

Hotwire.com Speeds Discount Travel Deals To Customers with Rhythmyx WCM Solution

Online Travel Site Reduces Time-to-Market for New Products 80%, Boosts Click-Throughs 300% by Improving Content Relevance

For Hotwire.com™, enhancing Web Content Management (WCM) is critical to achieving success in the highly-competitive online discount travel industry. An operating company of Expedia, Inc. (NASDAQ: EXPE), Hotwire® offers low rates on suppliers' unsold airline tickets, hotel rooms, rental cars, cruises and vacation packages at www.hotwire.com. The company's success depends on its fast response to changes as new discount offers become available. By responding quickly to time-sensitive, last-minute promotions with rapid content deployment, Hotwire can deliver a wider range of choices to consumers more efficiently – including vacation packages, special promotions and featured destinations – which ultimately drives revenue for both Hotwire's travel supplier partners and Hotwire itself.

Since 2005, Hotwire has relied on Percussion Software's Rhythmyx Web Content Management solution. With Rhythmyx, Hotwire delivers content for 15 million page views and 2 million unique visitors each month, while reducing time to market for new products more than 80 percent, boosting click-through rates up to 300 percent, and logging significant cost savings on engineering resources by shifting content responsibilities to business workers. Hotwire's customers are pleased with the results. In 2006, the J.D. Power and Associates Independent Travel Web Site Satisfaction StudySM recognized Hotwire as ranking "Highest in Customer Satisfaction For Independent Travel Web Sites."

Hotwire's Director of Store Management, Leland Zimmerman, explains, "Everyone benefits from our Rhythmyx WCM solution. Our customers get content that helps them find the travel deals they're looking for. Our suppliers have a distribution channel that can quickly steer traffic to their inventory when attention is needed. In addition, our organization functions more efficiently, allocating skilled engineering resources to high value projects while allowing the merchandising team to exercise total control over the content."

Before Rhythmyx, Hotwire engineers processed Web content updates manually, hand-coding the changes in a manner that was not quick enough for an industry that demands speed in handling "perishable" content. Hotwire doesn't own inventory – it depends on suppliers posting new discount prices, which Hotwire then makes available to consumers. Hotwire needs to be



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**– Leland Zimmerman
Director of Store Management
Hotwire.com**

nimble, calling attention to the good prices ASAP and when prices change, taking down promotional content ASAP to avoid sending consumers to sold-out inventory.

For example, Hotwire may be notified that a convention was cancelled at the last minute, making a block of hotel rooms available for booking at a significant discount. Before Rhythmyx, Hotwire's actions to control the inventory took up to two weeks. Today, with Hotwire's business staff controlling content via Rhythmyx, it takes only 24 hours – a reduction of more than 80 percent in getting new merchandising products to market.

“Before Rhythmyx, we had a *Best Deals* page, which was updated every two weeks,” Zimmerman says. “Now that we have the ability to contribute content updates as needed, we're able to call that page *Last-Minute Deals* and consumers have responded by increasing click-through more than 200 percent. Time-sensitive deals like this work well for our business, giving consumers access to great prices, and suppliers a quick way to sell excess inventory.”

Hotwire has also taken the first steps toward personalizing content with a Customer Segmentation Engine, developed in-house, that is helping the merchandising staff create targeted content. For example, Hotwire marketers can develop specific content for deals that are geo-targeted to a particular Designated Marketing Area (DMA) or Zip Code and then deliver that content with Rhythmyx. Zimmerman notes, “Increased relevance of content based on geographic segmentation has improved click-through 300 percent.”

Rhythmyx has contributed to significant cost savings at Hotwire as a result of a 50 percent reduction in development time, freeing up considerable technical resources for other revenue generating projects. Content production and QA is managed by Hotwire's business staff. And although they are managing twice as much content now, content production by business users is 30 to 40 percent less costly than when it was performed by engineering.

“We strive to balance efficient use of our engineering and business resources with the need to keep our content fresh and consumer relevant,” Zimmerman says. “Rhythmyx helps us to achieve both these goals – it allows us to react to market conditions and supplier needs much more effectively than before, as well as deliver content in a way that causes customers to act.”

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Hotwire received the highest numerical score in the proprietary J.D. Power and Associates 2006 Independent Travel Web Site Satisfaction StudySM. Study based on 6,800 responses from consumers who booked airline, hotel or rental car reservations through one of eight major independent travel Web sites. Proprietary study results are based on experiences and perceptions of consumers surveyed March - October 2006. Your experiences may vary. Visit jdpower.com.

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Hotwire Environment

Rhythmyx Content Server: Apache Tomcat

Operating System: Sun Solaris 9

Database: Oracle Database 10g Enterprise Edition

Application Server: BEA WebLogic for Web site application

Technologies Interoperating with Rhythmyx: Shell scripts to initiate publishing and check files into Perforce software for source code control

Output formats: JSP and related images (JPG, GIF, SWF)

Languages: Java, JSP

Applications: Home-grown Customer Segmentation Engine