

Alfresco Drives Collaboration at Oxfam

Charity improves teamwork across the organization by enhancing the standard platform for its 8,900 field workers to communicate and collaborate

Customer

Oxfam International

Industry

Non-profit

Use Case

Team collaboration,
document management,
sharing news

Integrations

Drupal-based Intranet,
OpenLDAP

Products

Alfresco One

Partners

Zaizi, Provonix

Results

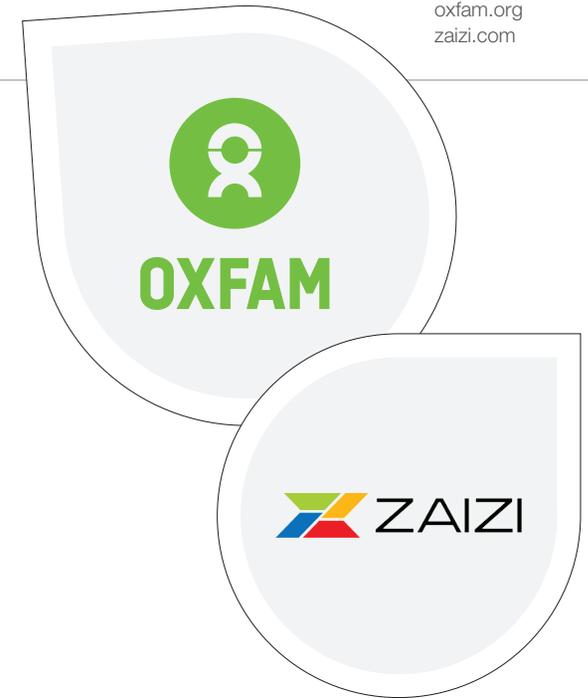
Oxfam International's new global Intranet is the only system that connects all of its 17 affiliate organisations, integrating more than 8,900 field workers and enabling them to collaborate and communicate more effectively in three main areas:

- Working groups — field workers can choose to join any of more than 700 groups to share information about established areas of business, but also create their own groups to discuss other topics, such as new developments in mobile technology.
- Governance groups — these allow global team members to share policies, governance and other materials to better coordinate and develop shared projects and maintain a common strategy across the whole organization.
- News and information — the Intranet provides a hub for sharing information and assets, from new developments in the Confederation to the new company logo and branding tools needed when Oxfam rolled out a new brand identity.

Oxfam

Oxfam is a world-wide development organization that mobilizes the power of people against poverty. Oxfam is a confederation of 17 organizations working together in more than 90 countries.

(continued)



“There is never a one-size-fits-all solution for a project as complex as our global intranet. Zaizi really helped us to get the best out of the respective strengths of Alfresco’s CMS, including WebDAV, and Drupal’s web platform, using other open source technology like Apache search to enhance overall performance.”

— Gabriele Sani, Intranet Manager
Oxfam International,

Business challenge

In light of this mission, the ability for its 12,000 employees to share information and learn from each other plays an important role in the organisation's ability to efficiently deliver positive outcomes.

In 2010, Oxfam International identified a major opportunity to dramatically improve communications and knowledge sharing across its confederation by creating a single global intranet, but by 2012 it became clear how it needed to be improved. At the time, the affiliates used a number of systems to communicate and share information but there was considerable room for improvement.

Many field workers in remote locations with low bandwidth found it difficult or impossible to access the systems. Others, even those with access to high-bandwidth, found the systems too complicated to use on a regular basis, and when facing a humanitarian emergency there is no time for training. By introducing a more user-friendly, accessible communications platform for these processes, Oxfam International felt that its field aid workers could more efficiently share successful campaigns, collaborate on common causes and interest areas and stay up to date with internal news and changes.

Oxfam's IT budget was constrained in part due to lower than normal levels of giving that plagued the charity sector during the sustained economic slowdown that began in 2008.

When Gabriele Sani, Intranet Manager, Oxfam International, began to evaluate content management platforms, he was naturally concerned with price as well as scalability and functionality. The CMS needed to be integrated with a Drupal-based intranet that had 8,900 users in 90 countries, 700 different groups and roughly 120,000 Intranet pages.

According to Sani, "This was about more than simply controlling software license fees, but ensuring that the costs of integrating and adapting the chosen platform to our diverse IT architecture would stay within budget as we



scaled. The system also needed to be easy enough for our field workers around the world to learn on their own even with minimal training."

Solution

After looking at more than 20 alternatives, Oxfam International turned to open source systems integrator Zaizi to lead the development of a browser-based communications and collaboration application that integrated Alfresco's CMS and Drupal's web platform and ran on its Linux CentOS 6 operating system. A Belgian agency, Provonix, was also initially brought in to provide specialist Drupal integration support.

To support field workers in low-bandwidth areas like most sub-Saharan countries, the system would deploy WebDAV, a tool that comes with Alfresco. WebDAV is an open standard that gives users a secure way to edit and manage files located in a shared site library as if they were on resident on their own computers. Besides being extremely intuitive, this avoids them having to go through a web browser or download large plug-ins, and it minimizes the bandwidth requirements. All the application data is hosted in the Cloud.

Sani continued, "We discovered Zaizi on Alfresco's website and the feedback on its services from existing customers was consistently excellent. They approached the project strategically by understanding our whole business. They chose what was best for us after discussing a range of options, rather than pushing certain solutions on us. Zaizi delivered many other benefits outside the initial business case."

Zaizi's integration strategy was to deploy Alfresco to mirror Drupal's structure. There is an Alfresco folder to mirror the content in each of the 700 groups including an HTML files that capture online content such as discussions, calendars and news. When a field worker uploads a file to the web interface, it's automatically stored in Alfresco and made available via other protocols as WebDAV or FTP (file transfer protocol). At the same time, WebDAV allows users to access the intranet as a shared drive, and therefore drag and drop folders throughout the system, and view and edit online content and folders as on their computers.

Sani concludes, "We are keen on sharing what we learned from working with Zaizi with other charities and organizations. With open source technologies, you can share the code and the experiences, which reduces the costs. If it can work for others with the same requirements, it's a win for everyone involved."