Microsoft

Microsoft maps out personalized partner experience with Sitecore

Microsoft builds incremental, multi-year roadmap to transform partner engagement with end-to-end Sitecore XP and Content Hub solution

Industry: Technology • Founded: 1975 • Employees: 124,000
Headquarters: Redmond, Washington • partner.microsoft.com

The Microsoft Partner Network (MPN) is one of the world's largest partner eco-systems, with 6.6 million unique visitors and 56 million page views per year across 100+ markets and 11 languages. Partners span large global brands like IBM and Accenture all the way down to one-person operations. Partners are critical to Microsoft's success: around 90% of total revenues result from indirect channels.

With such a large, varied, and constantly evolving audience, Microsoft had to ensure it could use the MPN website to personalize content to the right person at the right time and enable visitors to find what they want in just three clicks. To achieve this, Microsoft implemented a multi-year roadmap to digitally mature over time by using a portfolio of Sitecore tools that provide end-to-end solutions for the content lifecycle.

35,000
Content assets

30%
Faster to build experiences

244%
Higher engagement

The Challenge

MPN combines the widest range of products and services in the industry with the flexibility to choose the programs and benefits partners need to build, go to market, and sell commercial solutions. The MPN website acts as a virtual account manager, listening to partners and delivering the resources for success. Its two primary aims are to attract new partners and support existing ones by helping them determine which programs are going to benefit their business.

Microsoft faced two critical and inter-related challenges: managing the content lifecycle and improving personalization. It had a vast and often unmanageable array of siloed content distributed across multiple and disconnected sources. The MPN website comprises 450 pages and 35,000 assets. Organized, managed, and consistent content is essential to personalization. And while personalization can be complex, it's achievable with the right tools and approach. With a diverse 400,000-strong partner audience spanning multiple profiles — like industry, role, business model and maturity, solution, and product — personalization at scale was a challenge. In addition, while 30% of site visitors were profiled and authorized partners, around 70% were unknowns.

" The end-to-end Sitecore XP and Content Hub solution has enabled Microsoft to develop a world-class platform that delivers high-quality, personalized, and targeted content to millions of partners across the world."

– Nicol Chadek, *Director of Digital Marketing Operations, Microsoft*

Microsoft wanted to develop, manage, and control content more effectively, and also find a fast and efficient way to leverage that content to improve personalization at scale, convert unknown site visitors to partners, and enable existing partners to build marketable solutions. Although Microsoft has huge marketing resources, it realized that personalization would need a manageable and step-by-step approach, starting with the basics and mastering those before moving to the next milestone on its personalization roadmap.

The Sitecore Solution

Using Sitecore Experience Platform™ (XP) integrated with Sitecore Content Hub and Sitecore AI, Microsoft adopted a crawl-walk-run approach comprised of short-, mid- and long-term goals. Applicable to large and small organizations, this approach covers organizational alignment, personalization strategies, experimentation, and feedback. Microsoft started small by aligning business objectives and establishing a foundation platform, through to goal-oriented squads, automating complex processes, and implementing A/B testing.
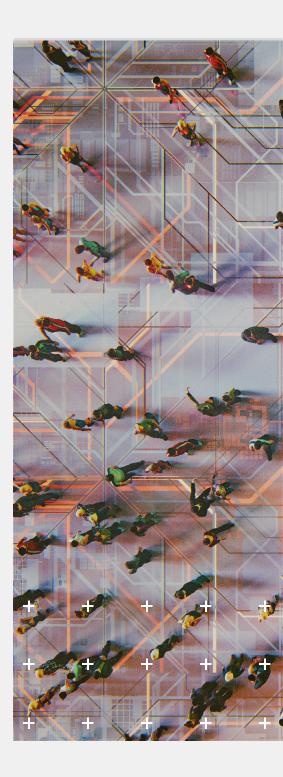
"We focused on basic capabilities – setting goals and campaigns for personalization and getting really good at them first. We also made a cultural shift in how the organization approached building experiences. Marketeers used to hand over a page for operations to build. Now marketers are coming to us with an experience," said Wina Wichienwidhtaya, MarTech Strategist at Microsoft.

Integrated with Sitecore XP, Content Hub makes personalization fast by removing content bottlenecks and allowing content created across different teams to be accessed centrally, improving access to assets and resources, and delivering content "out of the box" across all channels.

"Sitecore XP and Content Hub allow Microsoft to close the knowledge and experience gap and provide relevant, real-time moments in a partner's journey. The Sitecore solution serves up the right content at the right time," said Nicol Chadek, Director of Digital Marketing Operations at Microsoft.

Microsoft can personalize content, build guided journeys from unknown visitors to authenticated partners, and deliver opportunities for partners to co-sell services and products. For example, Microsoft launched 10 guided experiences across 12 languages and 139 locales. Sitecore AI amplifies Sitecore XP to automatically deliver individualized, contextual experiences that guide visitors along their journeys with useful and actionable content.

"We rely heavily on personalization to bring relevant content to partners, capture their interest and accelerate solution development. We couldn't do this effectively without personalization. And Sitecore AI Auto-Personalization connects you to your audience with greater breadth," said Wichienwidhtaya.

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The Outcome

With this multi-year effort, Microsoft has built a seamlessly integrated, end-to-end solution that has transformed content management and personalization at scale. It helps teams work faster and smarter, speeds up and simplifies personalization, and provides greater insight into effectiveness. Unknown MPN site visitors were cut to 11%, and 19% of members converted to paying partners. In six months, personalization drove 940 highly qualified leads to tele-sales.

Sitecore AI cut manual customization time by 30%, allowing Microsoft to reallocate resources to focus on building better experiences. Engagement rose 16%, and AI-enhanced pages now have an engagement rate 244% higher than other pages, as well as an 85% lower bounce rate and a 20% lower exit rate.

In one month, Sitecore tools delivered impressive KPIs, including approximately 50,000 visits to, and 3,100 downloads from guided experiences. Alternative channel engagement also increased, with Facebook traffic accounting for up to 30% of download activity, and 56% of traffic to AI-related guided experience pages coming from mobile devices.

Microsoft's use of AI earned Sitecore the 2020 Content Marketing Award from CMI for Best Use of Content Involving Artificial Intelligence.

Success Snapshot

- Sitecore® Experience Platform™ (XP 9)
- Sitecore Content Hub
- Sitecore® Experience Database™ (xDB)
- Sitecore Marketing Automation
- Sitecore Experience Analytics Tools (xAnalytics, Path Analyzer, Profile)
- Sitecore AI—Auto Personalization
- Sitecore® Federated Experience Manager (FXM)
- Hosted on Microsoft Azure
- Integrations:
  - MPN Dynamic Marketing Center
  - Clay Tablet for content translation
  - Microsoft Team Foundation Server
  - Webtrends digital analytics
  - Tealium for customer data management
  - Marketo for lead generation
  - Bing network and site search
  - WordPress & Vimeo for blog & video content

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Sitecore Platinum Implementation Partner

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