



Roslyn School District learns user experience is everything

**Roslyn
School District**
www.roslynschools.org

For many years Community Relations Director Barry Edelson has been with Roslyn Schools (NY) managing the website since the early nineties. He and his colleague, Technology Director Jason Lopez, were tasked with building a new website. Both Barry and Jason wanted to take the web content management systems they had in place and improve them. They saw the need to upgrade their technology to support communication across the school district. Together, they set out to find a solution that would not only have a new look and feel, it would also help schools bring parents, students, faculty, staff, and the entire school community closer together.

Roslyn School District overcame significant obstacles with their outdated website presence and made changes that put their district on the forefront of technology. The district was managing three different sites which were hard to navigate, time-consuming to update, and inadequate to report on. Many of these issues arose because all three websites were built on different web platforms:

- The district website and school homepages were created using SharePoint.
- Class and organization pages were pulled in through Blackboard Edline.
- Other parts of the site were linked out to the district's original HTML website from the 1990s.

ASSESSING THE SITUATION

Their three websites were disjointed across many fronts. There wasn't a way to see analytical insights from a holistic point of view across all three platforms for website performance. Pages would break when adding new content, there were limited customization features, and design had to be sacrificed to fit templates. Jason and Barry tried to create a smooth flow for site traffic by linking pages to each other, but realized it was not a sustainable solution.

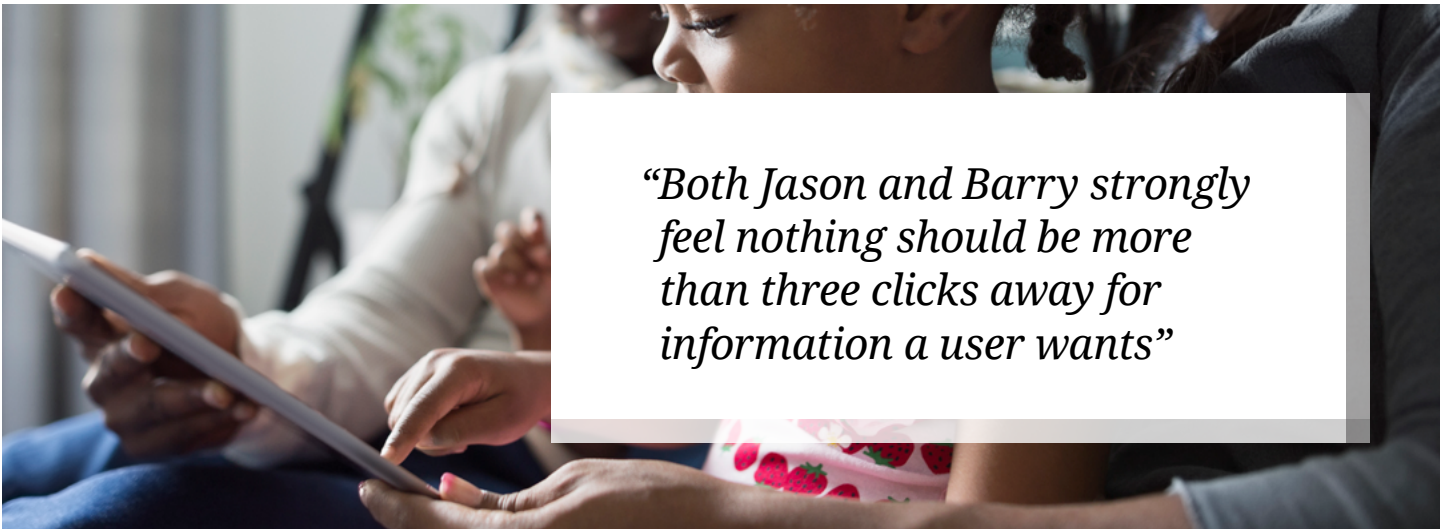
Adding to the management hurdles was the fact that they ran into customer service issues with certain platforms. If there was an issue, they could not find anyone to help them in a meaningful way. With the site performance and the lack of support that was happening, Jason and Barry decided it was time to move to Blackboard Web Community Manager.

OUT WITH THE OLD, IN WITH THE NEW

As part of the move to Web Community Manager, Roslyn School District knew some portions of the multiple content management systems would have to become part of the new website. Streamlining the sites was intricate because they had complex codes in them which were difficult to translate. However, the Blackboard team helped them decipher and repurpose the websites.

During the development phase, they also paid close attention to the content layout and visitor experience. Designers provided great website ideas that coordinated with Jason and Barry's technical knowledge of the backend requirements.

"Now we have a design that we love and gave a lot of thought to how the channels and sections should lay out so that we would have a lot of flexibility going forward," said Barry. Both Barry and Jason would work between the three old platforms to match the colors on all pages for brand consistency. Now they feel their experience managing the website is like "night and day."



"Both Jason and Barry strongly feel nothing should be more than three clicks away for information a user wants"

Reporting has also been improved with their move to the Web Community Manager. Now Jason and Barry can see within six months they have had more than 558,000 total visits and 676,000 page views. There is also more internal engagement with the new websites in place. The number of teachers creating classroom pages at each of the schools has doubled since moving to the Web Community Manager. With the old CMS, Jason and Barry said it was hard for teachers to learn and use. “We encourage teachers who have been using third-party sites to use Blackboard instead” stated Barry.

A PIECE OF ADVICE

After Jason and Barry’s experience with Blackboard’s process, their advice when revamping a school or district’s website is not to get too deep into the weeds from the outset. Think about the design and the overall concept of the site. Take the opportunity to have the website organized in appearance and data systemization. Think of it as downsizing from a large house to a smaller one. There is a lot of information on school websites, Roslyn had twelve to fifteen hundred pages on their old site. They took the opportunity to make it simpler and think about the things that were needed and not necessary.

“There’s a certain level of effort and thought you have to put into the project. You have to really think and plan and put your one-hundred percent into it,” stated Jason.

Finally, be prepared to spend time on the project. It is a process and it helps to take advantage of the migration service that Blackboard provides. “We went through content migration on our own before, and it was an extremely painful process to do by ourselves. We would have never been able to get to all of that volume of material done on our own. So, it is a good decision to take advantage of the migration process Blackboard provides,” Barry said.