

Mo' Content, Mo' Problems: How Drupal Alleviates Online Community Growing Pains



Using the Content Management System
that Evolved from *Its Community*
to Power *Your Community*

Duo Consulting
20 W Kinzie, Suite 1510
Chicago, IL 60654
312.529.3000
info@duoconsulting.com
www.duoconsulting.com

Congratulations: you've built a successful online community!

You and the brand you represent are on your way to glory beyond your wildest dreams.

What's that? You'll have to speak up.

You say you forgot to plan for the future? You didn't expect success?

Your software can no longer handle the demands of your online community?

Quit worrying. You have a friend in Drupal. Offering a strong out-of-the-box solution known as Drupal Commons, you have a final solution or at least a good start on a custom system. Or the Drupal platform can be configured from scratch to meet your precise community needs. At any rate, through some combination of these factors, you'll be over your growing pains in no time.

As your community has grown, do any of these challenges sound familiar?

- Features requested by your community are unavailable or hard to integrate
- Site performance gradually slows down
- Large libraries of content become harder to manage
- Content is difficult to liberate for promotional or viral marketing purposes

Drupal can solve all of these issues.



But why Drupal?

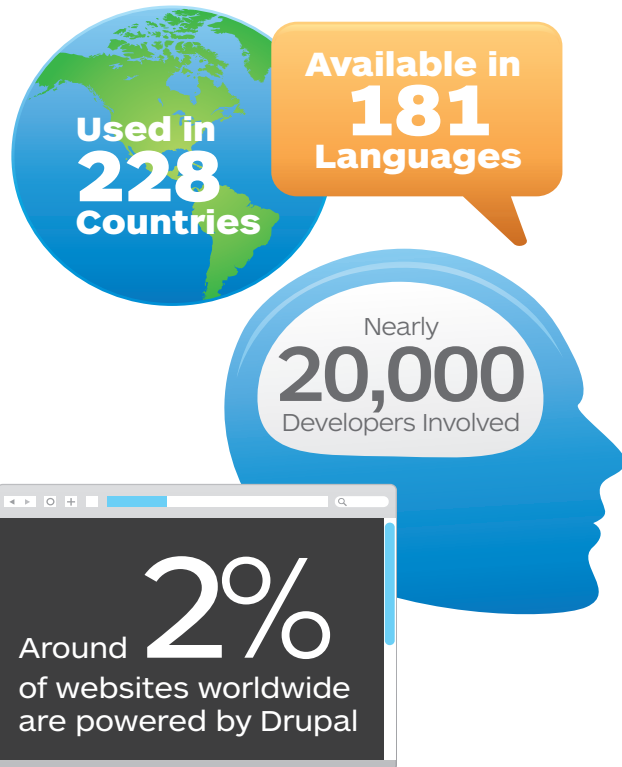
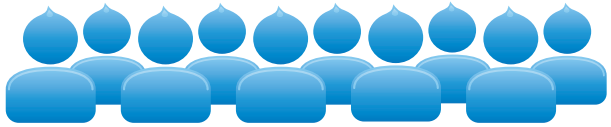
There should be a simple answer to every complicated question, shouldn't there? When you get down to the nitty-gritty, Drupal's strengths in community are pretty granular. For the sake of time (and attention span), we'll give you the simple answer.

As a content management system (CMS), Drupal:

1. Evolved successfully and continues to grow from its own community of developers
2. Is scalable for large libraries of content and a growing membership
3. Creates a strong foundation for content organization
4. Gives you full control of your content independent of formatting
5. Provides strategies for optimizing website performance under load

We'll discuss these strengths plus real-world examples of Drupal powering communities over the course of this e-book. First, let's dive into a little background on Drupal.

825,000 People Power Drupal



Just how powerful has the Drupal community become?

Source: drupal.org

Drupal Is For Community, By Community

In contrast to proprietary software platforms, Drupal was constructed on truly democratic principles. Consider your two options:

- **Proprietary Software**
An online community solution developed by a core group of contributors, placed in a one-size-fits-all package and limited by the developing company's resources and imagination.
- **Open Source Software**
An online community solution developed by a dedicated army of contributors, fully customizable and limited only by your imagination.

If the next phase of your online community has arrived without warning, you can trust Drupal's community roots. For years, those roots have dug deep, illustrating how powerful a well-organized community can become.

Drupal has maintained its community for 10+ years—since Dries Buytaert developed Drupal in his dorm room at the University of Antwerp. As far as we're concerned, that's a pretty strong basis for calling Drupal one of the leaders in community development.

Drupal's Innate Genius for Enterprise Content Management

What really sets Drupal apart from other online community platforms is its dynamic construction. It's a CMS that can handle the largest and most complicated enterprise websites out there. Time and time again, we've fallen back on Drupal to help configure gigantic libraries of content, making them more user-friendly for our clients' target audiences.

Active online communities with thousands of members means thousands of pieces of new content created on a regular basis. If you don't have the right framework to handle that kind of value, it's easy to fall behind. The longer you go without a strong system for organizing content, the more work you'll have to do to catch up when you do eventually realize the need for a stronger CMS.

For online communities, that content is crucial. After all, content and networking are the two practical value propositions for your community, and networking can't occur without content. Make the content accessible by providing easy ways for members to reach it.

For our clients, we build business and community websites in Drupal. It offers a higher level of customization, ensuring a completely unique experience that meets the needs of administrators and members alike.

Drupal excels beyond other CMS solutions in three significant ways.

Simple Organization

The 'views' module creates a highly organized taxonomy that administrators can easily manage and members can easily navigate. Breaking information into 'content types' also helps ease organization. Simple searchability is one of the goals here; when content is tagged and organized, members can get to it using a variety of paths.

Parsing Content

Breaking down individual pieces of content into different fields (a process we like to call 'chunking') helps split content for manageable formatting. These categorizations help avoid 'blobs,' or large blocks of content together on a single page, leading to content that's difficult to classify and separate from formatting.

High Performance

A strong configuration and Drupal's overall scalability maximize website performance, ensuring your community won't go down when your members need it most.

ACQUIA™



Drupal Commons Capabilities:

- Control your brand and the user experience.
- Create activity streams to keep members involved.
- Allow members to create profiles and connect with other members.
- Develop groups and subgroups within the community.
- Give members the ability to share content.
- Use a strong analytics backend to monitor member behavior.

Acquia Pieces Together Quick-Build Drupal Commons Solution

A pioneer in Drupal development, [Acquia](#) is a trusted name within the community. Noticing the web's social trends, the company put together a package of Drupal modules for easier web community development.

[Drupal Commons](#) makes a lot of sense, especially for smaller communities. Community developers make a small upfront investment that offers them the flexibility of Drupal with plenty of prebuilt functionality to get started. That way, you still have scalability and access to custom-coding you may need down the road.

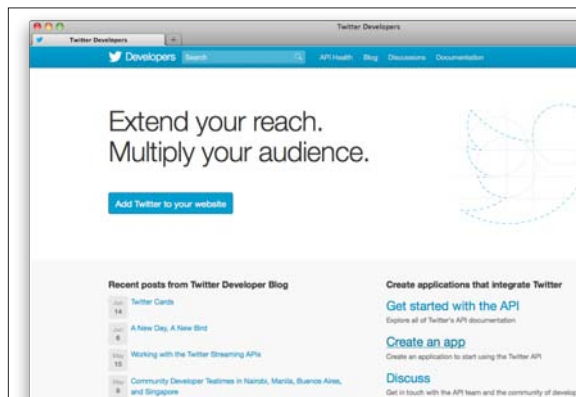
Drupal Commons offers online communities exhibiting growth (but on a small budget) to switch over to a more flexible platform—one that will scale well and fulfill the evolving needs of community members.

Of course, we could talk all day about the power of Drupal for communities, but where's the proof?

A Few Drupal Community Successes

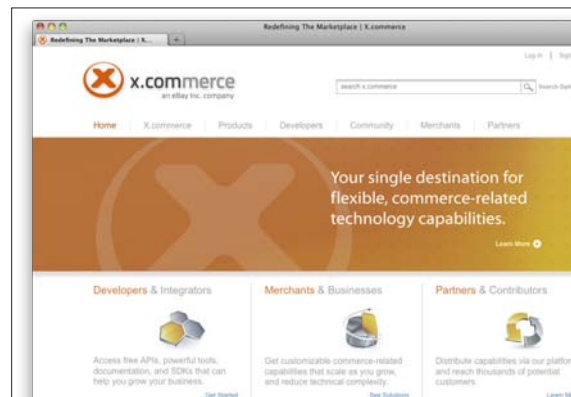
What we're explaining here isn't exactly a new concept in the world of Drupal. But that's a good thing because it means there's proof of enterprise success already out there.

Here are just a few quick examples of how Drupal has helped major brands create active online communities.



Twitter Developers

Twitter created a development community on Drupal Commons. Members of the community discuss ideas for integrating Twitter's API, as well as tips and troubleshooting.



X.commerce (Ebay)

Developed to help bridge the worlds of offline and online payments, Ebay's X.commerce connects developers and other stakeholders in the world of ecommerce. ([See what Ebay's Neal Sample has to say about Drupal.](#))



Symantec Connect

Symantec established this community as a central resource for community-driven support and information about the company's products. To date, members have submitted nearly one million pieces of content.

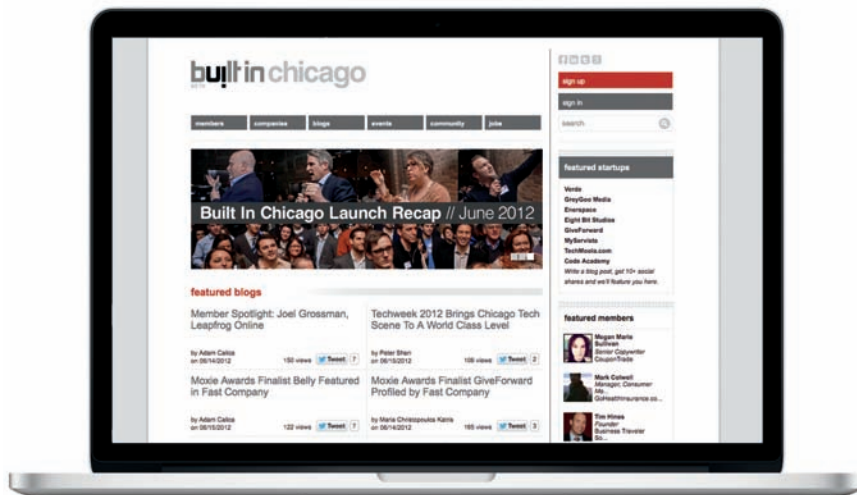
Want more detail into how Drupal works for online communities?
Recently, Duo helped re-launch Built In Chicago.

Built In Chicago Migrates to Drupal After Massive Growth

Built In Chicago is a resource for 'digital professionals' working to build great web and mobile businesses. It's all focused around the local Chicago tech scene. If you're part of a tech company in the city or suburbs, chances are good you've heard of it.

Like many ambitious community websites, Built In Chicago launched on the Ning platform. As a proprietary software solution focused on online communities, Ning fit the bill for the first leg of BIC's development. Eventually, the web community grew too big for its britches.

To supplement growth, BIC chose Drupal. Following a challenging content migration, the community's administrative staff launched the site with capabilities previously unavailable through Ning.



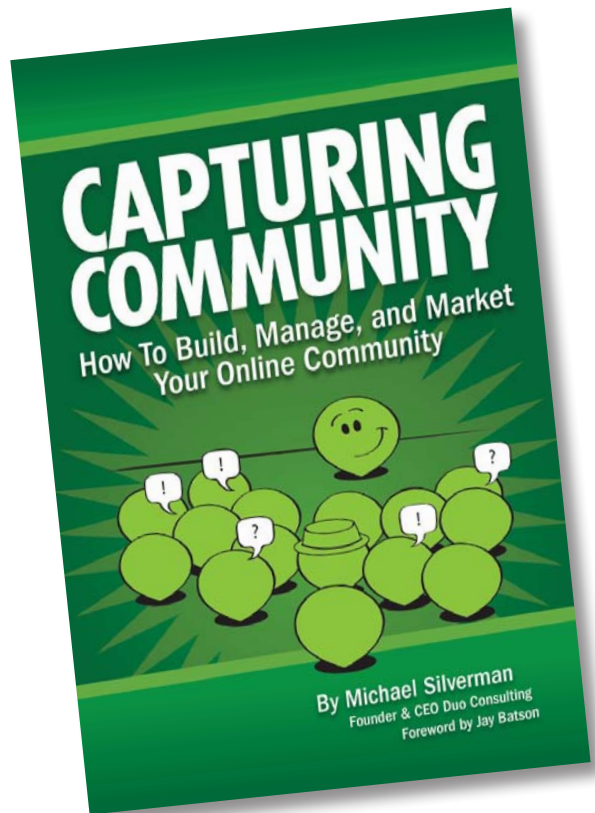
- **Quick Sidebar Customization:** Administrators for the website can easily reorder or switch out items using a right-hand column made of Drupal blocks. The most convenient part of the column is how easily admins can feature startups, members, events, jobs, blogs and more.
- **Tighter Control of Content:** With Drupal, content became both more structured and more fluid. Designated fields helped separate and categorize blocks of content, while the new CMS freed content from formatting on the backend, easing distribution.
- **Front End Access:** Similar to LinkedIn and other sites, the BIC community includes designated pages for companies to identify themselves. While many of the company pages are created by administrators, companies now have the ability to 'claim' pages.

Built In Chicago is just another example of how Drupal takes online communities to the next level. ([Read the full Built In Chicago story if you're hungry for more.](#))

Conclusion

If you've successfully built an engaged, active online community, take that next step. Even if you aren't quite in need of a new platform yet, consider planning for the future: choose Drupal for its scalability.

For all things online community related, check out Duo Consulting CEO Michael Silverman's new book, [Capturing Community: How to Build, Manage and Market Your Online Community](#).



Duo utilizes Drupal open-source technologies to create content-rich websites accessible through traditional and mobile platforms.

Contact Michael Silverman, CEO for more information
312.529.3000 | msilverman@duoconsulting.com