

**2002 Roundup, April 11-14, Orlando, FL**  
**Beyond Dreamweaver: Creative Solutions for Sustaining Web Sites**  
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In it's beginning, the strength of the web was in HTML – the interoperability between platforms to share resources and content with minimal amounts of knowledge to get going. At that time, to get advanced functionality – you needed programming skills.

In the last few years there has been an explosion of software to do very sophisticated things on the web:

- 1) What do we need to consider critically to select these tools (help nonprofits) with some of their needs of their organizations?
- 2) What is the potential is for these new technologies?

**Michael Stein**

**Five steps to selecting an ASP**

Evolution of Asp's – There are now over 100-120 Asp's serving the nonprofit sector, most of them are for profits, but a few such a Egrant, Social Ecology and Npower are nonprofit themselves. Only about 12 of the whole group have focused on web site/content management tools.

Riders play an important role in helping nonprofits learn about Asp's and which ones are good.

Michael as produced the e-nonprofit guide (an excerpt is available in the Roundup book).

**Five steps to selecting an ASP**

1. Assemble a team -- Select a leader and make sure you have buy-in from management. Insure there is a mix of technical and non technical people and that end users are included to make sure it works for everyone.
2. Define your needs – Drill down through the questions and answers to get to actual requirements. What else will you need attached to it and how will they work. What about important future needed additions?

3. Identify the ASP and find vendors and find out how you are to interact with them. What are the rules of conduct? Make sure you understand the categories. Check references.

Some resources to check might be:

- Tech Soup has a great directory
- Talk to tech consultants
- Vendor rooms at conferences
- E nonprofit guide
- Check references of similar users
- Talk to non-referenced clients

4. Make your decision – Take your list of needs and match with the vendor's options and check out costs.

Other things to consider:

- How often are updates done?
- How is development done?
- What is their commitment to development?
- What is their technical support policy?
- Where are they located in relation to your staff?
- Customer testimonials
- Business sustainability (check out their funding, annual report). The higher your budget for the project, the more in depth you should go.
- What is their commitment to the nonprofit sector or your sector?
- What happens if they have financial problems?

5. Signing your contract – The landscape of ASP's is challenging right now. It's evolving at breakneck speed. There are a lot of buyouts and lawsuits. If you are overhauling the data structure, you should consider:

- What are the implications for what you are doing with your data?
- How boxed in are you getting to your technology solution provider?
- How does it work with your current and future systems?
- How do the systems talk to each other?

**Phil Klein**

**When do you borrow, buy, rent or build your own features?**

Borrow

Rent

Build only what they must – depending on how mission critical it is.

Doing your research is most important.

- Find out what others are using
- Assemble a set of needs
- Compare features to mission

For “common” needs there are a lot of ASP's out there.

“Free” means no or limited tech support. It may mean long-term solutions. Without a strong business model behind the solution, it can be a problem.

Using free discussion boards and listservs can work great. They are easy to get up and going.

Realize that generic solutions DO work - nonprofits are not really so unique. Why reinvent the wheel?

The flexibility of generic apps may not be customizable. Can you compromise or not?

High costs of web-based software can be due to low customer base. Research the business model and find out.

Buying or renting can be a good choice for mission critical application, but you need a plan if you need to change vendors or if you have a change of funding support. Consider ongoing costs for 2-3 year life-cycle of an application.

Is renting better than buying? Make sure you select a product based on features. Do your research. Call users even if not nonprofits, to find out the product's quality and support. Be very clear upfront about the features you must have. Have as much detail as possible.

Build what you must. Building can be a brain drain to create details that are already out there. You will need to hire developers. Costs should be compared over the lifetime.

Building can work best if it is small and simple or it is one you want to extend in the future. It depends on scale of organization.

You can bring a group of like organizations together to develop a single software, although it raises level of complexity.

- Clearly define the future requirements as best they can
- See the process through from beginning to end

#### **Mike Litz**

They built their software internally in 1994 using tools to build tools that were available.

The project consists of a global network of 1000 partners – working in human rights and sustainable development – 90% outside the United States.

They index the entire content of the web site of each partner. There are 2.5 million documents and it is growing. Some of the challenges are:

- Multilingual
- Multimedia
- 10 centers in 5 continents

The 100 partners in US can tell when something new has been added to a web site. Editors review the new content and then link to the partner's web site. They needed to have differentiated editions of OneWorld – as different environments think differently about social issues, i.e. countries or ages, sectors, interests, etc. They look, feel and operate as different web sites.

They started out using free tools, but they were not integrated, so they had to learn a new set of tools for each job.

They use standards, i.e. HTML for indexing and XML on data feeds.

Considerations when choosing an ASP:

- Criteria
- Open source or not
- Time to implement
- Feature set system maturing
- Maintenance and complexity
- Adoption and community activity
- Long-term viability

### **John Whitmer Language Translation Tools**

John works in the San Francisco area and began working with an organization that served seniors in 6 languages. Originally they had pieced together a newsletter using solutions such as contractors and volunteers. They were looking a “simple” solution. John set about investigating and started a guide to tools available for text translation.

There are four categories of online translation tools available

- 1) Server-based solutions
  - AltaVista (Systran.net)
  - Bablefish

Problem:

- Low accuracy

- 2) Online translation broker

They use the Internet to send and receive files, but use people to translate.

Problems:

- Not immediate
- Need human intervention.
- Higher cost
- Longer time- a human can translate about 10 pages per day

3) Translation software installed on desktop.

Advantages:

- Cost

Problems:

- Low accuracy
- Human can intervene and make choices

4) Local translation brokers - hire staff that can translate

Advantages:

High accuracy

Choosing translation method:

Define your requirements

- Degree of accuracy you need
- How accurate is the tool
- How many languages do you need to translate into?
- What staff resources are available?
- What quantity of documents to translate
- How often do you need to translate
- What is the budget – both initial for startup and ongoing costs of translation

### **Q&A**

Q. How does OneWorld do translation?

A. They use machine translation as a first level translation and then ask staff in that country to translate.

Q. What is the critical factor for content driven site?

A. Biggest challenge is range of tools available. There are a whole range of tools available, but what are the objectives, goals and budget. What are lower cost/tech.

Lots of nonprofits can't handle FTP and HTML, so use a content management system such as Media Jump Start or Pagetool.org. Find a professional designer to design the templates that still allow some ongoing support, but client can insert content.

Determine the purpose of the website. That will help determine the amount of updating that needs to be done. For higher volume, permission, frequently

updated, lot of content, lots of visitors, designer to reach new audiences or to syndicate, then it needs to a larger tool. There are a wide variety of needs.

Q. Is there a tool to help navigate through the decision?

A. TechAtlas can help.

There is no generic list of requirements for web site. But the first tings to define are:

- Who is the audience
- What the business reason for the site

How to determine ROI –

Tangible:

- Estimate the amount of staff hours spent on content management
- Customer base increase
- Measuring web site traffic
- Measure inside traffic

Intangible:

- How does it improve efficiency and how does it help reach the audience.

Resources from audience:

<http://www.userland.com>

<http://www.b2p.com>

<http://www.rathmandesign.com>

<http://www.fogcreek.com>

**Great job guys!**