sites: 80-100
- # of Active Intranet Users: up to 16,000

Florida Hospital, with 8 campuses and 2,188 beds, is an acute-care medical facility operated by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It serves as a community hospital for Greater Orlando and as a major tertiary referral hospital for Central Florida and much of the Southeast, the Caribbean and Latin America. Adventist Health System, Florida Hospital's parent company, operates 37 hospitals in ten states making it the largest not-for-profit protestant healthcare system in the United States.

### Collaboration and content management challenges

With 16,000 employees dispersed over 8 campuses, managing information sharing and collaboration was both critical and difficult for Florida Hospital. An intranet powered by a traditional proprietary offering had been in place for many years. To support the nearly 100 departments and teams, the Intranet Team had created a self-service model. Using their content management and collaboration product, the IT staff delivered individual departmental & team CMS sites. Each site had designated site owners and content creators to create and manage the content, leaving the IT staff to focus on administering the backend and provide "how-to" training. This model allowed a relatively compact support staff to deliver CMS and collaboration services to a large, dispersed user base.

As the volume of content and users increased, and functional requirements began to grow, the legacy product began to show its age. While the out of the box tools had proven consistent and reliable, they lacked the flexibility to change with the hospital or easily/quickly deliver new CMS functionality. In addition to the overall architecture, there were several specific challenges pressuring the Florida Hospital IT staff to examine new solutions.

### Content management and employee attrition

One of the long-standing challenges for IT and users alike was the fate of department sites. As with any workforce, Florida Hospital sees regular staff turnover as employees leave the organization or transfer to new departments and locations. This created a unique challenge for the self-management model: As site managers and content

## Challenges

- Support ended for existing software
- Static, inflexible functionality
- Extensive secure Active Directory requirements
- Attrition negatively affected content management expertise

creators would leave, departmental sites were often left stagnant. Either new site managers would step in with insufficient expertise, or worse, the sites were left with no site management and content would go dormant.

### Software end of life

The manufacturer announced in late 2007 that support for the current version of the CMS product in question was being withdrawn. Florida Hospital had a couple years to find a replacement solution before support would no longer be available. The software vendor had a new product available, and it was reviewed as a possible candidate. Upon inspection, the new product version was hampered by many of the same challenges and limitations, such as a lack of support for secure Active Directory integration and difficulty in adding custom functionality.

Given the cumulative pressures of an aging system, user-management challenges, authentication limitations, and decommissioning of software support, Florida Hospital identified an immediate need to find and implement a new intranet CMS solution.

### Seeking Solutions

Florida Hospital was open to all options as it began to consider a new intranet CMS. The solution needed the flexibility to be customized and extended, secure integration to Active Directory, and an ease of administration. An early candidate was Microsoft SharePoint. While it met many of the requirements, it was determined that SharePoint required too many development, support and hardware resources to be a viable short-term solution.

The Intranet Team then began to review open source solutions. Open source technology had not been used extensively at Florida Hospital (outside of the server OS arena), so the team considered their choices carefully. After looking at the leading open source platforms, the team recommended implementing Drupal. Intranet Team Manager, Rick Mann, cites the rationale to go with Drupal, “Drupal offered a wide range of tools, an active development community, and we determined that we could get the core platform running relatively quickly and easily.”

It was also important that the team could continue, and improve upon, their distributed model of content management. With over 4,000 modules to choose from, the Intranet Team had legitimate concerns about selecting the right set of foundational modules that could be delivered as part of a departmental “template” or basic set of functionality. The search for reliable, usable, and supported modules led Florida Hospital to Acquia.

“As we moved closer to Drupal, several things became clear,” said Carlos Escobar, Administrative Director for Business Applications. “We were going to need some type of support – that was the biggest thing we felt we could potentially lose out on with open source. Fortunately, we found that support through Acquia. We also recognized that we wanted more than the traditional support we were accustomed to in commercial software. We needed a partner with a stake in our Drupal success.” Acquia demonstrated its Drupal expertise and interest, and the project moved forward with Acquia providing support and consulting.

## Delivering the Intranet

Acquia Drupal, or Acquia's distribution of Drupal that includes Drupal core and a set of essential modules, helped get the Florida Hospital Intranet Team on the right track. By initially paring down available Drupal tools, the team could continue with their decentralized content management style that allows departments to manage their own sites. This would be key to the team's ability to support such a large number of sites. In theory, the team would create and host departmental team Drupal sites using a standard template and consistent set of tools (modules), and then pass over the day-to-day management of sites to their respective site owners and content creators. This would, in turn, free up the Intranet Team to subsequently research, develop and deploy additional tools and functionality, to further enrich the Drupal experience.

As the Intranet Team and Acquia sat down to architect a solution, it was clear that there were some unique challenges. The first was creating a modified permission set around modules. As most modules are designed, each site owner actually had too much control over configuration and controls. Rick Mann explains, "One of the areas where Acquia helped us go beyond their set of modules was in customization – removing some of the more powerful admin features. This allowed us to deliver tools that would be durable, and prevent the site owners, who may or may not be technically savvy, to accidentally break or take their sites offline."

Acquia also made recommendations for a community-based LDAP authentication module, one of several contributed modules included in the team's default site template. Together, Acquia and the Florida Hospital Intranet Team were able to get the web and database servers, along with a standardized set of features, online within months.

The team's goal of supporting a large number of intranet departmental sites was met, with 4 employees supporting nearly 100 separate, but standardized Drupal sites used for collaboration and content management. Because of Drupal's ease of deployment, and the diligence put into creating a pre-packaged site template, these 4 team members are able to support their intranet, while also balancing a full workload of other, unrelated IT duties. A large portion of success is also due to excellent end-user training by the Florida Hospital MIS training team, and diligent research and testing for the core set of modules included in their standard department template.

## Building content management expertise

The Florida Hospital MIS department upholds a model of self-sufficiency. They seek to hire experts or cross-train existing staff to avoid outsourcing whenever possible. This approach influences how the Intranet Team takes on module selection and custom coding, as well as supports the departmental site owners and content creators.

The switch to Drupal presented an opportunity to improve user training and content management expectations. The Intranet and the hospital's internal IT training team developed custom training. As a result, departmental sites are no longer dependent on the original site owner; new owners can be trained and transitioned quickly.

### Benefits

- Self-service content publishing empowers departments
- Over 100 Drupal sites be supported by a compact team of 4
- Acquia support is focused on improving overall Drupal experience



“Acquia has demonstrated great thought leadership and guidance. Together, we are working to build smarter applications that get the most out of Drupal. Acquia’s success is closely tied to ours; we’ve been able to build a fantastic and unique partner relationship.”

Much of the content management expertise department site owners are learning through training reflects the relationship that the Intranet Team has with Acquia. The team has looked to Acquia for guidance in terms of what applications are most beneficial for their intranet, and the modules that can best deliver those applications. As the team becomes subject matter experts over their cadre of mission critical modules, training is geared towards making site owners proficient in using those modules to manage their sites and meet their department’s content and collaboration needs.

Staying connected to the user base is also important to the Florida Hospital Intranet Team. They provide on-going collaboration with all the site owners and content creators by implementing an internal “Drupal Community” site, as well as quarterly “Lunch and Learn” presentations and email blasts. In this way, the Intranet Team can provide additional training tips, provide a repository of FAQ’s, and help “close the support loop”.

As the sites become more mature, the team is looking to add more functionality in a controlled fashion. Says Rick Mann, “We are soliciting feedback from the departments about what features they’d like to see. We are currently in the planning stages of adding additional functionality, such as web forms, CCK and Views. We will also expand our training to include “advanced” classes, empowering our users to leverage these additional, powerful tools.”

Carlos Escobar draws a fine point on the role that Acquia has played, “Acquia has demonstrated great thought leadership and guidance. The value isn’t just the cost savings; it’s the quality of the relationship. It’s true that we’re saving at least 25% over the legacy vendor support; but that was also very low-level, reactive support. We only heard from the vendor when there was a problem, or when it was time to renew contracts. With Acquia, we are working together to build smarter applications, and improve our ability to get the most out of Drupal. Acquia isn’t selling software, so their success is more closely tied to ours. Because of this, we’ve been able to build a fantastic and unique partner relationship with Acquia.”

## About Acquia

Acquia is a commercial open source software company. We provide a valuable set of software and network services for the popular Drupal open source social publishing system. At Acquia, we maximize the potential of Drupal-powered solutions through our annual subscriptions for software and services. For more information about how Acquia can transform your community driven web investments, contact Acquia Sales at [sales@acquia.com](mailto:sales@acquia.com), 888-9-ACQUIA or +1-978-296-5250.