



Partner: Business Mechanix

Web Site: www.businessmechanix.co.nz

Country or Region: New Zealand

Industry: Education—Higher education institutions

Partner Profile

Business Mechanix is a business and technology consulting company headquartered in Auckland. A Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner, its three office locations employ 16 people.

Customer Profile

Northland Polytechnic (NorthTec) offers tertiary education at six campuses and learning centers across northern New Zealand.

Software and Services

- Microsoft Office
 - Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007
- Microsoft Server Product Portfolio
 - Microsoft SQL Server 2005
 - Microsoft Windows Server 2008 Standard
- Technologies
 - Hyper-V
 - Microsoft Silverlight

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Polytechnic Builds Easily Managed Web Site to Achieve Marketing Objectives

“In general, our new Web site powered by Office SharePoint Server 2007 is such a vast improvement that everyone on the staff is proud to send people there.”

Rebecca Fellenbaum, Online Communications Manager, NorthTec

NorthTec, an institution of higher learning in northern New Zealand, wanted to improve the effectiveness and manageability of its Web site. NorthTec and Business Mechanix, a Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner based in Auckland, built a new Web site using Microsoft Office SharePoint® Server 2007. NorthTec now uses the new Web site to easily manage and provide useful access to a wealth of information and to help achieve the institution's marketing objectives.

Business Needs

Northland Polytechnic (NorthTec) is a tertiary education provider in northern New Zealand. It offers degrees, certificates, and other training to 4,000 students in nursing, arts, business, and a variety of other fields and trades. Headquartered in Whangarei, it has five regional campuses and learning centers.

In June 2008, NorthTec decided that its Web site needed improvement. Every month, the Web site received 50,000 hits, representing about 8,000 unique visitors. However, “It was really more of an online brochure,” says Rebecca Fellenbaum, Online Communications Manager at NorthTec.

“Most of its information was in the form of PDF documents. It wasn't interactive, engaging, or user-friendly.” Beyond the main site, page addresses were awkward constructions filled with symbols and numbers, making them difficult to access directly. Navigation through numerous levels was laborious, and the site search function was not effective.

The site was also difficult to update. The marketing department managed the site, but the IT department was in charge of content updates. Between unwieldy content and management difficulties, www.northtec.ac.nz was not achieving its goal of communicating

information about the institution to prospective students, current students, alumni, and other interested parties.

Solution

Because NorthTec was already using Microsoft® Office SharePoint® Server 2007 Enterprise for its faculty and student portal systems, the institution decided to use that product to build an external Web site with content management capability. In September 2008, it put the project out for proposals for a partner to develop the platform.

NorthTec chose Business Mechanix, a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner with headquarters in Auckland, which has experience helping universities and polytechnics improve process efficiencies, especially in recruitment. In addition to experience in the educational sector and knowledge of Office SharePoint Server 2007, Business Mechanix brought a unique workshop process, called B-Agile, in which it helped NorthTec map its objectives into structures, designs, and data relationships.

Business Mechanix began work in November, bringing a prototype of a potential Web site to the first workshop. In four weekly workshops, complete with homework assignments, NorthTec and Business Mechanix designed the platform. Then Business Mechanix spent another four weeks implementing the design, handing over the system in January 2009. NorthTec spent four months developing site content for the various components of the system, and the new site launched in May.

The site takes advantage of data managed by Microsoft SQL Server® 2005 data management software, and runs on server computers that use the Windows Server® 2008 Standard operating system. Partway through implementation, NorthTec

successfully virtualized its Sharepoint server using the Hyper-V™ virtualization technology in Windows Server 2008.

One of the first features of the new site that visitors see is the main banner, which includes a rolling promotional item that uses the Microsoft Silverlight™ browser plug-in. “With Silverlight we are able to seamlessly integrate moving elements into the site, which the customer can maintain,” says Lyndal Stewart, Business Development Director at Business Mechanix. “We were able to use Silverlight to produce exactly what the customer asked for.”

The project came in on time and on budget. “In fact, we had a little budget left over,” says Stewart. “Some people at NorthTec had been a bit nervous about the B-Agile project process, and not having firm specifications before we started, but they’ve been absolutely delighted with the result.”

Indeed, Dave Williams, Director of Marketing and Communications at NorthTec, says, “NorthTec is pleased to have developed one of the leading Web sites in the tertiary education sector. The site has helped us gain valuable and positive exposure with prospective students in New Zealand and overseas. Working with the Business Mechanix team and a solid Office SharePoint Server 2007 platform has certainly been a winning combination.”

Benefits

NorthTec uses the Web site it built with Business Mechanix to easily manage content, giving users valuable information that aligns with NorthTec marketing objectives.

- **Easy management.** “Office SharePoint Server 2007 makes it really easy for me to

do all the updates to the site,” says Fellenbaum. “And we’re able to do a lot of things with Office SharePoint Server 2007 that we wouldn’t have been able to do in another content management system.” For example, the site includes a built-in library showcase that includes a catalog search right from the Web site, content aimed at key constituencies such as potential international students, RSS feeds, and buttons that can automatically send a page by e-mail or link it to one of more than 50 social media sites.

- **Access to good information.** “As a tertiary education provider, our main product is courses,” says Fellenbaum. “Now users can view and search for them in three different ways.” Addresses are straightforward and intuitive, featuring the name of the program or location, so that a program’s staff can use a direct address in promotion. “The search engine in Office SharePoint Server 2007 is so strong,” says Stewart, “that someone looking for a course on, say, fitness, can easily find it through the search engine, rather than having to navigate through the site.”
- **Alignment with marketing objectives.** With the new solution, the NorthTec marketing department can use the Web site to achieve its objectives. “We now have tools for online marketing,” Fellenbaum says. “We can target specific audiences, we can integrate with social media, and I expect we’ll be able to move some of our current printed materials online. In general, our new Web site powered by Office SharePoint Server 2007 is such a vast improvement that everyone on the staff is proud to send people there.”