

Case Study



YELLOW PAGES BASED BUSINESS NETWORKING PORTAL



“Idhasoft is a global world-class organization providing best-of-breed localized business and technology solutions, with continuous innovation and quality backed by best-in-class people”

Client Requirement

The site will be a 'Yellow Pages' based social & business networking portal exclusively aimed towards helping people find the right services on the net.

Through its online 'Yellow Pages' resource, it will gather people's collective intelligence and network them to locate the best possible businesses.

Targeted to be the ultimate resource for locating local businesses, the site will offer a range of features like Google Maps, location-centric searches and extensive user reviews in the form of articles, images and videos as well.

Through its community section, users will be encouraged to create an accurate profile and build a trustworthy community that helps them find and offer reliable services on the net.

The site will offer a range of tools for enhancing offline interactions between users along with bidding tools for getting the best deals.

The site will provide numerous customization options with easy navigation and user-friendly features to ensure access for members of all experience

Challenges

Developing a fully comprehensive business portal offering all the benefits of a community website along with crucial business-locating features such as Google Maps, video reviews and bidding tools, among others.

The implementation of a highly flexible & robust database that smoothly handles already millions and constantly increasing online business records.

Providing a robust framework for handling extensive amounts of data, ratings, statistics and options like bidding etc.

Sustaining good load balance for a feature-heavy website that is available 24/7 and accessed by thousands of users simultaneously.

Incorporating web usability principles while developing numerous features designed for enhancing the users' community networking experience.

Ensuring user privacy and safeguarding their content.

Technologies Used

PHP (Server-side Language)	<p>Most appropriately suited to create dynamic web pages.</p> <p>Enables fast extraction of data out of a database for presenting it on the web page.</p>
JavaScript and AJAX (Client-side Language)	<p>Crossover browser support & faster loading time with light web pages that require no plug-in downloads.</p> <p>Scalable Javascript based controls to provide flexibility and enhance user experience and involvement.</p>
MySQL Engine	<p>Versatile, low-maintenance database management system.</p> <p>Cross-platform compatible database component of the LAMP platform.</p>
Red Hat Linux	<p>License-free, sturdy platform with powerful multitasking abilities.</p> <p>Open source code allowing for extensive customization.</p>
Apache Web Server	<p>Ideal for serving static as well as dynamic content on the web in a safe and secure manner.</p> <p>Supports a variety of features while offering extendable core functionality.</p>

Manpower

Project Leader	1
Developers	5
Designers	2
Quality Assurance Testers	3

Planning

Keeping in mind the enormous structure of the website and the challenges involved, a four-tier development approach was adopted, consisting of:

- o The Database layer containing MySQL Server Database, Tables, stored procedures and so on.
- o The Interface layer and Database Abstraction layer for converting data between incompatible type systems in databases and accessing data from the database respectively.
- o The Business Logic layer consisting of all business logic procedures for modules like User Profiles, Invitations, Forums and Blogs etc.
- o The User Interface Layer which forms the Graphical User Interface of the website.

Architecture

The design approach was built around PHP and MySQL Server due to the social networking nature of the website. Modules like User Profiles, Invitations, Forums and Blogs were developed in PHP such that they can be executed directly from the UI layer. In order to most effectively access the database in an object-oriented context, an interface translating the object logic to the relational logic was used to communicate with the relational databases in an object-oriented manner. An intermediary abstraction layer was created for accessing data from the database. Stored procedures were used only for complex retrieval of data from multiple tables and were entirely avoided with conditional syntax to ensure smooth performance of the website. The UI layer was kept free of any business logic with images, applications and data being called from their respective servers. Sub-domains were used for the different areas of the website to guarantee scalability.

Development Highlights

The sturdy architecture was equipped with an exhaustive yellow pages database to fulfill the business networking aspect of the site. The optimized database was synergized with superior query features to offer accurate results through comprehensive search & browse options. Category-based and location-centric searches were enhanced by the inclusion of Google Maps and image-accompanied reviews. The site employed numerous user and service ranking tactics to encourage user participation and ensure the authenticity of reviews. Extensive bidding options provided by the site helped users locate the best services for cheap. Besides the integration of coupons systems, the site was equipped with numerous video options for supporting video reviews of services. Web usability guidelines were strictly followed during development and the interface was made easily navigable through judicious use of AJAX, CSS and HTML controls. The site was developed and fully functional within a span of 5 months.

Client Feedback

“GMI is clearly levels ahead of their competition and I am glad to have located them. Having worked with other outsourcing companies I'm pleasantly surprised by GMI level of preparation and documentation that goes into their projects. I fell fortunate to have found them and look forward to a long term relationship with them on all my future development projects.”