

Case Study // Quenching the Thirst for Self-Service



How Water Corporation's Web Services are Creating a Water Efficient Community



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Digital Channel Manager, Water Corporation



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Managing our water supply has never been more important than it is today. On a global scale, UNESCO has predicted water shortage will become a serious worldwide problem by 2020*; however, for parts of the world affected by hot and arid climates, such as Western Australia, the preservation of drinking water supplies poses a more immediate challenge.

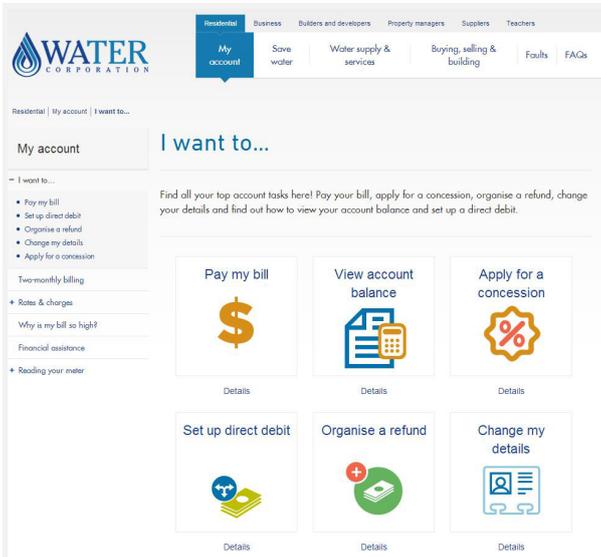
Water Corporation is a business enterprise, owned by the WA Government, responsible for supplying water to Perth and most of WA. Along with handling the state's water billing and service enquiries, and planning and building permission requests, Water Corporation's website also promotes water efficiency practices to customers, through research and educational resources, as well as interactive tools and calculators.

A Well of Uncertainty

One of the key aims of the Water Corporation website is to facilitate good water usage practices; however, in 2012, the organisation realised the site wasn't getting this message through to its users. To gain a full understanding of how it was being perceived by its customers, Water Corporation surveyed more than 800 residents, across Western Australia and, unfortunately, the results told a rather disappointing tale.

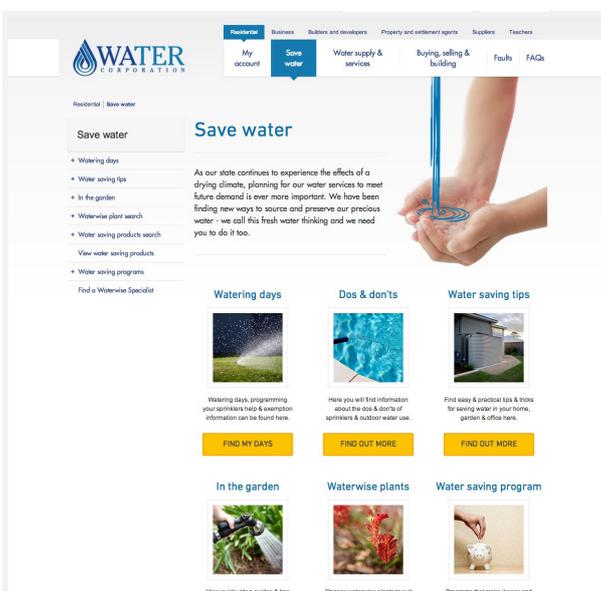
Tabitha Berger, Digital Channel Manager at Water Corporation, explains, “We saw a lot of cynicism. Many of our customers were uncertain about our purpose as an organisation. Very few respondents knew about our water conservation initiatives or climate efficiency goals, and many said our only contact with them was to

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*Shaun Choo
Head of Perth Office, Precedent*



send out bills and ask them to save water. They wanted to know what we as an organisation were doing about planning for our future, so we realised we needed to change the way we were interacting with them”.

Turning the Tide

Water Corporation kick-started a drive to improve the way in which it interacted with customers and the wider community. The first step was to introduce a billing reform so that, instead of receiving one, large bill at the end of the year, customers would receive a billing notification every two months; this meant that customers could make smaller, more manageable payments, choose the method of contact (either email or by letter), as well as receiving more regular contact from the organisation.

The second key step to improving customer service was the introduction of the Customer Connect initiative; the first major outcome of which is the Digital Strategy, focusing on enabling online self-service for customers. The aim was to give customers greater control over how and when they access important billing information and advice on how to be more efficient with their water usage.

Function Over Form

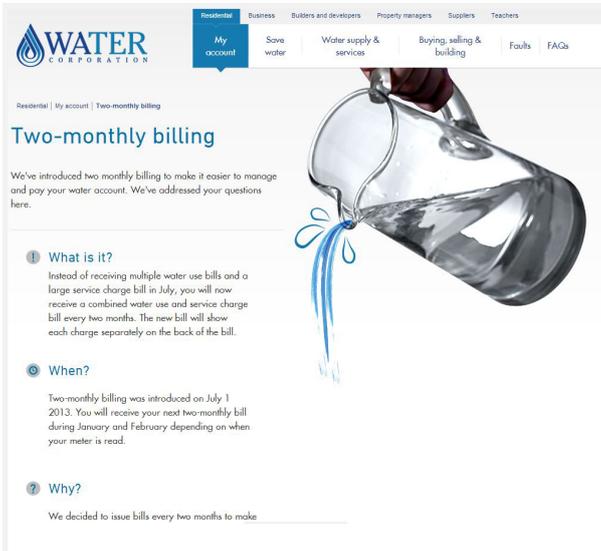
Making these initiatives a reality would require a completely new website which could handle the new functionality while providing users with a reliable website and a clean, simple design. Seeking expert advice and support for this new website build, Water Corporation put out a project tender, which was won by international digital agency, Precedent.

Head of Precedent's Perth office, Shaun Choo, explains that both client and agency had bold plans for the new site. “Nothing from the original site was retained. We carried out extensive research, based on analytics from the old site, to work out how it was being used; this insight influenced the design of the new site. Our design team, in Edinburgh, were focused on creating a look and feel which was clean, simple and professional- the aim was for the new site to have integrity and allow users to feel that all the information they needed was at their fingertips”.

Fixing the Leak

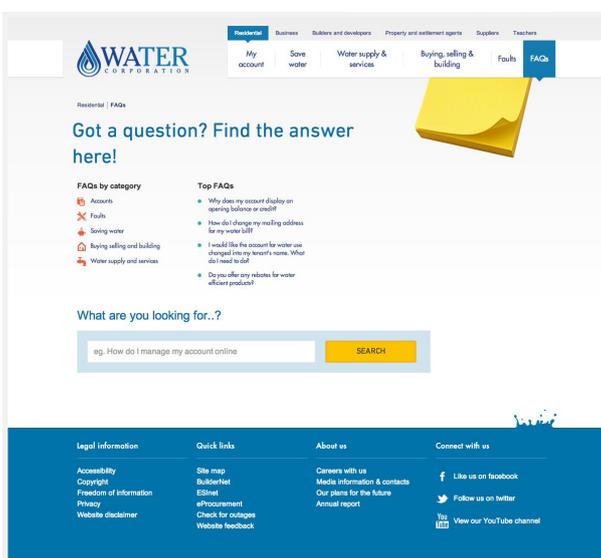
As well as improving their relationship with customers, another key driver for ensuring that the new site was user-friendly was the need to remove pressure from Water Corporation's customer call centres. Berger explains, “One of the main reasons people contact our call centre is because they don't understand the breakdown of their bills. Every time a call is handled by our call centre, it costs us approximately \$7, whereas an online query costs less than \$5. Enabling users to easily access their account information online

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Tabitha Berger
Digital Channel Manager, Water Corporation



would not only give them greater control; it’d also significantly cut our call centre overheads”.

Why Sitecore?

A key part of Precedent’s involvement was carrying out research for the new site; in particular, research that would identify the best solution to house the new site. According to Choo, after narrowing the search to two leading technologies, the agency finally decided upon Sitecore. “For us, the level of support provided by Sitecore was significantly better than that offered by its competitors, which is critical when undertaking a completely new project with relatively complex functionality, such as Water Corporation”.

As a government agency, Water Corporation also conducted their own, independent evaluation, to ensure complete objectivity when selecting a solution. “In the end, our evaluation led us to the same conclusion as Precedent”, explains Berger. “We needed a solution that would meet legislative record-keeping requirements, be easy to use, agile and also supported within Australia; that solution proved to be Sitecore”.

The Three-Year Plan

The new website launched in April 2013, complete with the self-service customer account facilities and a selection of new tools and resources to help WA communities take control of their water usage.

For Water Corporation and Precedent’s Perth team, the launch is simply an early milestone in their three-year plan to provide constant improvements to the website. “Initially, we focused on improving the experience for residential customers, as they’re the most prevalent user base for the site. The next focus will be to provide improved services for other user groups, such as our business and trade communities, which currently account for 30% of WA’s water usage, as well as on-going site improvements”, explains Berger.

One of these site improvements is to provide mobile users with greater accessibility; a project that’s already underway. “We’re looking at introducing mobile solutions and apps to the site, as customers highlighted mobile access as a key requirement in our market research. We also have over 4,500 Facebook fans and Twitter followers, so we’re keen to look at using mobile responsiveness to improve their user experience”, reveals Berger.

In order to keep the site fresh, engaging and up-to-date, Water Corporation has also launched a content drive, producing more interactive tools, calculators and infographics, which it hopes to deliver as part of its mobile services, using Sitecore functionality. “We want people to become more engaged with water conservation”, explains Berger. “Providing the right tools and information for customers to actively monitor their own water usage, as well as

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introducing water-saving practices in their own homes, is a powerful way for us to keep water conservation at the forefront of people's minds".

*The global water situation, Savewater: <http://www.savewater.com.au/research-and-resources/why-save-water/global-situation>

About Water Corporation

Water Corporation is a business enterprise, owned by the WA Government and accountable to the Minister for Water. As the principal supplier of water, wastewater and drainage services in WA, Water Corporation is also committed to providing climate resilient, sustainable water services and has established several plans and initiatives, including increasing water recycling to 60% by 2060.

[watercorporation.com.au](http://www.watercorporation.com.au)

About Precedent

Precedent are an international digital agency that transform organisations for a digital world. With 25 years' experience, Precedent offer an end to end service that starts with strategic and customer centric thinking, incorporates design and development and continues through hosting, support and optimisation. Precedent's strategic research leads the digital agenda in sectors such as government, education, destinations, membership, non-profit and finance.

precedent.com

Technology description

- » Sitecore 6.6
- » jQuery UI
- » Knockout JS
- » jQuery
- » .NET
- » C#
- » CSS3

Sitecore is the global leader in customer experience management software. The company delivers highly relevant content and personalised digital experiences that delight audiences, build loyalty and drive revenue. With Sitecore's experience platform, marketers can own the experience of every customer that engages with their brand, across every channel. More than 3,500 of the world's leading brands – including American Express, Carnival Cruise Lines, easyJet and Heineken – trust Sitecore to help them deliver the meaningful interactions that win customers for life.



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www.watercorporation.com.au

Precedent
www.precedent.com.au

Sitecore
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