

My Drupal Experience

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Target

- Many years in computing
- Closely followed Internet
- Discovered Drupal in 2007
- Drupal mostly a good experience
 - But not everything was good
- It's a tool,
must use it appropriately

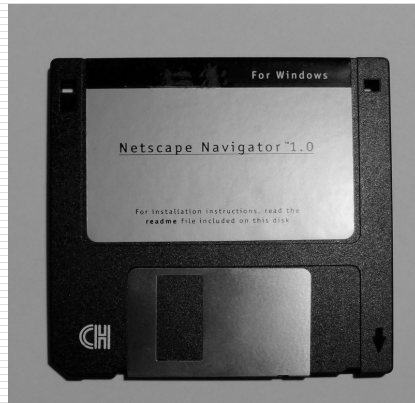
Plan for My Segment

- My early web experiences
- My first CMS experiences
- Drupal – “Kid in Candy Store”
- Initial constraints
- Longer term view
- Prudent guidelines

My Current eReality

- Three “personal” Drupal sites:
 - Fabian.ca
 - SeniorConsultants.ca
 - BeausleilCurveLake.ca
- On-going connection to cips.ca (Drupal)
- Moving a non-profit to Wild Apricot

in the beginning ...



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Early HTML Sites

- Great flexibility
- Limited interaction
- Bear to maintain
- Need single (logical) editor
 - Easy to descent into chaos
 - Teams need tight management

Early Promise

- eCommerce business revolution
- eLearning education revolution
 - Remember the dot.com bubble
- Not quite as simple as expected
 - It takes time to change people
 - Complex support infrastructure
 - Manage exploding complexity

Managing Complexity

- Desirable separation
 - Content
 - Presentation
 - Architecture
 - Security
- ... Content Management System

My Early CMS Experience

- Zope (Plone)
 - Great theory. I never put it into practice.
- PHP as CMS
 - Good components, needs integration
- LAMP CMS
 - Hundreds of choices (so it seemed)
 - Not all became winners

Personal Position

- I argued, strongly, for CMS
 - Volunteer lead for rebuild of IT Service Management Forum site (itSMF.ca)
 - Argued for Canadian Information Processing Society use of CMS (cips.ca)
 - Moved itSMF, didn't (initially) move CIPS
 - itSMF went with custom open source

By 2007

- CIPS was prepared to listen
 - And the market had evolved
- I led the CIPS Web Advisory Panel
- Needed CMS to:
 - Run on widely used platform (LAMP?)
 - Support for loosely organized users
 - Provide a rich array of features
- Drupal came out on top
 - (Even against a free Microsoft alternative)

Drupal: Kid in Candy Store

- Drupal offered hundreds of free modules
- Drupal offered hundreds of free themes
- No limit to the possibilities
- But ...
 - Even some WAP members didn't get it
 - And there were strange glitches

My View: Drupal realities

- Drupal appeals to developers
 - Community can ignore the naïve
 - Membership requires real effort
- Not all modules/themes are golden
 - Incompatibilities
 - Flaky behaviour
 - Abandoned waifs

Drupal Hacking

- Regular security updates (patches)
 - To core and to modules and to themes
- Web trolls will find all exposures
 - Doesn't matter if the site is popular
- Count on hacking attempts
 - Will exploit known vulnerabilities
 - Can't afford to ignore updates
 - Can't effectively automate updating

Multi-Site

- Great theory
 - One code base, multiple sites
 - Reduce the need for tech support
- But
 - Sites must synchronize maintenance
 - Real pain to move to new version
- Sweet spot: single support organization

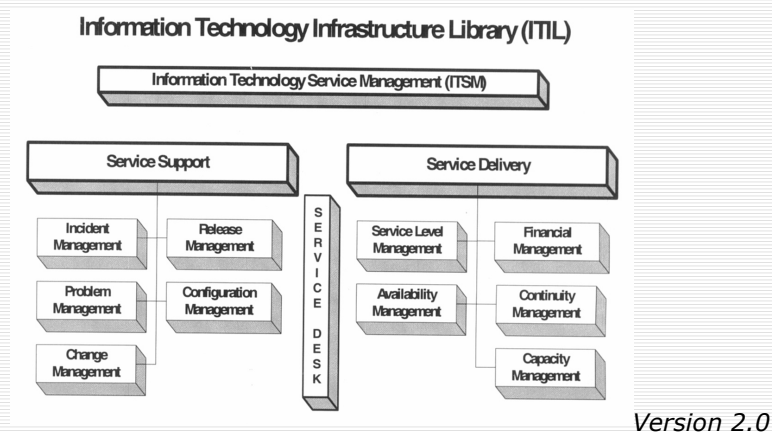
Can't Build & Forget

- Easy to use non-technical editors
 - CCK & Views tuning makes it natural
- Non-technical shouldn't maintain
 - Too many ways to go wrong
- Non-technical shouldn't architect
 - Very easy to mess up a site
 - Drupal is just too powerful

Operations

- Who ensures the service is up?
- Who handles incidents?
- Who installs patches? When?
- Who plans & installs new versions?
- What about security?
- What about capacity/availability?
- What about cost of service?

Operations (aka ITSM)



ITIL

- Is ITIL really required
 - Version 2 or newer version 3
- Personal websites
 - Formal ITIL is overkill
- Websites as delivered service
 - All ITIL processes considered
 - Some may be rudimentary

ITIL Resources

- If you're delivering a service, you need to understand ITIL basics
 - You owe it to your customers
 - You may have a legal duty of care
- Societies, websites, ... books, courses
 - itSMF.ca (Canadian society)
 - itil-officialsite.com (UK parent site)

My Current View

- Drupal isn't always the right choice
 - Should also consider
 - Custom open source (reduce hacking exposure)
 - Software as a Service (transparent support)
- KISS is vital
 - Minimum number of modules
 - Simplest structure of roles
 - Simple theme (Artisteer?)

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Service Level Agreement

- What do they need to succeed?
 - What does it mean to succeed?
 - What do they think they need?
- What can you commit to deliver?
- Bridging the gap
 - Another service provide
 - Another contract
 - "It's never going to happen here!"

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Drupal

- Can be a great tool
 - Especially in the hands of an “expert”
- Building is only the first challenge
- Sites need to be maintained and upgraded
- Solid operations plan is important
 - 10 ITIL (v2) processes is place to start

Thank You

... questions, comments?