

## **CHAPTER 2: HOW TO BECOME A BEST-IN WEB ORGANIZATION**

How does an organization become a “Best-in-Web” organization? Is this like the analogy of children learning to walk before they can run? Can an organization change gears and begin implementing Best-in-Web practices at whatever point they now operate, or must they first lay a foundation? Let us consider what this study’s participating Best-in-Web organizations recommend. Any organization, large or small, government or otherwise, can take these steps and then be ready to operate as a Best-in-Web organization.

While these steps may seem redundant to the Best-in-Web practices described in Chapter 1, the emphasis here is on the sequence of actions that need to be taken. These are a logical progression of steps that will strengthen an organization’s Web presence to be effective internally as a strategic tool and effective externally as a source of information and services to customers. A strong Web organization will be able to implement the Best-in-Web practices described above.

### **The Eight Steps to Becoming a Best-in-Web Organization**

1. Ensure high level support in the organization for the Web presence. Help leadership see the Web as a fundamental tool for accomplishing the overall mission, a tool that requires long-term funding so that it will evolve with the changing needs and expectations of the organization and its customers. This includes Internet, intranet, and extranet(s).
2. Establish governance of Web activities in a “Web Team” as close as possible to the organization’s leadership and ensure decisions are made in the best interests of the organization and the Web site.
3. Define the purpose of the Web site based on customer needs and what the organization has to offer them.
4. Develop clear business rules for workflow and content approvals, and for maintaining the Web site. Keep content fresh and clean – daily on the top level pages; review all content at least every year, archive old content, and improve navigation.
5. Ensure that the whole organization focuses on the customers and understands their perspective (e.g. customers may not know how the government is organized). Enlist and involve content providers from the programs and challenge each other to find new and better ways to satisfy customers.

## **Best Practices in Web Management**

6. Fully integrate the Web into day-to-day business processes of the organization. Use the intranet as the main resource for all employees.
7. Use performance measures and goals that align with accomplishing the organization's larger mission:
  - Customer satisfaction
  - Usability
  - Accessibility
  - Site performance
  - Quality, accuracy, and currency of content
  - Compliance with legislation, policies, and agency priorities
  - Marketing and outreach
  - External validation -- benchmarking, press, awards, etc.
8. Promote your Web site by ensuring that customers and potential customers are aware of the Web address and the information and services they can find.

## **Regulations Pertaining to Federal Government Web Sites**

In addition to following these steps, to be able to follow Best-in-Web practices Web teams must understand and follow the considerable amount of general management guidance and regulations that pertain to Web management.

- The Freedom of Information Act of 1966, which grants anyone the right to request access to federal agency records or information.
- The Federal Information Security Management Act of 2002, which provides the framework for securing the Federal Government's information technology systems.
- The Government Performance and Results Act of 1993, which strategic plans every three years and annual performance plans and reports.
- The Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, which sought to minimize paperwork burdens and maximize public utility of information collected. Requires OMB approval before collecting information from the public.
- The Information Technology Management and Reform Act of 1996 (Clinger-Cohen Act), which give OMB authority to manage Executive Branch IT resources.
- OMB Circular A-130, Management of Federal Information Resources, which details the IT Capital planning process (with Exhibit 300), Security Plan, Risk Management Plan, Privacy Plan, and the Enterprise Architecture framework, and calls for post-implementation reviews.
- Federal Order 13011, Federal Information Technology, signed 1996, establishing the CIO Council.
- The Government Paperwork Elimination Act of 1988, which requires Federal agencies to offer electronic maintenance, submission, or disclosure of information, when practicable as a substitute for paper, and to accept electronic signatures when practicable.

## Best Practices in Web Management

- The Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act of 1998, which regulates unfair and deceptive practices in connection with the collection and use of personal information from and about children on the Internet.
- 1998 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, strengthening provisions addressing access to government information for people with disabilities (Section 508).
- The President’s Management Agenda, of 2001, which requires federal agencies to be more citizen-centered and results-oriented, and provide more electronic services to customers
- The Treasury and General Government Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2001, which mandates maximizing the quality, objectivity, utility, and integrity of information disseminated.
- The E-Government Act of 2002, which designates FirstGov as the official Web portal of the U.S. government. It also requires agencies to set up a process to determine what information will be accessible online and by other means, and to develop schedules for making that information available, and report on this progress regularly.
- The Notification and Federal Employee Anti-Discrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002, which increases Federal agency accountability for acts of discrimination or reprisal against employees. This act requires the posting of EEO complaint data on the agency’s Internet site. Each Federal agency must post on its public web site certain summary statistical data relating to equal opportunity complaints filed against the agency.

## Selected Guidelines and Other Resources

Many organizations have published (or are creating) guidelines that specify detailed standards for the design and management of their Web pages. These help Web teams operate effectively and ensure they meet the legal requirements for Federal Government Web sites. The following examples illustrate various approaches to organizational guidelines. The Department of Energy example is particularly good for its organization, clarity, and Web presentation (accessibility).

- Department of Defense Web Policies and Guidelines ([www.defenselink.mil/webmasters/](http://www.defenselink.mil/webmasters/)).
- Department of Energy, Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Communications Standards and Guidelines ([www.eere.energy.gov/communicationstandards/](http://www.eere.energy.gov/communicationstandards/)).
- Department of Housing and Urban Development Web Policies and Web Management Structure ([www.ezrc.hud.gov/library/bookshelf15/policies/wwwpol.cfm](http://www.ezrc.hud.gov/library/bookshelf15/policies/wwwpol.cfm)).
- GSA Office of Governmentwide Policy report, “Performance-Based Management: Eight Steps to Develop and Use Information Technology Performance Measures Effectively” (Plunkett, no date).
- NASA Worldwide Web Best Practices, Draft 2.0, NASA Best Practices Team Report, August 29, 2000, 75 p. ([nasa-wbp.larc.nasa.gov/](http://nasa-wbp.larc.nasa.gov/)).
- NIST publication 800-37, “Guide for Security Certification and Accreditation of Federal Information Systems.”

## Best Practices in Web Management

- Interagency Committee on Government Information, “Recommended Policies and Guidelines for Federal Public Web Sites,” (<http://www.cio.gov/documents/ICGI/ICGI-June9report.pdf>).

Web customer feedback programs like the American Customer Satisfaction Index are available for government participation (for a fee) (American Customer Satisfaction Index, <http://www.theacsi.org/overview.htm>). Customer feedback from these programs can be used to improve the Web site. Outside organizations evaluate Web sites, recognizing excellence with awards. Web managers can use the criteria for these awards to improve Web site design and the management of Web content and applications. Academia, professional organizations, niche media companies, training organizations, and other organizations study management, IT, and other business and government activities, and they generate considerable information (for example, Kellett, 2004).