Wrecking Ball Media Group

Leading interactive agency chooses Adobe® ColdFusion® 9 and Adobe ColdFusion Builder™ to advance next generation of Adobe TV to discerning creative audiences

Wrecking Ball Media Group

www.wreckingballmedia.com

Industry

Application & Platform Development

Digital Brand Strategy & Creative Services

Challenges

• Revamp premier site for expert instruction and inspiration about Adobe products

• Bring new site to market quickly

• Improve site performance and usability

• Streamline content management

Solution

• Rich Internet application

Wrecking Ball Media Group worked with Adobe to create and launch the next generation of Adobe TV, using Adobe ColdFusion 9, ColdFusion Builder, and the Adobe Flash Platform.

Results

• Developed initial global platform in ten weeks

• Reduced development time and costs by as much as 30%

• Increased visitors to Adobe TV and video views by more than 50% in only two months

• Accelerated site performance and delivered advanced search and other functionality

• Offered innovations such as embedded player for delivering content to social media sites and blogs

Pleasing a tough crowd

When Adobe asked Wrecking Ball Media Group to create the next generation of Adobe TV, Adobe's free online video resource for expert instruction and inspiration about Adobe products, Wrecking Ball had to fill a tall order. Adobe presented a long list of requirements including speedy site performance, better search features, faster content uploading, integrated social media functionality, and more. At the same time, Wrecking Ball was feeling a healthy dose of peer pressure.

"We were developing the new version of Adobe TV for our peers—other top creative professionals and developers—and they can be a tough and discerning crowd," recalls Joseph Princz, founder and managing partner of Wrecking Ball Media Group. "We also faced a lengthy requirements list that grew throughout the project."

Enterprise-class tools for database-driven development

To create the customized site from the ground up, Wrecking Ball relied on Adobe ColdFusion 9 and ColdFusion Builder, as well as Adobe Flash® CS4 Professional, Adobe Flash Player, and Adobe Flash Media Server software. According to Princz and Wrecking Ball Development Director James Brown, the interactive agency chose Adobe ColdFusion 9 and ColdFusion Builder for many reasons including smooth integration with the Adobe Flash Platform, rapid development capabilities, and ease of connecting to database content without having to write extensive code.

Today, about 900,000 unique visitors worldwide visit the newly revamped Adobe TV site monthly, logging almost two million video views during that time. Visitors have quick access to more than 5,000 videos, streamed live using Adobe Flash Media Server software, and viewable within the ubiquitous Adobe Flash Player.

"In just two months, we saw the number of unique visitors and video views on Adobe TV jump by more than 50%," says Bob Donlon, Adobe TV group manager. "We attribute this to the greatly improved user experience on the site."
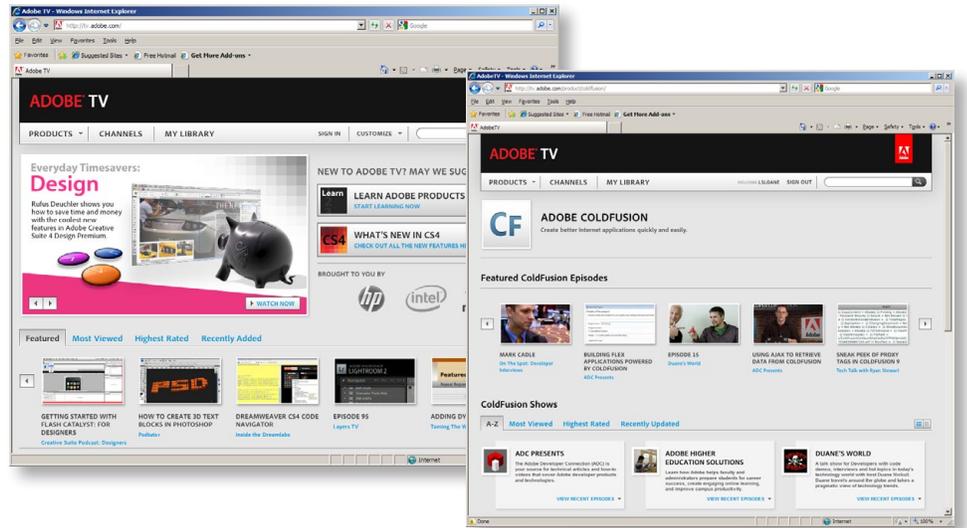
Adds Brown, "With ColdFusion 9 and the Adobe Flash platform, there is no easier way to build rich Internet applications from client to server. We use a variety of tools and languages on a daily basis, but for data-driven, highly scalable sites that need to be developed quickly, ColdFusion 9 and ColdFusion Builder are the best tools for the job. We would have used it even if the site wasn't being created for Adobe."

Streamlined content management

From start to finish, new capabilities in Adobe ColdFusion 9 were key to completing the project with the required feature set—all in a tight ten-week development timeframe and with a small team.

For instance, using the RSS Feed Importer, the team was able to take existing RSS feeds and imagery from the previous version of the site and ingest them automatically into the new site's back-end Oracle database. They used the cfspreadsheet tag to import metadata and links to

"With all the new features of ColdFusion 9 and ColdFusion Builder, we estimate that we were able to develop Adobe TV with 30% fewer resources and time than what would have been required using other tools."

James Brown,
Development director,
Wrecking Ball Media Group

videos from a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet to directly populate the site's Oracle-based content management system (CMS) with existing video content. They also created new functionality to enable up to 20 concurrent users to upload and schedule fresh content automatically.

"New features in ColdFusion 9 saved us countless hours that would otherwise have been spent on manual content entry," says Princz. "With ColdFusion 9, were able to upload a large number of videos, imagery, and other content to the new site quickly and automatically."

Faster, more powerful development

New Object-relational mapping (ORM) in ColdFusion 9 provided a robust infrastructure for Rapid Application Development (RAD) that further streamlined and accelerated development. "ColdFusion ORM is a real game-changer," says Brown. "We can write object-oriented code and reuse it many times. Because of ORM, we did not have to touch the database or write a single SQL statement. ColdFusion 9 figures out all the necessary database joins and tables and does all the heavy lifting for you. ColdFusion 9 is one of the best upgrades to ColdFusion that Adobe has ever brought forward."

ColdFusion 9 also exposes many existing enterprise services that can be accessed using remoting, without writing a single line of ColdFusion Markup Language. This capability enabled the team to eliminate the XML layer while still getting data efficiently into and out of the Adobe Flash Platform. With remoting calls to the Adobe Flash Platform, end users get their information live from the database, not via XML.

Because the Adobe Flash Player is already installed on 98% of Internet-connected desktops worldwide, the team could rest assured that viewers could watch Adobe TV's high-quality video on the web and reach the largest possible Internet audience. Wrecking Ball also created an embeddable version of the Adobe Flash Player that users can place on their own blog, website, or social media site; the content is streamed live from Adobe TV versus coming from static RSS feeds.
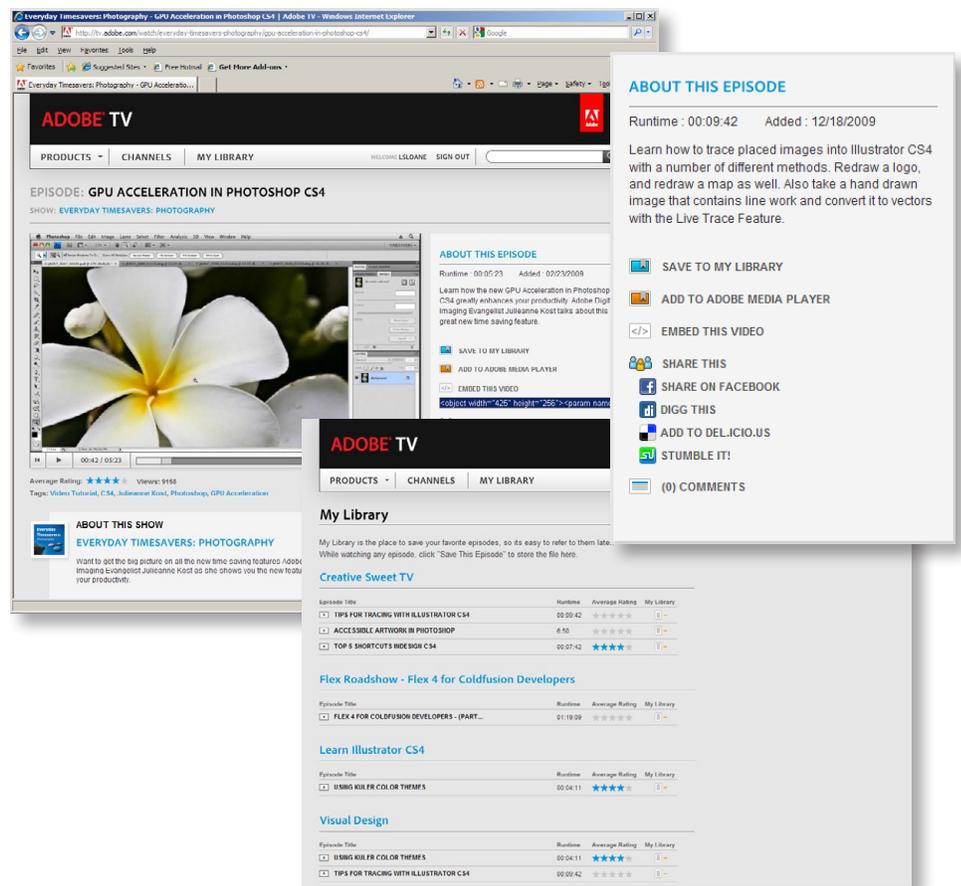
"With ColdFusion 9, we don't have to specify the data source for each database call, so it's faster and easier to develop a major data-driven website like Adobe TV. We can make its content portable across any number of sites, such as blogs or social media venues like Facebook," says Brown.

Better functionality in less time

Other factors contributing to faster development of the site include the use of ColdFusion Server Manager, a desktop application based on Adobe AIR®, to centrally manage multiple ColdFusion servers from a single location. This accelerated deployment because any changes could be copied to all of the servers automatically.

"ColdFusion 9 lets us spend less time worrying about syntax and making the code work and more time thinking about new functionality and improving the user experience," says Brown. "With all the new features of ColdFusion 9 and ColdFusion Builder, we estimate that we were able to develop Adobe TV with 30% fewer resources and time than what would have been required using other tools."

From start to finish, new capabilities in Adobe ColdFusion 9, such as the RSS Feed Importer and ColdFusion Server Manager, were key to completing the project in a tight ten-week development timeframe. With all the new features of ColdFusion 9 and ColdFusion Builder, Wrecking Ball Media was able to develop Adobe TV with 30% fewer resources and time than what would have been required using other tools.

"The experience of being able to produce a project like this for Adobe, using the latest ColdFusion tools and the Adobe Flash Platform, was truly second to none."

Joseph Princz,
Founder and managing partner,
Wrecking Ball Media Group

Systems At A Glance
- Adobe ColdFusion 9
- Adobe ColdFusion Builder
- Adobe Flash CS4 Professional
- Adobe Flash Media Server
- Adobe Flash Player

For More Information
www.adobe.com/products/coldfusion/

More responsive site performance

Caching in ColdFusion 9, according to Brown, is excellent, resulting in better performance for Adobe TV users. The team was able to control caching in very granular ways, such as caching page fragments or specific objects. Explains Princz, "The performance of the Adobe TV site is fantastic. In fact, it supports 900,000 unique monthly visitors globally with a small server farm, due largely to the rich caching supported by ColdFusion 9."

Throughout the development cycle, Brown and his team used the new ColdFusion Builder IDE for coding the application, managing servers, and deploying the project. "ColdFusion Builder is fast and intuitive—it works very well," says Brown. "With features like line-by-line debugging, code introspection, and code highlighting, we saved hours that would otherwise be spent saving files, checking them back in, and refreshing them. ColdFusion Builder is a powerful IDE that brings ColdFusion 9 even more solidly to the forefront of enterprise-level programming languages."

Stellar success

For both Wrecking Ball and Adobe, the Adobe TV project was a tremendous success. The number of unique visitors to the English language site—the first among several international sites to launch—increased by more than 50% during the first two months. In addition, the feedback on Twitter, blogs, and other outlets has been overwhelmingly positive.

"Adobe TV was really a dream project for us," says Princz. "We were able to use Adobe tools, leverage our knowledge from projects completed over the past dozen years, and create some of our best work to benefit our peers. The experience of being able to produce a project like this for Adobe, using the latest ColdFusion tools and the Adobe Flash Platform, was truly second to none."