

# Board Report for Monterey County Website Portal Presentation

March 17, 2015

## I. Website Evolution and Development

The current website evolved from a basic experiment in the early stages of web presence. Over time, the internet site has been limited to basic information flows to the citizens of the County. Today, the site contains multiple pages of information originating with many County Departments; there is little to no governance as to consistency, style or accuracy. It serves up over 1,000,000 page views per year, comprised of approximately 25 percent new visitors and 75 percent return visitors. To improve both public and internal service, the County is currently planning to provide a new website on a new software and hardware platform. The project completion date is mid-April 2015.

The website is a concentrated source for local government information, services, and applications, but untapped potential remains. Economic development, tourist information, and expanded agricultural information, to name a few, are planned to be included in website presentation to the public. To realize this potential, a team of government business unit and technical staff were brought together to determine needs and process.

This team evaluated the current site's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) in separate sessions. As part of the SWOT process, the information was accumulated and best practices were developed, which will be demonstrated today.

Along with internal sources of strategic development, the team solicited input from the general public by conducting a long term survey; it received almost 400 responses from a wide range of residents, visitors, and business sources. Part of the survey solicited suggestions to improve the existing site and input on what new features would be helpful for the website user, resident or visitor. The website was designed to be as flexible as possible. This is a very dynamic environment and must be able to adjust to the ever changing needs of the citizens of the County. Not only were the residents of the County addressed but visitors' needs, whose tourism is our second largest industry, were also taken into consideration. We have an amazingly beautiful environment, and we have an extremely diverse cultural heritage; many people come from all over the world to participate in the celebrations associated with our diversity and natural beauty.

During the website development process, the Information Technology Department searched for a vendor partner that could provide expertise in the development of government-related websites. After researching and ultimately attending the National Association of Government Webmasters conference, a short list of potential vendor partners was compiled.

Vision Internet (VI) was selected as our partner due to their extensive government website background, the compatibility of their development environment with County resources, the ease and flexibility of their content management system, and cost. Once on board, VI immediately used their set of tools to evaluate the flow of website visitors, determining where people's primary interest is and tracing their movement around the existing County website. Using heat maps and other evaluation tools, they were able to identify where website users landed when first visiting the site. This, combined with VI's extensive background and experience in developing and maintaining hundreds of government websites around the country, has been used in the design process used for Monterey County.

## II New Website Functions

The overall goal was to redesign the website to spread awareness of our county's services; our aim is to make it more appealing, interesting, interactive, easier to use, and easier to extend county services online. Additional capability, beyond what is currently available, to accept credit card payments for multiple County services is desirable and will be available in future releases.

First and foremost, we sought a solution that would provide an easily-learned interface for content creators, thereby minimizing training requirements. We required a solution that would be able to support and enable the creation of the following pages:

- Home Page
- Services Page
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Contact Us
- Weather/Surf
- Traffic
- Headlines module (on home page)
- Streaming media page
- County of Monterey Event Calendar
- County of Monterey Job listings
- Member Listings
- About County of Monterey
- Newsletter archive
- Search Results
- Terms of Use
- My County of Monterey login page
- County of Monterey Department Drop Down Menu

We required a solution that has the following functionalities:

- Responsive Website Design
- Fully ADA Compliant
- Home Page
- RSS Feed and Newsletters
- Templates
- Scalability and Flexibility
- FAQs and/or How Do I?
- Job Postings
- Compatibility
- News and Announcements Application
- Security
- Banners
- Dynamic Layout Functionality
- Shopping Cart
- Analytics
- Accessibility validation.
- Search Engine

- Approval Work Flow
- Forms and Questionnaires
- Formatting and Additional Functionality

### III. New Website Implementation

This project had a very limited budget which was provided by the Director of ITD. The time dedicated to the project was also limited, as ITD is not a general fund supported department; thus, staff worked on the project in between their regular assignments.

The initial scope of the project was to develop a new County web portal and style templates that define a common approach to the look and feel of the overall website; it has been completed. There remains a significant effort to migrate the existing content into the new website. Additionally, we must adapt and integrate certain individual department websites that were recently created and are hosted outside the County's domain. We have designed the templates to be as flexible as possible and have already adapted some of the existing sites to the new schema.

With regard to content management, each department has the ability to conduct complete development and editing within their template space on their department pages. Each department has identified a page editor responsible for content management, including accuracy and timeliness of postings. Each department will have control over workflow, allowing internal quality assurance functionality. This person or persons will be trained by ITD staff or, if the department wishes, ITD will maintain their website at standard analyst rates.

Part of the website development effort includes identifying incorrect information which, over the years, has accumulated on existing local sites. This includes broken links and misspellings. To accomplish this, and to provide future assistance to prevent this from occurring, we purchased software that will scan the entire website on a routine and on-demand basis to alert content managers of potential errors. This software is already in use and is assisting us in evaluating the content to be migrated to the new system. Several departments have been using this software on a regular basis and agree regarding its ease of use and accuracy.

One of the most requested functions is the ability for the public to register for e-notifications for automatic notice of changes in department-related information. This service has been included in the design. Internally and externally, there was a request for an all-inclusive calendar of County events. This has also been included. Departments will have the option to provide entries to the calendar from their self-maintained calendar. People looking at the master calendar will have filtering capability to see either selected or all County entries.

Departments that choose to continue to host their sites outside of the County's domain will be provided either a landing site or a re-direct function. In the future, it is hoped that these Departments will choose to take advantage of the design functions of the content management system and rejoin the County's domain.

We have not provided for social interaction functionality, such as Facebook, Twitter or YouTube, on the County website as we do not have sufficient staff to support such activities. However, there is functionality available through the content management system for individual

departments who would be responsible for maintaining that capability. The new website has contact capability through e-mail should either the public or internal county staff wish to suggest any new functionality or report any issue with the website.

Of special interest to departments is the ability to use their websites to survey their particular visitors. That functionality will now be available in the content management system and each department can design, issue, and receive feedback using this feature. This functionality is of special importance in providing another feedback mechanism to determine how well a department or section is providing service. Survey feedback can now become an integral piece of a Department's overall performance management program.