



How EDUs use Acquia Site Factory to build successful websites

Using The Factory Method Brings Order to Digital Chaos

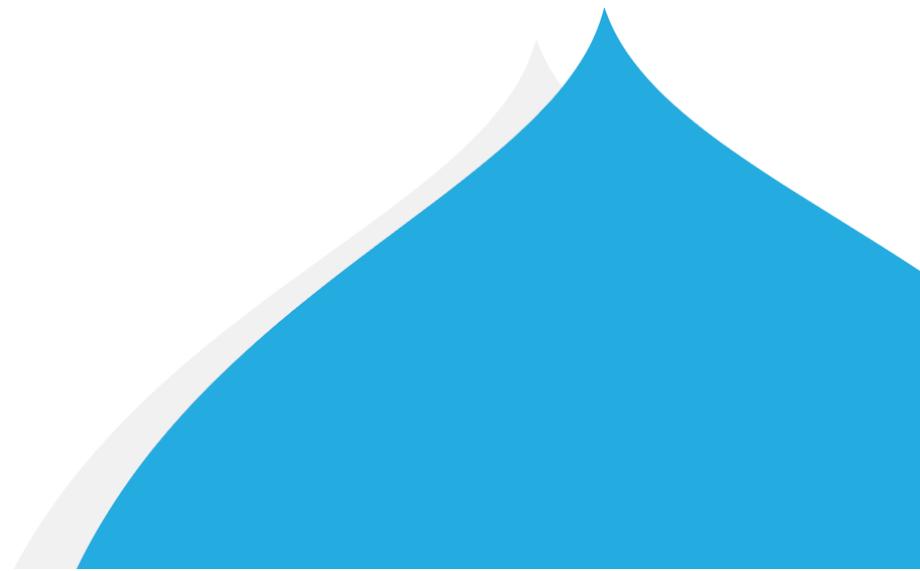


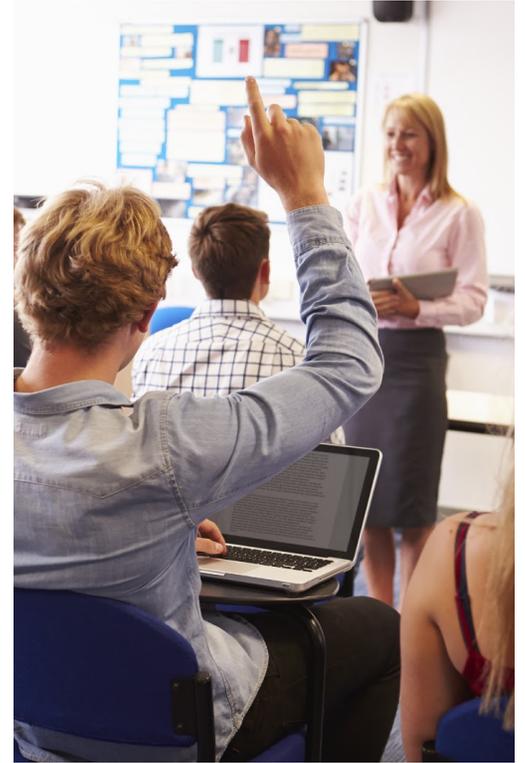
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Introduction

Colleges and universities have to create and maintain websites and web pages for many users with different, sometimes conflicting needs while also providing high-level brand consistency and user experience. Although doing this isn't easy for any organization, EDUs must accomplish it with far fewer resources than for-profit institutions. So they need a way to do it that is cost-effective, scalable, and repeatable.

EDUs must use a digital platform that provides central site-delivery and governance, enables consistency in brand- and user-experience and allows the flexibility for students, professors, researchers, departments, administrators, and other university-affiliated groups to have autonomy over their own sites.



Digital Governance: A False Dichotomy

Most EDUs have and rely on the tools that can get a single site up and running. However, those tools are inefficient and ineffective for creating and managing multiple pages and sites, especially with the limited people and resources at their disposal.

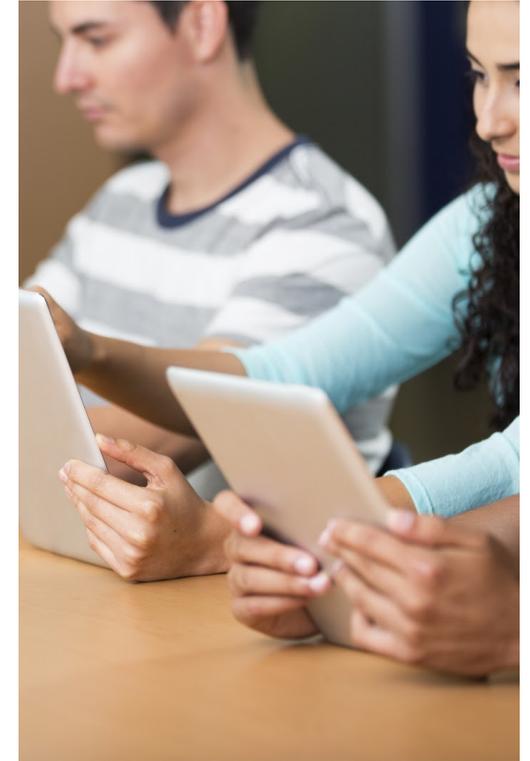
Typically, EDUs do one of two things when it comes to governance of site or web page updates:

1. IT and digital marketing teams are the sole updaters of all things digital to keep control.
2. Individuals, groups, and teams from across the university are allowed to make their own updates.

Both of these have significant drawbacks. The first takes far too long to implement because of the workload for IT and digital marketing teams. The second is all but certain to lead to brand consistency issues and errors.

EDUs are limited to these two bad choices by the lack of a unified technology or platform. Without that technical teams must spend more time and therefore more money re-creating the wheel for each site. Although the customized product resulting from this may be good for the user it was created for, inevitably mistakes and differences from other EDU digital sites creep in, hurting the sites' quality and leading to a bad visitor experience. Ultimately, this makes the organization look inept and hurts whatever goals the site was created to achieve: attracting prospective students, acquiring research and donor funding, increasing web traffic, etc.

Because visitors come to EDU websites from many different places and for many different reasons, every page must be able to function as though it were the institution's home page. With a digital governance strategy and multi-site management platform, IT can maintain control over all sites while allowing teams outside of IT to have the freedom to make updates as they need them.

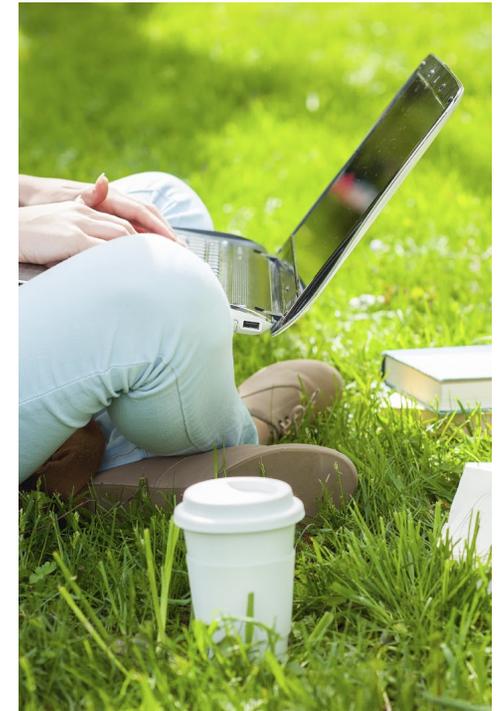


The Need for a Digital Factory

Instituting this requires adopting a digital factory model: Standardizing the functions of people, process, and technology to produce brand and technology compliant websites and digital experiences at scale.

How to tell if you would benefit from this model:

- Do you or your IT/digital teams have to start from scratch each time you want to create a new site? “From scratch” as in you are selecting and adopting new technologies in order to create new sites.
- Do departments or groups in your institution have separate sets of technologies, resources, processes, and site templates for similar types of experiences such as a departmental website or a professor’s academic site?
- Does it take weeks or months to make updates and changes to all of your sites? Are nearly impossible, or it takes weeks or even months to implement.
- Do you or your visitors have trouble finding the information or find outdated information and sites?
- Do you have trouble finding who manages what, and need to get your resources under control because you need to become a trusted service provider (of sites and digital experiences) for your institution?
- Do you spend more time playing catch-up and maintaining sites you have than innovating on your digital strategy?



What Does It Take to Institute A Digital Factory Model?

The factory platform is 75 percent approach (i.e. organizing people and processes) and 25 percent automation (i.e. technology). The reason why there is so much emphasis on approach is because it requires a new foundational framework and mindset to mobilize all of the teams within your organization to work in unison as a factory.

Create a Digital Governance Team

The first step is assembling a team to manage and govern the digital platform and approach across your institution. For some EDUs this will mean hiring new staff and personnel. For others, it will just require a bit of reshuffling, and reassigning of jobs and responsibilities. This governance team can consist of one or two people -- a big team is not necessarily imperative for success.

Start the adoption by defining role-based teams. The exact number of people can vary based on the IT digital organization, projects, and overall platform scope. The teams and/or individuals can be centralized or distributed across the organization. For many EDUs, as resources and personnel are limited, it often makes sense for the same individuals to operate multiple roles.

Here are the teams/roles needed to operate a digital factory:

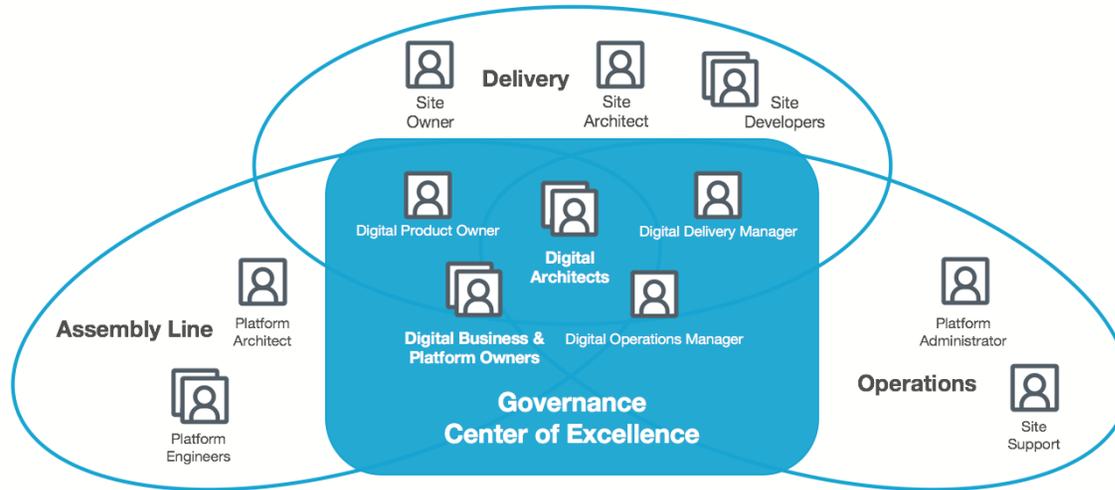
- **Assembly:** Responsible for the assembly of the shared Drupal distribution. Analyzes site requirements for content types, integrations, digital assets, and management needs up-front and creates a site model to define the core Drupal distribution. Provides continuous distribution lifecycle management to maintain Drupal versions, modules, assets, and all platform required code.
- **Delivery:** Customizes shared Drupal to individual site needs. Upgrades the Drupal distribution for new requirements as needed.
- **Operations:** Provisions and operates the digital sites at scale. Provides all site changes, site content updates, security, and site retirement.
- **Governance:** Establishes standards and policies to support digital platforms. Provides a unified organization playbook for the people, policies, and standards for digital sites including planning, developing, delivering, and operating digital sites and experiences across the EDU.



Acquia Cloud Site Factory

[Acquia Cloud Site Factory](#) lets you use a centralized site management console and shared Drupal platform to deliver and govern multiple digital sites sharing common functionality or architectural patterns. This common multi-site code base and management platform enables you to have unified view of all your sites with a standard process for configuring and managing multi-site delivery.

Digital Governance Team



Built on Acquia's scalable cloud platform, Acquia Cloud Site Factory allows you to manage multiple digital sites at scale, with features such as:

- A centralized, role-based site management console for managing digital sites built with Drupal tuned to specific content and site governance requirements.
- Multi-site Stacks delivery and governance, for building multiple sites from dedicated codebases and deploying new updates across a collection of sites.
- Open integrations with REST-based APIs.
- Powerful delivery automation to eliminate error-prone manual processes.
- Acquia Cloud platform services, including DevOps services and tools, a guaranteed SLA, remote administration, security and monitoring.

The Components of a Factory and Other Required Technology Migration and Automation (i.e. Building a Factory)

Step 1. Replace and consolidate old technologies and CMSes

Whether you are replatforming or moving onto a brand new platform, you will have to conduct a technology audit to find out what technologies, like content management systems (CMS), are currently used in the organization. Then you will need to decide which sites and data to migrate to the new platform. You are unlikely to decide to move all your sites because many of them will be outdated. However, you may want to consolidate certain sites or start fresh with new ones.

Step 2. Define business needs and assemble distribution accordingly

After you have a general sense of which sites you need to build or are keeping, you will need to decide all the common core elements you want all of your sites to have and make templates based on that. This sounds daunting but, with the help of OpenEDU and a supportive technical partner or development team, it's very manageable.

Key to this is gaining a thorough understanding of your institution's business and digital experience needs. That requires finding out what all stakeholders, students, professors, researchers, departments, administrators, and other university-affiliated groups, want and need on their sites. Without this your platform won't be flexible enough to meet future digital demands and technical integrations. For example, if your EDU hopes to expand its marketing presence internationally, you will need greater personalization capability. This is because international students and scholars from different countries will require different messaging and information, all of which may be different than that needed for domestic students. You may not want to start your personalization efforts immediately, but you will need to prepare and build your platform now so personalization technology can be easily integrated later.

Step 3. Platform build and site migration

Now it is time to install your distribution onto your platform and to begin the platform build. During this, you will have to migrate sites, content, and data to Acquia Cloud Site Factory. This will involve some basic re-architecting and redesigning of your sites so they are compliant with your distribution.

This is also when you will decide how you want your sites and teams within your organization grouped. Doing this will allow you to build and establish technologies and processes to automate site creation, delivery, and maintenance capabilities.

Step 4. Assign roles to site builders, site managers, factory admin, etc.

When your first few sites are up and running, you will need to designate who will manage them. You will also need a general factory manager or admin. Most EDUs will simply assign roles based on existing organizational groups like departments, professors, research groups colleges, etc.

Note: If you're a current Acquia Cloud Enterprise (ACE) customer, moving to Acquia Cloud Site Factory makes a lot of sense. However, you will still need to go through the steps of building a platform, and automating your sites and methodology.

Distributions and OpenEDU

Every factory requires a collection of common modules, features, and code. That's what allows it to quickly launch uniform and on-brand sites at scale. At Acquia, we call this common collection a "distribution." Because getting a distribution right the first time is so important and can be complicated and time consuming, we have partnered with ImageX and more than a dozen universities to create [OpenEDU](#), a distribution that brings together all the best EDU Drupal modules.

OpenEDU is an out-of-the-box solution that lets colleges and universities build and provision new sites and digital experiences with higher efficiency and lower costs.

Along with our partners we are continually reviewing and expanding OpenEDU to best meet the needs of higher education digital teams.

CASE STUDY #1

FSU improves site governance and saves money

One of the most common (and overwhelming) problems EDUs face is not having the resources to manage existing sites while also needing to provision new ones to keep up with demand. Outdated technology makes this challenge even more problematic.

That's exactly the problem Florida State University was facing. Ongoing digital sprawl and an outdated CMS resulted in very visible lack of brand continuity. So they had to establish brand continuity across all of their separate websites while maintaining the flexibility for each department to make their site their own.

With the help of Kwall agency and Acquia, they did a replatform on Drupal 8 using Acquia Cloud Site Factory. This allowed them to develop an easily deployable base configuration and gave each department tools to make its site fit its particular needs. For instance, standard customizable features include: news and events, slideshows, layouts, and color scheme. Content editors from each of the various departments feel reassured knowing their bespoke sites share a uniform theme throughout.

In the long-run, FSU's replatform will save millions in lifetime costs of managing each website. They are no longer subjected to licensing fees or rigid support contracts. Today, FSU's platform and factory approach allows any permitted individual to log onto the Acquia Cloud Site Factory console and start creating the site they need. That site is automatically compliant with FSU's overall site and brand standards, and gives the factory manager full visibility into what everyone is creating to ensure sites stay consistent and controlled.

CALL OUT "By recommending Acquia Cloud Site Factory with our higher education clients who require a large system of websites to be easily deployed and managed, KWALL has been able to deliver web systems that provide appropriate scale and can be managed with ease, " said Kevin Wall, CEO of KWALL. "With Site Factory and Drupal, KWALL can provide systems for Higher Ed and Enterprise that allow for appropriate digital governance and control while allowing content authors the capabilities they require."

Distributions and OpenEDU (cont'd)

OpenEDU extends the functionality of Acquia Lightning , a program which accelerates building authoring experiences through the four functional areas of Drupal authoring: layout, workflow, preview and media. OpenEDU's ready-made content types let institutions quickly create and manage universally required pages. This reduces initial setup costs by making department pages, news articles, course catalogs or faculty profiles readily available and easy to create and manage. OpenEDU is particularly beneficial for resource-strained colleges and universities.

CASE STUDY #2

Trinity University Ensures brand consistency

Trinity University is renowned for its beautiful campus in Texas and array of liberal arts professors and courses. Unfortunately, the beauty of its campus wasn't mirrored in the look and experience of its digital sites. Professors, faculty members, and departments had all created sites but without a multi-site governance model. As a result the central IT/digital team was hard pressed to control, update, maintain, and support these sites and while meeting the staff's evolving needs. Many of these sites contained crucial data -- research, course archives and content, and more -- but had been created on a various CMSes like Wix and Wordpress.

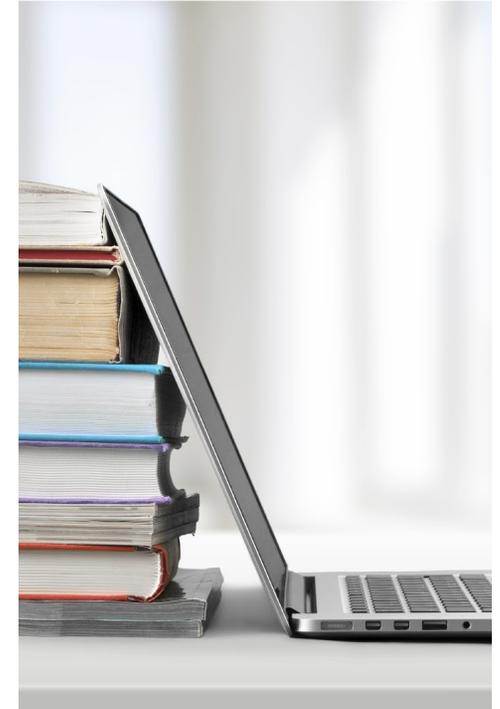
With so many CMSes and sites to keep track of, Trinity unfortunately lost track of entire websites full of content. Additionally, because there were too many external and different CMSes and technologies to manage, the university's IT/digital team also lost its ability to support these sites.

"We couldn't offer support or ways to improve content, architecture, or CMS because we didn't own the technology."

As a result, there were no easy way to update these faculty sites, no easy way to support these sites, and no easy way to make sites consistent across the Trinity domain.

Just as importantly, the sites were an eyesore, a mess from a visual, user experience, and site architecture perspective. Most had been made with little to no thought given to scalability and consistency and most hadn't been updated in a long time. The result: A cacophony of off-brand, visual layouts many of which couldn't even be identified as being a Trinity site.

Using Acquia Cloud Site Factory and ImageX, the school was able to bring in governance and create order from the chaos.

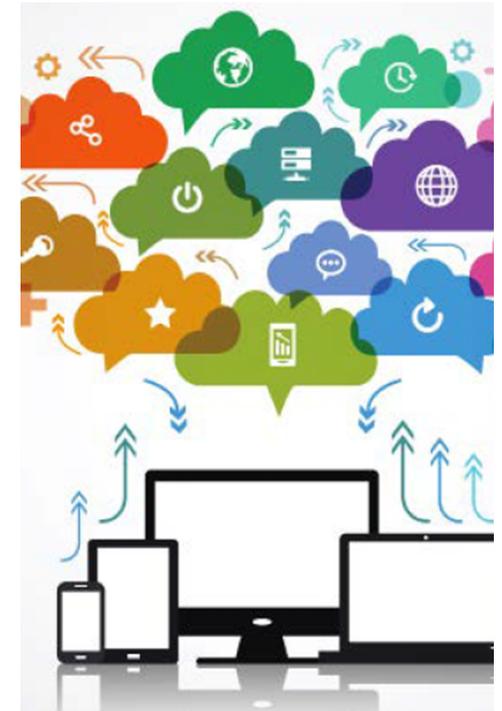


Following a technology audit, Trinity worked with ImageX to build a platform and process that was customizable, extendable, and easy-to-train. Fortunately Trinity already had Drupal implemented. Because Drupal is open source, they could utilize the same teams in the same or similar ways their other projects had - this meant a lot of time savings for Trinity's team.

The first thing Trinity did was create site templates and common site layouts. So, they used their main Trinity site (.edu) as the graphic design and implementation inspiration. This meant they could share themes, documents, modules, other implementing process and project management processes developed while migrating their entire site to Drupal. This allowed them to reuse much of their code, and to share the hosting. With all of the content being in the cloud (i.e. using Drupal) and using the Acquia platform and using a new subscription for their faculty sites, allowed them to retain remote admin, maintain on-call support ticket system- all of which led to little to no downtime, and higher traffic loads.

With ImageX's help, the IT/digital team at Trinity identified crucial business needs for the platform, including maintaining brand standards, allowing users to navigate sites "without leaving the ecosystem of Trinity", and providing an appealing and friendly user experience to visitors. In order to meet these requirements and to move quickly on the task at hand, Trinity along with ImageX's installed OpenEDU as their distribution, and tweaked it to meet their specific needs.

This allowed Trinity to create three robust, different themes. Each has a look and feel distinct from the others while having enough common elements -- fonts, color palettes, header, footer, and page layout -- to make it clear they were related to each other. In essence, it gave Trinity's faculty a structure within which they were free to personalize their sites and make their own. Using a unified internal technology and platform let the IT/digital team provide technical support to staff that had previously not received it. A win-win for everyone.



Conclusion

EDUs no longer live in a world where simply having a site, any site, is sufficient. They need the very best sites, and many of them. However, they must create and manage the increasing number of these sites using their already limited resources. Acquia Cloud Site Factory and a digital factory approach makes it possible to do this.

LET'S TALK

