


FILNET CASE STUDY

AABE Website Enhancement & Modernization

New Website Includes Content Management System Upgrade, Members-Only Sections, Discussion Boards, Private Messaging, Surveys & Online Payments

CLIENT	 <p>American Association of Blacks in Energy (AABE)</p>
PROJECT	Website Enhancement & Modernization
WEBSITE	http://www.aabe.org/
TECHNOLOGY	Open-source database platform that supports ANSI SQL standards as well as ODBC, JDBC, .Net, C, C++, C#, Java, PHP, Perl, Python, and Ruby drivers for developing applications with popular programming languages; Google Analytics; Secure Socket Layer (SSL); Web Hosting
DURATION	04.2008 – 10.2008

Overview

The American Association of Blacks in Energy (AABE) is a national association of energy professionals founded and dedicated to ensure the input of African Americans and other minorities into the discussions and developments of energy policies regulations, R&D technologies, and environmental issues. With over 45 chapters around the country, the organization needed a new website that would be more interactive and useful for its over 1300 members around the country. Filnet led the web development project, which included an online registration engine, and built a dynamic members-based site.

Challenge

Like many nonprofits, AABE needed to spend wisely on their web enhancement and modernizing venture. The association also had a long list of requirements for its new online presence. Ultimately, AABE wanted a website that was attractive, dynamic and perhaps most important, easy for its members to contact AABE, renew dues, register for events and take advantage of all the resources available to them.

The former AABE site lacked the interactivity of discussion boards, permission based access of members, private messaging, or the ability to take polls and surveys. What's more, the association needed a secure website that could be used for future online classes, job postings, events tracking, member signup, online dues payments and selling products.

AABE
American Association of Blacks in Energy

Search | About Us | Contact | Login

Home | Chapters | News | Events | Career Center | Links | Forums | Membership

NEWS

AABE New Redesigned Website is here!

Apart from a completely new design and layout, the website offers expanded content, added site options as well as enhanced navigation and usability. Some added new features are the Career Center, Discussion Board, and Membership Online Application.

The enhanced online tools will allow chapters members and general users to more efficiently access Inclusion Information.

We Want To Hear From You! - Please use the "Contact Us" link located in the upper right-hand corner of each page of the site or click here to give us your feedback on the new site or to let us know if you run into any problems.

EVENTS

AABE NJ 4th Annual Black Tie Gala

Economics and Energy: "How it Affects You" [11.14.08]

December Board Meeting [12.04.08]

2009 Annual Conference [04.14.09]

DC Energy Expo [11.01.08]

Latest Headlines

AAE About Energy Newsletter October 2008 [Atlanta]

AGA Winter 08-09 Outlook for Natural Gas Consumers [National]

Assistant Secretary of the DOE Resigns [National]

Career Center

A place for members to post resumes and search for opportunities in the Energy Industry.

AABE Local Chapters

Select a Chapter below

- Arkansas
- Atlanta
- Birmingham
- California Central Valley
- Central SW Louisiana

American Association of Blacks in Energy
1625 K St NW, Ste. 405 | Washington, DC 20006
info@aabe.org (T) 202.371-9230 (F) 202.371-9218

Chapters | News | Events | Career Center | Links | Forums | Membership
Disclaimer | About Us | Search | Contact | Login

Solution

With a clear vision of the ideal members-based website for the association, Filnet set out to create a powerful online community. Filnet crafted all navigational and user interface graphics for the website. We also provided design mockups to our client and developed templates based on AABE's design selection.

On the application side, we elected to use Apache server platform and develop the website using PHP. MySQL database was selected over Oracle because of its lower costs. We provide AABE is a better return on their investment by using an open-source database platform, and provides support for ANSI SQL standards.

To ensure the website was safe, we used Secure Socket Layer (SSL) technology with 128-bit of encryption. Through SSL, the certificate assures that information is kept private between AABE's web server and users' web browsers. Additionally, a firewall was added to prevent access to unused ports, intrusion detection with open-source tripwire, shut down un-needed services, and daily reports from the server.

Discussion Board

Filnet used another open-source application called phpBB for AABE's discussion board because the tool is highly customizable. The application is equipped with a powerful search engine, editable user profiles, private messaging and even polling features. The phpBB discussion board tool can also be used for job postings and resume submission. AABE can even track members' login habits.

Web Analytics

To allow AABE to track use of the new website, Google Analytics was elected to monitor site traffic. The tool gives AABE access to behavioral data such as where visitors come from and how they interact with the website.

Content Management System (CMS)

Filnet put in place a content management system (CMS), which manages AABE chapter sites as well as the main site. The tool also allows AABE to delegate permissions to chapter administrators for their individual sites as well as giving them the ability to submit news, events and links to the national site for approval. All submission process follows a submit/review/approval workflow—a feature rarely found in basic CMS packages.

Articles Submissions

We integrated an articles submission module with a WYSIWYG editor that allows authorized AABE users to submit articles easily and without the need of technical knowledge. The module gives members the ability to upload document attachment in Microsoft Word or PDF formats. An auto-notification feature sends an email to the AABE staff upon member submission of an article.

Calendar/Events

We also added a calendaring system. Now, AABE staff and chapter members can add local or national events to the new website.

Search Engine

Filnet incorporate the most used search technology to the site to allow public visitors and members to search the website in its entirety.

Hosting

Filnet hosts the AABE website at its secure co-location hosting facility partner, LexiConn Internet Services. They were selected because of their robust security offerings.

Results

Filnet built an interactive website for AABE using a multi-tiered architecture that included a public website, members-only site, backend administration systems, databases and external resources. The member based website has an authentication system that enables AABE for the first time to manage user access based on groups' permission levels. Now, users can access specific sections of the AABE website based on the permissions through a single sign-on feature. Plus, the website is used for online member signup and renewals.

Using new statistics collection feature, AABE staff can now review online traffic data number of website users, the pages viewed, the search engines and search phrases used to find the website, the length of time spent on the website, the way users navigate our website, time when users are most active, and more.

Registered users now have access to a discussion board on timely topics around issues of hot-bottom energy issues. Using an internal messaging system, users can even locate and send a private message to any other registered user. Plus, AABE can now survey members to get their opinions on energy issues. This information in turn can be used to lobby Congressional or local representatives to make change.