



An ICG Case study

Waterfowl Habitat Moves to the Cloud

Ducks Unlimited Migrates 10,000 Pages of Media and Content to DNN EVOQ and the Microsoft Azure Cloud

July 15, 2017

The Mission

Over the years, Ducks Unlimited (DU) had built a substantial online presence (<http://www.ducks.org>), serving more than 10,000 pages of content to a vast network of employees, volunteers, and more than 5 million unique visitors per year across North America. One centralized system hosted all the content and images on a “home-grown” CMS solution.



But it was clear that — not only was the website design due for a refresh — the custom-built website platform did not have the ability to support the future growth and security they needed going forward. The legacy solution was also not optimized for the modern web — meaning that things like fully responsive design and event-driven functionality were not technically possible and a leading-edge user experience was lacking. In addition, the existing physical infrastructure of servers and network devices were reaching their end-of-life.

Duck Unlimited devised a plan:

- Identify an existing Content Management System (CMS) platform that was flexible, scalable, responsive to mobile devices, and robust on the .NET framework with security in place to protect employee and volunteer data.
- Devise a way to migrate a decade-worth of text and images from the custom website database into the new CMS platform.
- Redesign the website to improve the user experience.
- Identify a public cloud infrastructure that could scale with their projected growth.
- Identify an external resource with the experience required to work side-by-side with them during the implementation and data migration, and who could be trusted to be there long-term to provide ongoing support.

Choosing Platforms and Technology Partner

After evaluating three of the most prominent CMS platforms for the .NET framework, DU selected DNN/Evoq as their platform of choice. And after considering the major public cloud platforms, they determined that the Microsoft Azure public cloud platform was the better solution for their overall needs.

Next came selecting an expert on the DNN/Evoq platform with experience deploying solutions into the Azure cloud to help them accomplish their objectives. After an extensive evaluation, they chose Mitch Sellers and IowaComputerGurus (ICG) based upon their extensive experience with the DNN platform, data migrations, and deploying large systems into the cloud — including specific experience with Azure deployments.

“Mitch and his group were highly recommended ... and he kept up-to-date, with a deep knowledge of the DNN platform, tips, and tactics.”

— Robby Parker

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The Solution

With all the decisions made, the time had come to execute. Robby Parker — Manager of Digital Media for DU — knew the plan was aggressive. On a mission-critical website of this scale, any data migration would be a large project. **But the DU plan called for two migrations and a site redesign at the same time.**

First, building a new site from scratch inside the DNN/Evoq platform, then migrating ten thousand pages of public-facing content out of a custom website and database implementation and into the new website. Finally, the new solution needed to be deployed into the Azure public cloud.

Perhaps most importantly, all three complex tasks had to be completed while maintaining crucial site organization and distributing the content into a main site portal and fifty state portals without disrupting operations, corrupting the new design, or negatively impacting data.

Experience Counts

This is where ICG's extensive experience with the DNN/Evoq platform was invaluable. They consulted from the beginning to ensure that the newly designed website had a clear and direct path from the legacy schema into the DNN/Evoq schema so that content, media, caching, and URL management mapped cleanly. ICG was also instrumental in helping DU configure and optimize the DNN/Evoq installation for a load-balanced infrastructure environments (web farm) to position the DU site for further growth.

Then, ICG analyzed the existing "home-grown" website and database code and wrote custom converting software that would not only extract the existing content from the legacy system, but it would also generate meta-data that "understood" where that content data had come from. Then it would use the meta-data to populate content directly into the new DNN/Evoq instance and individual state portals as needed while maintaining the new styles.

Once migrated into the new website platform, extensive testing was done to ensure the project's success and that performance across the site was optimized. Finally, the site was deployed to the Azure public cloud.

"There simply was no question they couldn't answer.

Having that resource as a go-to during the entire redesign project was invaluable. Mitch and his team went above and beyond to make sure our project was successful."

— Robby Parker

"The team at Ducks Unlimited was great. They knew what they wanted to do and we accomplished the objectives together."

— Mitch Sellers

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Mission Accomplished

The project went live in September of 2016, and by all measures the project has been a complete success. In recognition, ducks.org was awarded **Outstanding Mobile Website** from the Web Marketing Association in the non-profit category for 2016.

- The new website has been completely updated, is modern and responsive, and supports social media and notifications.
- Content is easier to manage and maintain.
- The platform has a modular design allowing the addition of new modules, functions, and features as needed.
- Security is significantly more robust — protecting employee, volunteer and user data.
- All content populated accurately across fifty state portals and the main site, preserving the legacy site's most significant asset.
- All work was performed during scheduled maintenance windows, meaning no operations were disrupted during migration or deployment.
- Being “in the cloud” means that hardware and network are now supplied as a service — eliminating capital expenses.

About Ducks Unlimited

Ducks Unlimited was founded in 1937 during the Dust Bowl era by sportsmen and philanthropists to ensure the future of wetlands and waterfowl habitat. Since then it has grown to become the world leader in wetlands and waterfowl habitat conservation — delivering their vision across North America. You can learn more about Ducks Unlimited at: ducks.org

About ICG

IowaComputerGurus (ICG) is a leading provider of custom application solutions built upon the Microsoft .NET Technology stack; including all major CMS platforms, MVC Core, and the Azure Cloud. With an emphasis on web technologies, performance optimization, security, and compliance projects, we set ourselves apart by placing a strong focus on quality and customer service for the life of the project. Learn more about us at: iowacomputergurus.com

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