



Department of Homeland Security Web Governance

Bringing Governance to the Enterprise

Submission Date: July 12, 2012

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Executive Summary

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security presents a case study of a large public sector organization which leaped from a start-up to a turn-around phase in the space of two yearsⁱ. As we approach year three, we are dealing with the challenges of an organization that is in re-alignment.

- *In the start-up phase our challenge was to build a structure and system from scratch without a clear framework or boundaries. We also needed to weld together a cohesive high-performing team. Finally, we had to make do with limited resources.*
- *In the turn-around phase, our challenge was to re-energize demoralized employees, and going deep enough with difficult personnel choices.*
- *In the re-alignment phase we will be dealing with deeply engrained cultural norms that no longer contribute to high performance, convincing stakeholders that change is necessary and restructuring the top team.*

The results of our effort to bring web governance to the enterprise is that we created a clear path to leadership for web operations and have modernized our approach to web communications. Resource and roles and responsibilities issues linger.

Challenge

Goal-setting: The public web provides a global platform for public engagement and is often referred to as the single most important communication tool at our disposal to quickly reach a global audience. It provides a key means of information sharing on Department policy and programs, reaching stakeholders and the public, and putting a human face on the work we do to keep the country safe.

To meet these objectives, DHS has invested resources in a web infrastructure, publishing environments and human resources. However, it was clear the Department of Homeland Security was not getting its money's worth for this investment in public web.

Baseline Analysis: When Secretary Janet Napolitano issued her Action Directive on Web Systems Optimization in December 2010, we faced a number of challenges in how the online footprint for the agency was being managed. We knew there was room for improvement in how our public web was managed but didn't have a measured baseline for the scope of the program. For example, we didn't know how many websites we had, how many CMS platforms we supported, how many people were in the web workforce, how many hosting solutions we had, how much training was provided to our workforce, how we measured performance on the web, etc.

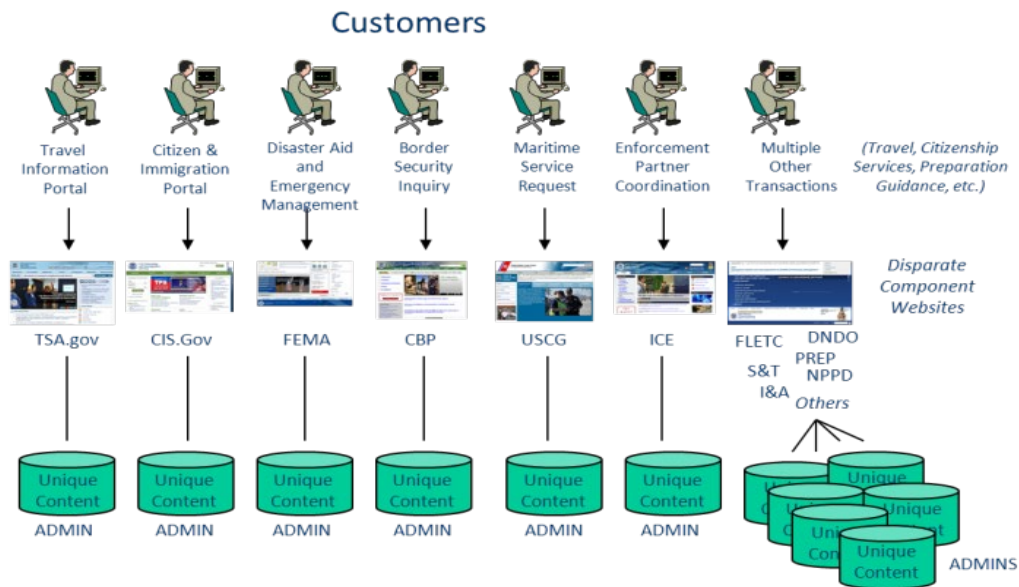
Strategy: Our lack of strategy on content, search and metrics was also hampering our ability to succeed. The skills gap was also a pain point and the lack of a training approach or strategy was problematic.

Policy: Our domain administration at the agency can best be described as un-managed at the start of this process. This had led to a proliferation of domains, no process to evaluate the business need for the domain and no enterprise asset management plan. The result of this inattention was duplication of effort, inefficient allocation of scarce resources a poor user experience due to the difficulty of finding our content.

Staffing and Structural Reform: We also faced significant staffing and structural issues in how the web was supported at the agency. The OPA unit was given authority as the business owner but was not funded to support web and originally had contractor staff that was on-loan from another directorate. In addition, the centralized publishing model using a very outdated and difficult content management system (CMS) was unsustainable for an organization of our size.

Approach

The Secretary's intent in her action directive was "To streamline customer access to DHS services, improve DHS web content management and reduce costs by establishing a strategy for web-content management and web-hosting services through consolidation and centralized hosting of DHS



public-facing websites.” This policy created the authorities needed for action. She directed the agency to take a number of steps within prescribed timetables to remedy this, including:

- Setting up a two-tiered governance structure, (Executive Steering Committee and a Web Council) including charters adopted by each tier, with representation from both the Public Affairs and Information Technology experts and leadership
- Conducting a data-call to discover the scope of all public facing websites and resources supporting them
- Create and approve a web content managing and hosting services strategy
- Provide implementation requirements and milestones through the ESC to all components
- Provide for a moratorium on spending to support legacy CMS or web hosting solutions and an approval process for significant spending to enhance legacy systems
- Establish metrics to capture improvements to customer service, web content management and cost avoidance
- The legacy architecture is depicted in the embedded chart.

Goal-Setting: Our content strategy started with a common understanding of the purpose of our site and a strategy to move to a new model that recognized we had to prioritize the work of publishing to the website and fully recognize that our users had shifted from navigation to search in their preferred methods of searching for content. We also made a commitment to removing old content and following our user’s task orientation.

PURPOSE OF OUR WEBSITE:



1. Provide valuable info
 - a. tell our story to a global audience
 - b. help them complete their top tasks
2. Help people find stuff
 - a. Improve content quality by eliminating redundant/old/trivial (the ROT)
 - b. Improve search
3. Do the feedback loop: engage

Strategy: The content strategy was recently approved by the ESC and the fee structure for the hosting strategy is currently being finalized for approval. The agency decided to adopt an open-source Web CMS in their strategic sourcing. A short-term training strategy was developed by OPA along with an outline for a long-term training strategy to address our known skills gaps.

We adopted a problem – solution approach. To address being hard to navigation we moved to simplify and unify our site. To address the lack of consistency we adopted customer service standards and consistent templates. To address the issue users had with our site being unwieldy we moved to enhance content quality, especially search. To address the proliferation of CMS systems we adopted strategic sourcing. We have one approved Web CMS for new systems and a plan to migrate operational components to that platform between now and FY2013. We are also building once and reusing many times, and plan to adopt a common content repository in a multi-tenant environment. To address the expensive infrastructure systems we identified in the data-call, we are now in a cloud-based hosting environment that is cost effective and pay-as-you-go.

To address our deficiencies in metrics, we adopted an enterprise metrics standards document at the DHS web counsel which spells out standards and best practices for collecting metrics across five streams: analytics, usability, satisfaction, business goals and search. For analytics, we have made a determination to adopt Google Analytics as the agency tool and adopted a metrics plan which directs everyone to use this service and share the data with OPA.

To address our lack of enterprise search, we have adopted the USASearch affiliate program and have authorized it as the enterprise approach in our content strategy document, which was adopted by the ESC.

OPA has developed and has begun to implement our short-term training plan and has an outline for a long-term training approach to address the skills gaps. Discussions are underway about roles and responsibilities for training at the enterprise in terms of which areas OCIO is responsible for and which areas OPA is responsible for.

Policy: The data-call provided the agency with a baseline inventory of known domains and called into sharp relief the lack of management controls. The Web Governance bodies adopted criteria for new URLs and sub-domains. OPA enforced a secretarial Action Directive on Cross-component collaboration which gave it authorities to approve new internet identities to have an approval process for all new domains that provided transparency on activities underway to create new domains and an opportunity to stop actions that were inconsistent with the web governance mandates. The Web governance body also directed the OCIO to begin an asset management plan for putting the website inventory in a modern asset management database.

Staffing and Structural Reform: For the known structural staffing issues, OPA negotiated an MOA with the OCIO that agrees to convert four contractor positions to full time federal positions and eventually make them positions that are funded through OPA. This will save money, but also build in important accountabilities and assure that the public release authority for OPA resides with federal employees.

We also introduced de-centralized publishing and tiered administration to address the unsustainable web publishing model. Tiered administration has business units (called support components) at HQ appointing a HQ Web Liaison and alternate and having these people responsible for all communication with OPA web publishing as well as vetting web publishing that comes from content authors within their organization.

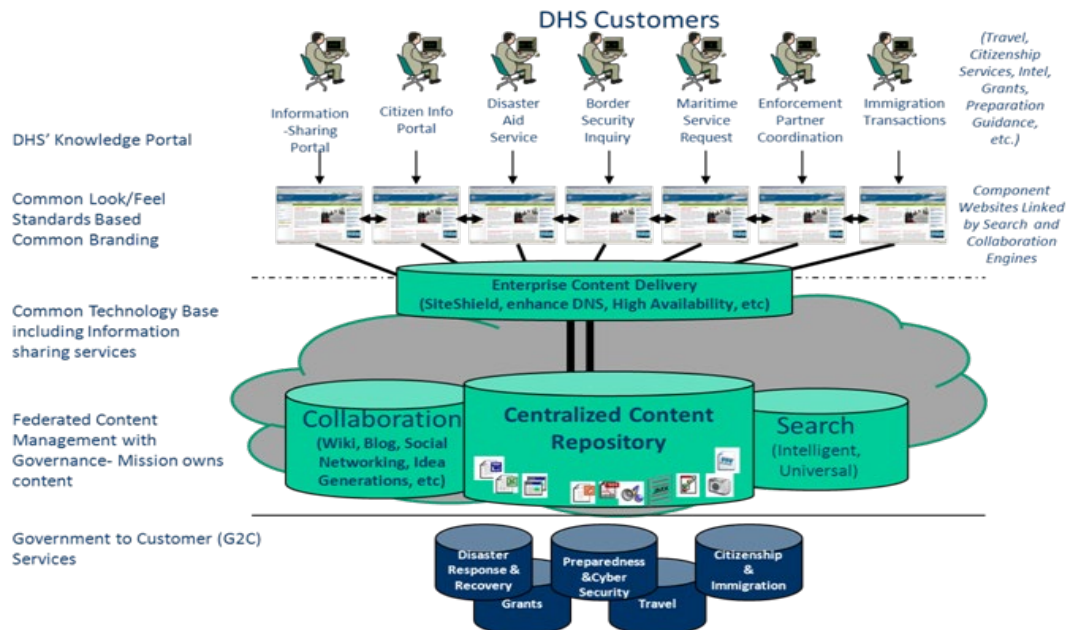
Discussions have commenced at the leadership of the web governance groups about using the Working Capital Fund as an approach for enterprise funding in the future.

Results:

Strategy: Our strategy documents are in the process of being implemented; Preliminary results include the following:

- By eliminating redundant old and trivial content we have trimmed our assets by 20 percent.

- We are in the process of migrating to a new data-base CMS which will allow us to implement our de-centralized publishing approach and free our OPA Web team to be more active in managing the web activities for the enterprise.
- The new template based publishing will allow us to get out of the business of creating custom web layouts and concentrate on fielding great content for the public.
- Use of the new search engine will save us \$50,000 a year which had been paid to use the Google Search appliance and has already helped increase the DHS.gov customer satisfaction from 71 to 73 in the first month. USCIS has implemented USASearch and has achieved a double digit increase in satisfaction which they attribute to the new search strategy.
- The use of Google Analytics is in the process of being implemented and will allow us to have apples-to-apples comparisons of user behavior on our collective sites when the code is put on all target top level sites.
- The short-term training plan is starting later this month and when implemented is expected to train over 170 people across HQ in how to public and approve content within the new Web CMS.
- The First three to move to the new environment for the Web Content Management cloud Service will be www.dhs.gov (preview on July 27, hard cutover on August 10), www.fema.gov (hard cutover on July 20), www.tsa.gov (preview on Sept 1, hard cutover scheduled on September 14). to occur on Successfully implemented Preview.Fema.Gov as the anchor website for the Web Content Management Cloud Service.
- The target environment is depicted in the embedded chart:



Policy: The process to gate approvals of new URLs has proven a success in providing for a review stage by OPA as the business owner of Web Communications. The criteria for new URLs has been published. This allows transparency for the policies, which has led advocates for new initiatives to re-evaluate whether a new domain and infrastructure is needed. OCIO has yet to resource the asset management database, so we are still keeping our inventory and documentation in an Excel spreadsheet and on hard drives.

- To date we have reduced the 302 public facing websites reported to OMB in October 2011 to a current level of 286. Further reductions are planned for FY12 and FY13.

Staffing and structural reform: One of the four positions is now filled and hiring actions in an advanced state for the three remaining vacancies. When fully executed, this change will:

- map functional responsibilities to the proper organizational unit
- shift from expensive contract support to a sustainable federal civil service staff model
- assure Web publishing subject matter expertise will reside with civil servants, so OPA will enjoy enhanced continuity of operations and provide for inherently governmental activities to be handled by civil servants with release authority instead of contract employees

Lessons Learned

- It is vital to have authorities set and documented from the highest possible individual at the agency: the Secretary if possible; also have clear Delegation of Authorities in place to avoid unnecessary delays or obstacles in implementing your program

- Resource web operations in a way that maps functional responsibilities to the proper organizational unit
- Strongly encourage and incentivize reuse across a federal agency and ultimately across the federal government. Shift to open-source or government funded tools where possible to save money and gain efficiencies
- Document your strategic plans and socialize and approve through your governance bodies to aid buy-in
- Assure proper representation and attendance at the right level for your web governance entities and approve charters that set out the business rules for how these structures will operate across the enterprise
- Need to mature a federal acquisition contract framework to better support reuse, delivery and cost efficiencies.

ⁱ This framework is drawn from Watkins, Michael, **The First 90 Days, Critical Success Strategies for New Leaders at All Levels** (2003, Harvard Business Press, Boston, Mass.)