

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
Business License Information Service (BLIS)

Case Study

The Client...

Dept. of Commerce & BLIS

About the Department of Commerce

The Department of Commerce is a NSW government agency whose role is to make doing business in NSW simple, accessible and fair for employees, consumers and industry while providing best value for government. The Office of Fair Trading (OFT), a division within Commerce, safeguards consumer rights and advises business and traders on fair and ethical practice. Besides direct services for individuals, the legislative framework they administer sets the rules for fairness in the countless daily transactions between consumers and traders. Unfair practices are investigated and prevented and a licensing system helps ensure unqualified or inappropriate people do not work in a range of NSW industries.

About the Business License Information Service (BLIS)

One of the initiatives within the OFT is to inform consumers which Commonwealth and NSW licenses are applicable to their business. As part of this responsibility the OFT has initiated the online NSW Business Licence Information System (BLIS). BLIS allows users to find all licence related information that might be relevant to them when starting or running a business. The system comprises a total of several thousand licenses, application forms, guidelines etc. organised in a classification schema with several hundred categories – and offers shopping cart functionality where users can add or remove licences from their 'basket' before progressing to the checkout counter. It offers several licence search options and presents the information to the user in a PDF package which can be downloaded over the internet.

The Challenge...

Overcome An Ineffective Site

A directional meeting in 2008 after the initial rollout of the system identified the following issues:

- The site template did not meet the requirements of the NSW Government Style Directive.
- The licence information acquisition process was not very intuitive for the general user.
- The overall performance of the site was problematic, with searches taking a long time to complete. This was a major issue with most page transactions including some embedded search functionality.

The Solution...

Upgrade Of The BLIS Website

Squiz was successful in working with the OFT in 2008 and 2009 to upgrade and enhance the BLIS system which solved the issues mentioned above.

The upgrade of the system was performed without incurring any downtime on the BLIS production website. All upgrades, regression testing and integration testing have been performed in a 'sandpit' environment before the deployment of code and data to the new production servers.

In particular the following tasks have been undertaken by Squiz in a joint effort with OFT during the upgrade process:

- Upgrade of the Squiz 'Supported Open Source' CMS, MySource Matrix from R3.7 to R3.20
- Upgrade of several system components: Oracle 9i -> Oracle 10g, Redhat 3 -> Redhat 5 and PHP4 -> PHP5
- Re-design of the graphical web interface to meet the NSW Government Style Directive, and application of the new design to BLIS
- The design of the BLIS home page has been modified to simplify access to common licences and information which is required when starting a business

- Server configuration, project management, implementation specialist services, system testing and go-live of the upgraded site
- Regression testing of the system in a 'sandpit' environment, including integration with the Adobe Suite
- A project manager co-ordinated deliverables from each of Squiz's business units and followed the project through to the successful completion of the upgrade process.

The following tasks have significantly improved the overall performance of the BLIS website:

- Long-running search queries executed on the database server were rewritten by Squiz, resulting in major performance improvements.
- The application architecture has been simplified to a 'twin server' solution, only requiring one database server and application server to run the BLIS website.
- The Oracle database server upgrade from Release 9i to Release 10g added further performance improvements.

The Result...

A Useable Website

Citizens in NSW have now a more useable website for the search of business licences across NSW and the Commonwealth.

The pivotal point of success for this newly revised website is the fresh and useable interface for NSW citizens to quickly find any relevant licence information to their current or future business.

Home Page

The redesigned home page allows the user to choose between several different search options:

- 'Start-Up Packages' will return licence information relevant for someone who plans to start a business,
- Section 'Common Licences' lists licence information that is frequently requested by users,
- Search by 'Business Activity' allows the user to look for information relevant to an occupation, and
- The 'General Search' allows for search of licences across all classifications and licence types.



Home Page

The redesigned home page allows the user to choose between several different search options <http://blis.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au>



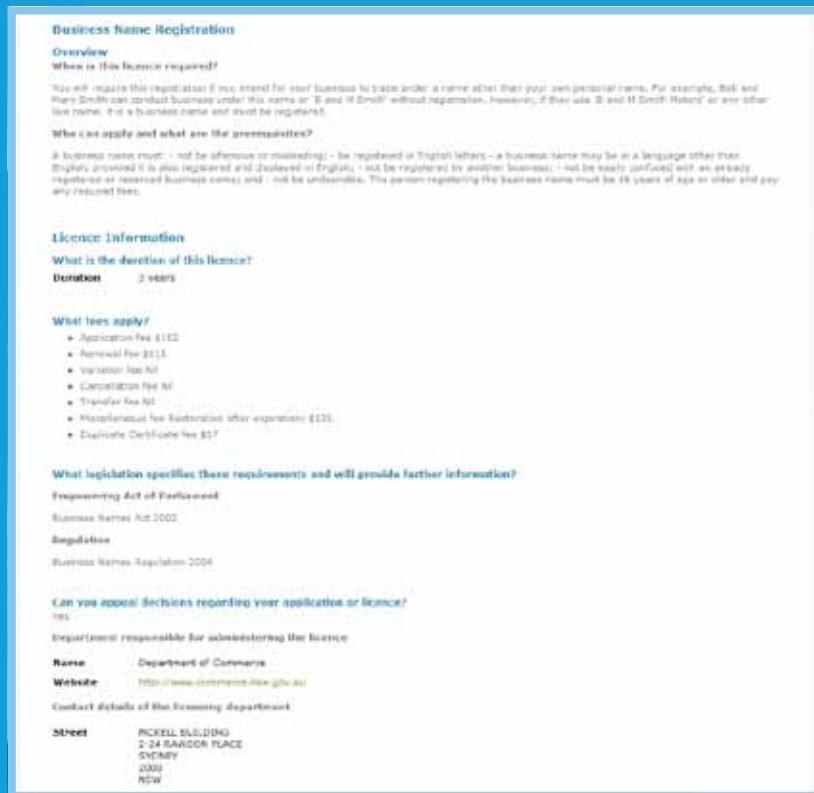
Search Options

The following screen shows how a user can add individual documents to the shopping 'basket' by ticking a checkbox.



Check-Out

The following screen shows how the user can choose a delivery method (email, fax, post or download) by filling in contact details before requesting the delivery of the final combined PDF document.



Licence Details

The following screen is an example of a page containing licence details; in this case general information about what is required when registering a business name.

CMS projects are multi faceted and long in duration. As a result, the biggest challenge is to maintain commitment to the change being implemented. A large part of maintaining that commitment is early acceptance of the CMS chosen and the ability to quickly demonstrate the benefits delivered. This is especially true when the solution is an open source product. In our case, our ability to configure the CMS using the skill sets of our in-house professionals and the support of SQUIZ's implementation services quickly demonstrated our ability to meet the project's business objectives

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