Project: Sigwatch

Challenge

When SIGWatch asked us to bid for the project, it already had a Typo3 website that managed user subscriptions, and automated and personalised the distribution of its newsfeed (for example, users could choose from a tick box menu which topics they wanted to receive information on).

And then SIGWatch wanted to go much further, adding a suite of online tools (the "Issues Management Engine"), to enable users to analyse news data, generate rankings of NGO campaigning issues by country, and plot graphs to compare NGO activity by issue and/or geography.

To do this, SIGWatch proposed adding two new databases: a database of over 500 "issues" with which to code incoming news reports by subject, in turn grouped by one or more of some 50 "topic tags", and a database of NGOs containing information on location, campaigning focus, history, recent activity, and so on.

The new databases had to be tightly integrated with the existing newsfeed archive. So, for example, each newsfeed report would need to be coded for the NGOs involved, issue(s), and countries, and vice versa, each record in the NGO database when called up online would need to list all the newsfeed archive records mentioning that NGO, and be searchable by geography or issue or topic tag.

Another requirement was to automatically score each newsfeed record for its "impact", a number calculated from the number of NGOs involved and the "influence" of those NGOs (related to the size of the NGO in question, ranging from 'local' up to 'global coalition'). These scores would provide the raw data for the new online analysis tools.

Finally, all the databases and coding had to be completely flexible and updatable, so SIGWatch could add or delete issues and topic tags, expand its NGO database and of course, upload and code every day 20-30 additional news reports.

Company Profile:

SIGWatch is a twelve year old issues management consultancy based in Freiburg, Germany with partners in Switzerland, the U.S.A. and Canada. SIGWatch specialises in tracking and understanding NGOs (activist and campaigning groups) to help business manage NGO risk. Its primary service is a daily email feed of intelligence about NGOs supplied on subscription to companies, industry associations and governments. To provide this feed, SIGWatch monitors the activities of over 2,000 NGOs globally.

Testimonial

"I have always been impressed by Agenda's enthusiasm for our project and their creativity in resolving the site's many technical challenges. Even though we were separated by great distance (Freiburg to Maribor) and language (our working language was English), there was no time when we felt that Agenda did not understand our needs. Although the project was delivered late – in truth, the original schedule was unrealistic – it was delivered on budget, an achievement in itself.

We are very pleased with the new site. We have already commissioned Agenda to add several new features and are now working with Agenda on a second major upgrade of functionality. This will certainly be as challenging as the initial project, but we are confident Agenda will perform brilliantly again."

Mr. Robert Blood, CEO at Sigwatch

Benefits for the client

The most important benefit is that the new site has transformed SIGWatch's subscriber experience. It has added a huge amount of extra value to the regular subscription service because now users can interrogate SIGWatch's databases, extract interesting and useful correlations and get insights into emerging or accelerating issues in a way that was never possible before.

One of the tools that we developed for SIGWatch is the Issues Index. This takes the impact scores for the last nine months and generates a colour-coded "temperature chart", ranking issues associated with the same topic by the amount of recent NGO activity. At a glance users can now see which issues are hot and cold, and drill down to the regional or country level. Another powerful tool is the Issues Tracker. This plots the impact data over time, ranging from the last 12 months to the last 10 years. Up to three issues and/or topics can be plotted on the same chart, with the user specifying for each plot the country and/or region.