



The Well Project

Award-winning web portal delivers critical treatment information to HIV-positive women

Benefits

- Portal delivers up-to-the-minute information tailored to users' specific requirements
- Workflow and version control automate and streamline content publishing process
- eRoom enables online collaboration and communication between geographically dispersed authors and reviewers
- Robust platform provides the functionality to support complex future initiatives such as multiple language support
- Workflow triggers based on expiration dates prompt editors to review all content periodically to ensure its currency and accuracy

Business overview

The Well Project is a nonprofit organization dedicated to reducing the total human cost of the global HIV/AIDS pandemic, through a unique and comprehensive focus on women. Founded in 2001 by Dawn Averitt Bridge, The Well Project spent two years researching, designing, and building the most comprehensive and current web-based resource available for women with HIV disease and those who provide care for them. The web portal, www.thewellproject.org, provides the latest information on living with and managing HIV disease for HIV-positive women, healthcare providers, and advocates.

The information on The Well Project's website is multilayered and designed to facilitate communication between patients, support-service providers, and clinicians by providing complex information in an accessible, conversational style. Patients and caregivers alike can log on to The Well Project and educate themselves on the challenges and solutions facing women living with HIV today.

Challenges

The Well Project is the inspiration of Bridge, who became a leading advocate and activist for AIDS treatment after discovering she was HIV positive in 1988. Five years ago, Bridge completed a 2,160-mile trek from Maine to Georgia on the Appalachian Trail—an experience that inspired her to create an advanced technology solution to the information gap that existed for HIV-positive women. “As a woman with HIV during the earliest years of the epidemic, I had to find my own way with the help of many. Information about HIV and how it would affect me as a woman was nearly impossible to come by. I finished the trail committed to creating a resource for other women facing a similar journey with HIV and AIDS,” says Bridge.

Business profile

The Well Project, Inc.

Comprehensive web portal for HIV-positive women, healthcare providers, and advocates, providing the latest information on living with and managing HIV disease

Industry

Service provider

Geographies

Headquartered in Charlottesville, Virginia, with 18 contract writers and 14 advisors throughout the U.S. and Puerto Rico

Business solution

Customer service portal, website management, collaboration

EMC Documentum products

EMC Documentum content management platform including Content Server, Webtop, Web Publisher, and Administrator; EMC Documentum eRoom

Deployment summary

Web content management system that automates publishing of complex medical information and provides dynamic content delivery to patients and caregivers

EMC partners

Armedia, BEA Systems

Facing an information void

With the growth of the Web, numerous sites had begun to spring up offering varying degrees of information for AIDS patients. Yet, there was still a void of resources specifically targeted to women, now the fastest growing population of new HIV infections in the U.S. and worldwide. Furthermore, HIV-related web information has tended to be highly technical and geared toward healthcare professionals. “There were many websites providing a vital service, but they were mostly just online libraries for past research and treatment recommendations,” says Richard Averitt, Bridge’s brother and chief operating officer of The Well Project. “Also, there was little context or accessibility for less sophisticated readers. For instance, unless you had a high level of infectious disease training, it could be difficult for you to know whether an article published in 1993 was still relevant to today’s treatment regimens.”

Approaching a multidimensional challenge

Among the HIV population, clients with the greatest need often have lower educational levels—or in the case of their caregivers, are often overwhelmed with caseloads or lack the specialized expertise to tease out the very complex information surrounding HIV and AIDS treatment and management. “There are complexities to virtually every aspect of HIV and AIDS treatment, with all sorts of implications along the way,” says Averitt. “For example, if you are a patient with HIV and also Hepatitis C, there are some very important co-implications and co-morbidities and issues with drug interactions.”

The challenge for The Well Project’s developers, therefore, took on multiple dimensions. First, they needed to be able to distill complex content into a form that could be easily understood by the end users, both patients and caregivers. Second, they needed a mechanism for safeguarding the credibility of important medical information by being able to relate it back to its original source material. Third, they wanted to be able to dynamically deliver the most pertinent content to the user based on her unique situation. For the Hepatitis C patient, for instance, the system would need to provide modules of information specifically addressing the complications and issues surrounding the treatment of HIV in combination with Hepatitis C. “In dealing with clients without much knowledge of infectious disease, it’s important that they can take action based on the whole picture, rather than smaller bits of information that may or may not be relevant,” says Averitt.

Breaking new ground

Out of these requirements came a vision for a web portal that would fill the information gap for women with HIV and AIDS, as well as their care providers. “We wanted to accomplish something that had never been done in this sphere: create a system in which patients could be sure they were getting up-to-the-minute information (tailored to their needs), and where caregivers could be sure of credible information based on documented sources,” says Averitt.

For the solution, The Well Project enlisted Armedia, an Atlanta, Georgia-based business and technology consulting firm specializing in content management solutions. Working with Armedia, The Well Project identified a number of technical requirements for the new portal. First was a mechanism to enable remotely located content writers to create, approve, and publish material to the site. Next was the ability to publish content in a variety of formats such as basic text, complex charts, audio, and video. The site needed to be able to dynamically generate customized content based on the individual user’s requirements, and provide rich, interactive site functionality to serve a wide variety of users.

EMC Documentum solution

Launched in September 2003, The Well Project's portal is based on the EMC Documentum® content management platform—a complete family of products that deliver capabilities to create, manage, deliver, and archive all business-critical content.

In investing in a solution as comprehensive as EMC Documentum, The Well Project employed long-term thinking. The ability to manage complex workflow processes, deliver dynamic content, and expand with the organization's needs are all critical to The Well Project's ongoing success. "We have some far-reaching ideas for expanding our capabilities into the future, such as a complex clinical trials database, and in order to succeed, we need a very robust and scalable technology platform," says Averitt. "I pushed our development team to come up with alternative solutions, but our requirements kept bringing us back to EMC Documentum."

"The Well Project's mission is to change the course of AIDS history and begin to see new cases decline worldwide. The only way we can do that is by providing quality education, awareness, and treatment management. We truly believe that the EMC Documentum platform is the solution that will help us fulfill this vision."

Richard Averitt, Chief Operating Officer

Streamlining content publishing processes

The Well Project's editorial team consists of 18 of the world's most prominent writers and editors on the subject of HIV disease in women. In addition, a 14-member National Advisory Board consisting of physicians and AIDS healthcare specialists provides direction on editorial content as well as a medical editing checkpoint. Writers, editors, and advisors are geographically dispersed throughout the United States and Puerto Rico.

The Well Project makes full use of EMC Documentum's sophisticated workflow and web publishing capabilities to accelerate the creation of content and allow nontechnical users to easily contribute content for the site. The system features easy-to-use web authoring tools that enable these users to generate content without knowledge of HTML or XML. All content creators are connected to the Documentum repository, and the system tracks and manages every phase of content development from initial concept, to writer assignment, to editing, to medical review and final advisory board approval. Once the story is approved for publication, the system places it in the publisher queue for the twice-weekly posting to the site.

Moving beyond online libraries and committing to currency and accuracy

In order to differentiate itself from other AIDS-related websites that serve primarily as online archives of past developments, The Well Project made full use of the workflow triggers in EMC Documentum to keep information current. As each new article is posted, the system assigns it an expiration date. As the date approaches, the system automatically prompts reviewers to reread the material and update it if any significant changes have occurred.

“In this environment, information is constantly changing. It’s vital for us to stay on the cusp of new treatment developments, and we’ve made a commitment to deliver only the most accurate, current information,” says Averitt. “We are constantly reviewing our content and bringing it up to date so that our clients can have the assurance that they’re reading about state-of-the-art disease treatment and management.”

Customizing the user experience by refining complex medical information

Once the content is approved for publication, the EMC Documentum platform utilizes rich metadata to assemble and transform the Word documents into tailored information based on the client’s request. A portal application based on BEA WebLogic presents the information to the user. Using the previous Hepatitis C example, clients searching for specific information on HIV in combination with Hepatitis C will receive not only the specific information they requested, but also a module of accompanying articles related to the subject.

“We take very complex medical information and distill it down to a sixth- to eighth-grade reading level, and then serve it up in a modularized way so that people can access the information in the manner that best serves them,” says Averitt. Another example might be a nurse practitioner in a local health clinic, who may not have expertise in complex disease management but may have a high caseload of HIV-positive women in a lower-income area. The nurse can retrieve information specific to a certain patient, such as an HIV patient who is pregnant. The information can be printed out in a form that’s easy for both the caregiver and the patient to understand. In turn, the patient can share the information with her physician, who can then visit the site to review the article and verify the data sets that were used to create it.

Managing online collaboration with eRoom

Another vital component of The Well Project’s portal solution is EMC Documentum eRoom™, a web-based collaborative workspace that enables distributed teams to work together more efficiently. As a geographically dispersed organization, The Well Project uses eRoom to manage a variety of internal communications. eRoom is integrated with the core EMC Documentum repository in which all internal documents are stored, as well as work-in-progress material that is being prepared for the public. In addition, eRoom’s calendar function serves as The Well Project’s core scheduling tool, providing a unified calendar for all employees and writers to schedule meetings and coordinate work. “eRoom is an extremely valuable tool for us, and we’re hoping to expand its use,” says Averitt. “There is a great deal of travel involved in this work, and eRoom lets us travel light and still have reliable access to critical documents wherever we are.” He added that EMC Documentum’s version control ensures that employees can always access the right versions of the documents they need.

One future eRoom project is a system to support the The Well Project’s Women’s Research Initiative on HIV/AIDS, which consists of working groups of researchers and experts from government, the pharmaceutical industry, research institutions, and healthcare providers. Currently, there is no unified mechanism for these participants to communicate other than e-mail, and eRoom would provide a central location for them to collaborate on conference topics and work projects.

Future plans for multiple language support

In the near future, The Well Project will roll out a Spanish language version of the site, with plans for other languages including French, which is of vital importance for AIDS-burdened countries in Africa. EMC Documentum's ability to manage multilingual websites from a single web content management platform will be a key enabler for localization of The Well Project's site. The platform's workflow functionality and version control will be among the critical system components necessary to ensure that the information stays completely consistent across every language, and that an update in one language is carried through to the others. Fallback rules within the system manage different versions of translated content, and a workflow trigger automatically updates the content once a new translation becomes available.

"Multiple language support is an excellent example of why we wanted to build on a platform as robust as EMC Documentum right from the beginning," says Averitt. "Our pledge to users of the accuracy and currency of our information will be no less important once we're live in two, three, or four languages—but the complexity will increase."

Summary

In the two years since The Well Project was launched, it has achieved unprecedented success. The numbers speak for themselves: site traffic grew by 300 percent last year and more than 25,000 people log on to the site every month. Considering that many of those users are caregivers who may serve up to 10 individuals, the reach of the portal is truly impressive. "In a very short time we've created a reputation as a true thought leader in the field of AIDS treatment and management, and we now work on special projects hand in hand with the National Institutes of Health and the Food and Drug Administration," says Averitt. The Well Project also gained notoriety among the information technology community in 2003 when it was named to the *InfoWorld* 100 list, recognizing enterprise IT projects that have made the best use of technology to meet business goals.

"Can content management save lives? That may seem like a farfetched idea, but our mission is to change the course of AIDS history and begin to see new cases decline worldwide. And the only way we can do that is by providing quality education, awareness, and treatment management," says Averitt. "We truly believe that the EMC Documentum platform is the solution that will help us fulfill this vision."

About Documentum software from EMC

Documentum software from EMC Corporation includes enterprise content management solutions that enable organizations to unite teams, content, and associated business processes. With a single platform, EMC Documentum software enables people to collaboratively create, manage, deliver, and archive the content that drives business operations, from documents and discussions to e-mail, web pages, records, and rich media. With Documentum enterprise content management, organizations improve their competitive advantage by accelerating time to market, increasing customer satisfaction, and reducing operating costs. For more information, visit www.EMC.com/documentum or call 800.607.9546 (outside the U.S.: +1.925.600.6754).

About EMC

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Customer Profile
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