Chicago Digital
Small agency, big results

Courtesy of: Wicker Park Bucktown Chamber of Commerce, wickerparkbucktown.com

Chicago Digital
Chicago, Illinois
www.chicagodigital.com

Results
• Created long-term, strategic client relationships by continuing to add functionality and value to projects over time
• Kept focus on client results versus costs with affordable Adobe Creative Cloud membership
• Used web apps to enable nontechnical customers to easily update websites
• Streamlined workflow and accelerated production cycles using integrated tools

Strategic marketing agency standardizes on Adobe Creative Cloud™ and Adobe Business Catalyst to create web solutions that empower clients to promote products and services online

Organizations in the Chicago area that want help with digital marketing need look no further than Chicago Digital—an innovative marketing agency that builds integrated digital media solutions that help clients become smart web marketers. Chicago Digital began in 2009 as small web design firm that created one-off web projects for local clients. Today it is a full-service strategic marketing company publishing dynamic online solutions for organizations across business sectors.

In addition to website design and development, Chicago Digital's scope of services now includes content authoring, mobile and tablet website development, digital sign design, social media, and search engine optimization. While most of the agency's customers hail from the Chicago area, its client list includes organizations across the world in the fields of healthcare, retail, professional services, and entertainment, as well as architecture, engineering, and construction, to name a few.

Picking the platform
Six months into its first year, Chicago Digital discovered the Adobe Business Catalyst platform and decided it was the state-of-the-art, hosted subscription service that would enable the company to scale its business model from a web design and development shop into a full-service marketing agency. The team at Chicago Digital now builds and deploys all web-related projects using Adobe Business Catalyst, leveraging the platform's predefined functionality, to create comprehensive web solutions for clients.

Challenge
- Grow small, start-up web firm into full service strategic marketing agency
- Deliver robust web-based solutions that solve real-world challenges for clients
- Empower clients to self-manage content with no technical expertise

Solution
- Leverage the predefined, scalable functionality of the Adobe Business Catalyst platform
- Access all Adobe Creative Suite applications and services, plus upgrades to all new versions and exclusive new features between releases, through Adobe Creative Cloud

Systems at a glance
Adobe Business Catalyst

Adobe Creative Cloud. Components used include:
- Adobe Photoshop
- Adobe Dreamweaver
- Adobe Illustrator
- Adobe TypeKit

Adobe Proto

"Adobe Business Catalyst does more than give us the ability to rapidly build robust sites the first time out," says Mike Sallander, president of Chicago Digital. "It allows us to add functionality to client projects over time as the platform's capabilities continue to advance, resulting in multiple repeat engagements and long-term strategic relationships with our customers."

Cutting-edge workflow

Adobe tools and technologies dominate Chicago Digital's workflow, where designers and developers work together to rapidly prototype and complete a wide variety of web-based projects. Agency designers use Adobe Photoshop® and Illustrator® to create, edit, and repurpose creative assets, while developers hand-code sites in Adobe Dreamweaver®, making extensive use of code hinting and jQuery syntax to support web apps in Business Catalyst. Dreamweaver is the agency's preferred editing environment for building new projects as well as adding functionality to existing Business Catalyst implementations.

A Premium Business Catalyst partner, Chicago Digital made a key business decision to join Adobe Creative Cloud, which became available just as the agency was set to update its Adobe Creative Suite® licenses. Adobe Creative Cloud gives the entire Chicago Digital design and development staff upgrades to all new Creative Suite software versions upon release, plus exclusive features between releases, enabling them to stay up to date on the core web and design software integral to their daily workflow, including Photoshop, Illustrator, and Dreamweaver, as well as Adobe TypeKit®.

Having the latest technology is a top priority at Chicago Digital, and a definite advantage when it comes to recruiting and retaining top talent. Joining Creative Cloud proved to be an incredibly cost-effective measure that provides all agency staff with the most cutting-edge tools at their fingertips, and makes it possible for the agency to bring new staff on board at a low monthly software cost.

"With Adobe Creative Cloud, we can quickly and easily add employees to projects as needed, keeping us focused on delivering great results for clients, rather than worrying about costs," says Sallander. "My business partner, Scott Shefler, was so sold on the benefits of Adobe Creative Cloud that he waited at his computer until midnight so he could sign up the moment it came online."

According to Sallander, Adobe TypeKit—which the agency previously purchased as standalone software—is a valued-added bonus in the Creative Cloud membership. With it, Chicago Digital designers can choose from a vast library of fonts from premier type designers that bring just the right style to web projects.
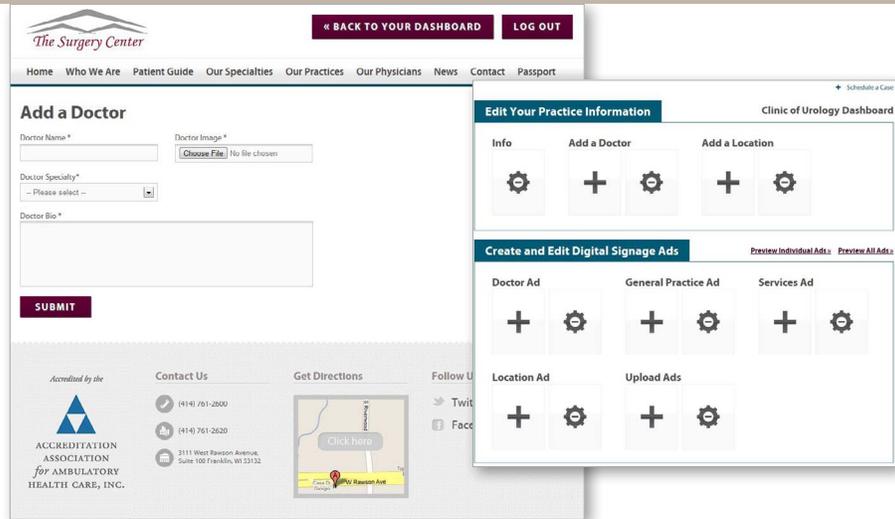
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Mike Sallander
President, Chicago Digital

Sallander and his client team are also beginning to work with Adobe Touch Apps in Creative Cloud including Adobe Proto. They like the idea of being able to rapidly sketch wireframes on tablet devices while brainstorming and meeting with clients. The files automatically sync to the 20GB of storage space each member has on Creative Cloud, so team members can access them from anywhere. From there, the site prototypes can be opened in Dreamweaver for coding and then published using Business Catalyst. The workflow helps Chicago Digital bring ideas to life and iterate on them more quickly, helping to further fuel agency efficiency.

Added opportunities

Chicago Digital's portfolio of successful Business Catalyst implementations serves to continuously attract prospective clients. When The Surgery Center, LLC— a group of medical and surgical facilities in the Milwaukee area—selected Chicago Digital to design a new website and companion digital sign program for its lobby, the results exceeded the client's expectations. The project also provided the agency with the opportunity to use Business Catalyst in a whole new context—building a digital sign program that is functionally integrated with a website.

The Surgery Center wanted a new website that captured the essence of its organization with a clean look, as well as a reliable, easy-to-manage, digital sign in the lobby that busy doctors and nontechnical office staff could easily update. Above all, the client wanted to minimize cost and have both systems share one content repository, as well as a similar look and feel across screens.

"We used standard protocols on the Surgery Center project, including HTML, CSS, and jQuery in conjunction with Business Catalyst to cost-effectively create a solution with greater functionality and ease of use than any other technology could deliver," says Sallander. The crux of the project's success is that functionality and content management are separated in Business Catalyst, resulting in an implementation in which the client has full control over content without touching the solution's performance or underlying functionality. For example, when a staff member revises a practitioner profile, they simply fill out a form from a secured login area on the website. They edit the information in just one place, while the program pushes it live to both the web and digital sign.

The dual web and sign project also accommodates four pre-built 30-second image ads designed to promote various medical services and specialties. To build a digital signage ad, staff simply selects the type of ad and fills in the corresponding text information. This innovative Business Catalyst implementation also allows uploading of custom image ads, which is particularly useful when it comes to advertising local sponsors, introducing new medical services, and showcasing participation in community programs.

Website Graphic Design: Marian Williams Design, marianwilliamsdesign.com

"Adobe Business Catalyst and Creative Cloud have really brought the web workflow full circle, enabling small agencies like us to confidently approach new web projects knowing that we can hit home runs for clients."

Mike Sallander, president, Chicago Digital

Multiple industries, powerful solutions

Another example of Chicago Digital's work that showcases the breadth of functionality within the Business Catalyst platform is The Wicker Park Bucktown Chamber of Commerce website. The goal of this site is to be the central hub of information for the Wicker Park Bucktown community. A key requirement of the project was to utilize a content management system (CMS) that would enable nontechnical chamber staff to manage the website.

Staff can easily create neighborhood and chamber calendars that receive payments and handle RSVPs, process new member applications, keep chamber members informed on the latest news, create neighborhood itineraries, manage member directories, add new commercial properties, and feature local business in their community blog. Leveraging web apps in Business Catalyst, the Chamber site promotes exclusive offers to members and public offers to non-members.

Previously, site visitors had to click on a variety of links to accomplish what can now be done in one place. Chamber members can comment on events, blog posts, deals, announcements, and more. They can also take advantage of member-only special offers and purchase advertisements on the site to reach a local audience. Members and nonmembers alike can browse, search, and find business listings on a map. A popular feature for users is the ability to view neighborhood event calendars and filter by category, date range, and quick select options.

While these two projects highlight the success Chicago Digital has achieved using Business Catalyst for clients today, Sallander and his staff are excited about new ways to work with Adobe web tools and technologies moving forward. "Adobe Business Catalyst and Creative Cloud have really brought the web workflow full circle, enabling small agencies like us to confidently approach new web projects knowing that we can hit home runs for clients," says Sallander.

For more information
*www.adobe.com/products/
business-catalyst*