

planetmagpie

*unleashing the power of IT*

# CASE STUDY



*Building a More Capable, More SEO-Friendly PlanetMagpie.com using Sitefinity CMS.*

San Jose IT Consultant PlanetMagpie Selects Sitefinity CMS for Rebuilding Their Website & Recommending to Clients

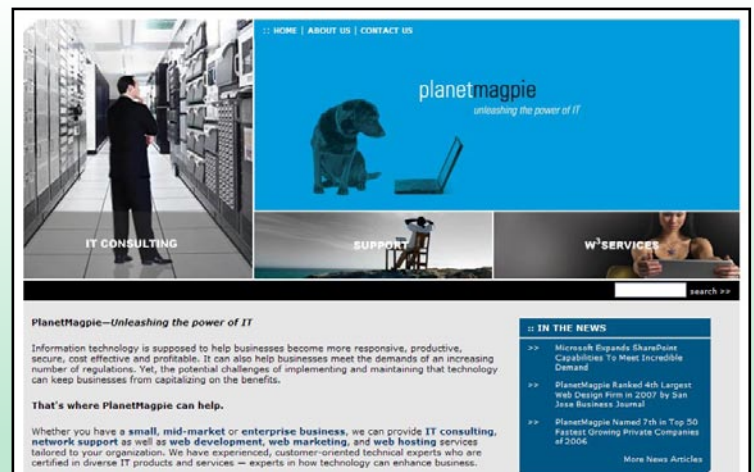


## THE CHALLENGE

PlanetMagpie needed a whole new website. We were missing capabilities we needed on the administration side, and the current site version (codenamed “PM 2.5”) had caused some unexpected difficulties.

One, the site used GUIDs to list webpages. These are numeric ID numbers used as a webpage’s URL, like this: [www.planetmagpie.com/ItemID=23552998210](http://www.planetmagpie.com/ItemID=23552998210). The search engines couldn’t read these URLs as clearly as they would regular text. So PM 2.5’s SEO fluctuated.

Two, there was a disconnect between website content and navigation. We could update the content through Administration automatically. But since the navigation menus ran from a separate listing, we had to update those manually each time we added or moved a webpage.



*PM 2.5, the old PlanetMagpie.com website.*

We had three options:

1. **Simplify the website to remove the complexities causing the problems,**
2. **Build a new CMS all by ourselves,**
3. **Switch to a third-party CMS.**

All three options were investigated. We began work on a new CMS, but the project grew so fast in scope it seemed ridiculous to keep going on it.

Then our lead developer, Brent Taylor, offered up the Sitefinity CMS for consideration. We’d already used Telerik’s RAD Editor in PM 2.5; that’s how he knew about their CMS.

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“Why Sitefinity? We needed a proven solution. One we could use ourselves, and re-sell at a competitive price for the software and the implementation. Sitefinity had the features and the tools we needed, out of box. And it allowed for fast customization in every area. It had the wheels to get us moving quickly.”

After a live demo and some administration testing, we decided to go with Sitefinity. It did fit with us, and for a few reasons.

One, we wanted to take advantage of Sitefinity's ASP.NET programming hooks. Since we have on-staff ASP.NET developers, this meant customization for ourselves and for future web development clients.

*Sitefinity had the features and the tools we needed, out of box.*

Two, if the CMS suited us well enough, we'd begin recommending it to all of our Web Development clients.

Three, Sitefinity is structured using modules. This meant we could modify and/or build specific parts of the website to our liking.

And we would need that. Because we had specific requirements for the new site (now code-named “PM 3.0”). The list of those requirements included:

**An all-new Portfolio to use as a client showcase**

**SEO-friendly URLs**

**Easy-to-manage content**

**A new interactive design**

**Sidebars to offer our newsletter and free downloads**

**Interoperability with our ecommerce solution (MIVA Merchant)**

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## THE SOLUTION

In order to fix these, we set three major development goals:

1. **Fix the link issues that caused SEO disruptions**
2. **Move or recreate all content (webpages, news, navigation elements) in a new layout format**
3. **Build a Portfolio centerpiece where we could showcase websites designed by PlanetMagpie**

“PlanetMagpie.com has 400 webpages and news pages,” said Chris Williams, Technical Writer. “Moving the bulk of it over was easy. The little edits are what leeches up the time!”

In fact, we did a lot more than ‘little edits.’ Sitefinity contains 9 internal modules governing content, design elements, navigation, etc. We modified 3 of them to suit our site’s purposes: adding more fields to Generic Content, adding tag fields & icons to News, and adding sequences to Galleries & Images.

*Adding look-and-feel to our Sitefinity-based site was no more difficult than to a .NET application.*

On top of that, we built 3 new modules. Product Catalog Tester, News Items and Portfolio. Yes, in order to make our Portfolio really shine, we opted to build it ground-up.

Why? We wanted administrators to create image galleries for each Portfolio entry, and

then give that entry a text-based ID. This way, each admin could associate images to Portfolio entries without embedding them. Which meant we could re-use some of the images between entries and cut down on load time.

Keeping load time down was a big priority with a website of this size. With 400 pages, each with its own menu and header images. Jennifer Garcia, another of our Web Developers, was in charge of keeping the look-and-feel slim and fast-loading.

“The goal was to make sure all the pages rendered the same, regardless of browser. PlanetMagpie.com has a complex design with many images, gradients and dynamic content controls. Luckily, adding look-and-feel to our Sitefinity-based site was no more difficult than to a .NET application!”

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Of course, we had some snags. Every major website project does. Ours centered on browser remediation and main menu development.

We had the biggest problem with keeping the layout consistent in all browsers. Spacing that looked fine in Internet Explorer, didn't in Firefox. Break tags stretched too far. Sidebars stubbornly sat a pixel or two out of alignment. It took a lot of CSS tweaks and double-checking to straighten it all out.

Another issue came up with the main navigation menu. Because the menu was tightly integrated with the coding, the original design we had for the menu buttons didn't fit. The text and tabs jerked back & forth across the menu bar.

So Brent adapted the design ("slightly outside my job description") and used custom menu skins. One for the main menu, one for the "slider" and one for the tabs seen on the Portfolio. By using these 3 skins, the navigation had enough flexibility to keep the design consistent, while still using only images and CSS. No extra programming needed.

## THE RESULTS

Sitefinity's SEO-friendly URL link structure took care of Goal #1 out of the box. Search engines began re-indexing the site almost immediately.

Once the above-mentioned issues were fixed, Goal #2 was a walk in the park. Management of the site's content, its news, even its navigation menus are now handled through Administration with a few clicks.

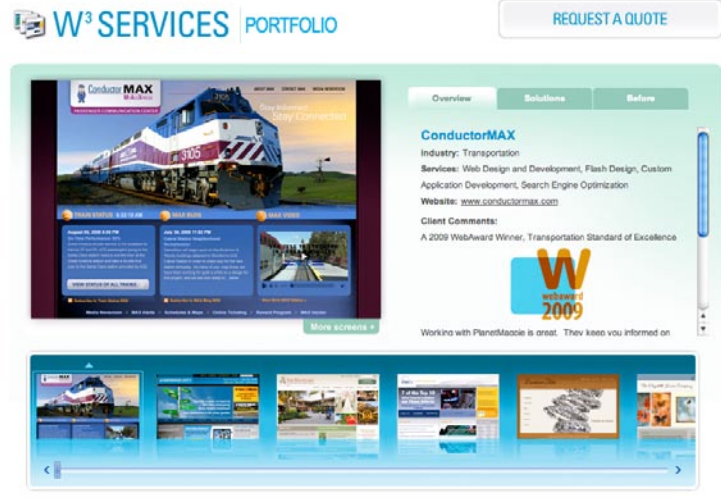
The Portfolio was a major success, too. Every entry has room for screenshots, comments from the client, a list of which development services were needed... even a 'Before' screenshot to show the changes.



PM 3.0, the new PlanetMagpie.com

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Currently PM 3.0 runs on a Windows Server 2008 system, using IIS 7 for its Web server. Its database server is another Windows 2008 server running SQL Server 2008.



PlanetMagpie.com W3 Services Portfolio

NOTE: We started the PM 3.0 rebuild using Sitefinity 3.6. Mid-way through we migrated up to Sitefinity v3.7 in order to grab some new features (like the Wiki function). We were actually able to upgrade the CMS *while we worked on it!*

Doreyne Douglas, PlanetMagpie's W3 Manager, is extremely happy with selecting Sitefinity as PlanetMagpie's CMS of choice. "We researched CMS software for years, never finding a product that met all

our needs. The software prices were unreasonably high for small and mid-market customers. As you can imagine, the choice was very important—and not just for meeting our high customer demand. We needed to make sure the developer training was a good long-term investment."

"Two months into developing our own proprietary CMS, Brent came across Sitefinity 3.6 and recommended we switch to it for PlanetMagpie.com as a test case. We did, and now we're implementing Sitefinity on two other customer projects. Telerik makes for a great partner—we get an affordable CMS, and they use our developer feedback when updating Sitefinity!"

Sitefinity CMS covered every base. With about 4 months of development, we built a more SEO-friendly, easier-to-manage PlanetMagpie.com.

#### PLANETMAGPIE

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#### INDUSTRY

IT Consulting, Web Development

#### BACKGROUND

PlanetMagpie is an IT consulting agency in the San Francisco Bay Area. We provide Microsoft-based technology consulting, website development, network support and web/business services hosting.

#### WHY SITEFINITY

ASP.NET codebase. Search engine optimization built-in at page level. All the content modules we needed. Low price point. And if we're going to recommend a CMS to our Web Development clients, we wanted to know it inside & out.

#### TECHNICAL DETAILS

The all-new PlanetMagpie 3.0 website is now hosted on Windows Server 2008, running Sitefinity CMS. ASP.NET and SQL Server technology round out the site's development.