

A Client Case Study

NEWS CORP AUSTRALIA

XWP



SUMMARY

New Corp Australia partnered with us on one of the world's largest site migrations to WordPress VIP. The results are workflow efficiency gains, empowered publishers, and notable cost savings.

SERVICE PROVIDED

- Strategy & Discovery
- Development
- Platform Migration
- Code Review
- Ongoing Support

KEY METRICS

- 90 major brands on various platforms
- 15 sites
- 1 year
- 8 million unique visits/day
- 600 million page views/month
- 40x improvement in time to publish
- 50% reduction in build time



COLLABORATION, CUSTOMIZATION, & CONTRIBUTIONS

With the success of an initial test site migration to WordPress VIP, News Corp Australia embarked on one of the most significant technical undertakings in the company's history. Over the course of the year, we worked together to complete the migration of 15 major web properties. This large scale project required a deep understanding of business needs, close collaboration, custom developments, and lasting contributions to WordPress core.

WEB PUBLISHING WOES

In 2014, News Corp Australia was struggling with ongoing development, maintenance, and administration challenges related to their existing publishing platforms. The platform that was being used at the time was responsible for a host of workflow inefficiencies. News Corp Australia needed a better solution. Owning and operating more than 90 major news, sports, business, and lifestyle brands spread across a wide range of publishing platforms, they needed an enterprise-level solution with the power to scale.



www.xwp.co

engage@xwp.co



THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIPS

As News Corp Australia evaluated their options, they considered WordPress, an open-source platform which was well on its way to prominence at the enterprise-level after a rapid rise in the web publishing industry. Our relationship with News Corp Australia began with an introduction from Matt Mullenweg, the co-founder of WordPress. This set in motion one of the largest WordPress VIP site migrations in history in size, scope, and complexity. Through collaboration with WordPress VIP, News Corp Australia positioned themselves for success from the start.



“The migration of News Corp Australia sites to WordPress.com VIP was one of the largest and most complex undertakings in my time at Automattic. It's a great example of how News Corp Australia, WordPress.com VIP, and XWP were able to work together to deliver a much better solution to our client.”

Paul Maiorana, VP of Platform Services at Automattic / WordPress.com VIP



www.xwp.co

engage@xwp.co



START SMALL, SUCCEED, THEN SCALE

News Corp Australia's first venture into WordPress began with our collaboration on building The Australian's BusinessNow blog on WordPress.com VIP as a test project. After the successful release of BusinessNow, News Corp Australia went all in and decided to start migrating their major brands to WordPress as a site production platform. In October of 2014 we embarked on the larger migration project. The size, scale, and complexity of the News Corp Australia migration was unlike any of its kind to date. The complete migration of their major branded sites was over a year in the making, with the first site on the platform, PerthNow.com.au, launching October 7, 2015.



FOCUS ON WORKFLOW

One of News Corp Australia's major goals in migrating to WordPress was to improve efficiencies in producer workflow. With a consultative and collaborative approach, we took the time to develop a comprehensive understanding of their workflow challenges to make sure the WordPress solution addressed their pain points.

Today, as a result of the migration and implementation, producers without technical skills are able to manage workflows within hours, not days. Together we were able to transform the way News Corp Australia does business. Armed with an agile platform that integrates seamlessly with internal systems, stakeholders are able to contribute value to their sites in ways that were not possible before. The result of these efforts has been a dramatic reduction in the time and cost required to make updates and improvements to each web property.



"Some of our goals with the migration were to improve workflow efficiencies, empower site producers to make changes with a full preview of their impact, and cut the time it takes to build out a section of the site from days to hours. We're so proud to be part of that success story."

Weston Ruter, CTO at XWP, Lead Architect on the SPP project



REWARDING RESULTS

Some of the highlights of our collaboration include:

- A core suite of VIP-approved plugins and a base theme that serve as the foundation for each new site on the platform.
- A “Site Build” experience, powered by the WordPress Customizer, that offers web producers the ability to assemble and organize an infinite combination of complex layouts – without touching code.
- A streamlined development workflow and toolset that helps internal development teams get up to speed quickly to build on and extend the platform.



TECHNICAL TANGO

A project this size is not without challenges. One of the major hurdles we faced was the need to carry over the existing markup (HTML, CSS, and JavaScript) of each web property. While intended as a time-saving measure, the current markup brought with it a wide range of complexities that had to be accounted for on the new platform. We used Twig, a PHP-based templating engine, as a solution and worked tirelessly to reconcile and consolidate the disparate parts of the existing HTML markup into a new structure that maintained compatibility with existing CSS and JavaScript while paving the way for future improvements. The result was a significant simplification of site structure with the added benefit of a decreased learning curve for News Corp Australia's internal development team.



CREATIVITY WITH CUSTOMIZER

We also encountered challenges related to WordPress architecture. We had decided to use the Customizer to allow for live configuration/preview of page layouts. The first challenge we ran into was the Customizer’s inability to maintain the context of a page – by default, it’s sitewide. We introduced “Contextual Settings”, allowing for metadata to be stored within the context of an individual page.

A WAR ON WIDGETS

As we moved forward with Site Build, configuring dozens of widgets per page, we eventually ran into the next challenge – scale. WordPress, by default, stores widget configurations in a single array within the options table. As the number of widget instances grew into the hundreds and eventually thousands, WordPress was grinding to a halt as it attempted to load the ever-increasingly large array. We solved the challenge by re-architecting how WordPress stores widgets, breaking them out of the array and into a custom post type, solving the scaling issue and adding the benefit of the post type architecture with “author” association, revisions, and more. Several of these improvements were baked back into WordPress core.



CONTRIBUTIONS TO WORDPRESS

Migrating News Corp Australia to open-source was a powerful move, not only for the business and their brands, but for the WordPress community overall. Overcoming technical hurdles of a migration of this size and scale meant new developments and improvements to WordPress core. These enhancements not only benefited News Corp Australia, but can now be used to the advantage of anyone operating on the WordPress platform. Likewise, now that News Corp Australia's major brands are on WordPress, they too will be able to enjoy future platform improvements simply by operating on an open-source publishing solution.



A NEW CULTURE BUILT ON COLLABORATION

In many ways, this migration project allowed News Corp Australia to reinvent themselves. The experience of tackling such a large and complex project has enabled them to understand the importance of relationships, transparency, and the value of all stakeholders in new ways. Additionally, they are more agile than ever before and iterate more quickly. The move to WordPress as a platform has dramatically improved the efficiency and effectiveness of ongoing development, streamlined platform maintenance with WordPress VIP as a hosting partner, and simplified site creation and administration for News Corp Australia's internal teams.



A FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

News Corp Australia's migration to WordPress is a powerful example of big media embracing open-source and influencing the future of the web. In the media space, success is tied closely to the speed of information. With this migration, News Corp Australia has improved their speed to build, speed to publish, and speed to market. And that's not all. The business has seen major lasting impacts to their efficiency, their culture and their bottom line.

We at XWP are so proud to continue our work with News Corp Australia. We love discovering solutions to big challenges and our close collaboration with our client on this project has given us the opportunity to solve their challenges at a massive scale. This project allowed us to prove the power of WordPress as a platform for our client, while serving the larger community by contributing to the WordPress core. We will be honored to continue our collaboration within the News Corp family of companies in the years to come.



REFERENCES

- Chris Dimitropoulos, Head of Program Delivery - chris.dimitropoulos@news.com.au
- Myles Lagolago-Craig, Platform Director - myles.lagolago-craig@news.com.au





POWERING YOUR PROJECTS

www.xwp.co engage@xwp.co