How to build a more **user-focused website**

With the right platform, agencies can easily comply with mandates for modernizing internal and external websites

Kale Fluharty
Director of Federal, Liferay

THE PANDEMIC HAS amplified the need to improve agencies' ability to interact digitally with citizens and other constituents. It has also magnified the importance of the 21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act's (IDEA) goals of creating secure, searchable websites with a consistent look and feel. Underlying all of this is the demand for analytics that can drive evidence-based improvements in the customer experience.

Site improvement efforts begin with understanding what people are trying to accomplish when they interact with a government resource online. Gathering information about those interactions can help agencies determine if users are accomplishing their objectives. If users are not successful, the data can help agencies identify what they need to change for creating a better digital experience. And, of course, it's vitally important that all online interactions happen in a way that is secure and trustworthy.

A personalized, self-service experience

After the 21st Century IDEA was signed into law, the General Services Administration's Technology Transformation Services published the U.S. Web Design System. This offers guidance and technology that agencies can use to create websites that are IDEA-compliant.

Liferay applied the principles of the U.S. Web Design System to our platform to further streamline agencies' ability to create websites that achieve the goals of the act. Liferay is particularly focused on facilitating action-oriented, self-service interactions. Our analytics component allows agencies to create audience segments so they can personalize the experience of website visitors based on why they use the site and what's important to them.

We also offer a more robust cloud-based analytics offering and the ability to test different versions of content to find the best way to reach the target audience. With Liferay, agencies can meet IDEA's searchability requirement with a best-in-class capability right out of the box.

Shifting the focus away from back-end systems

At its most fundamental, the Liferay platform is open-source and has all the security and stability advantages of open-source software. With a robust community reviewing Liferay's source code, vulnerabilities are quickly identified and fixed. For our enterprise product, we harden that open-source offering through rigorous security, vulnerability and cyber-hack testing.

Furthermore, agencies can deploy the Liferay platform wherever they choose, including in a government data center when data must stay local or in their preferred cloud service provider environment.

Liferay helps agencies achieve the 21st Century IDEA's goals for both external- and internal-facing websites. For example, when the team behind Grants.gov decided

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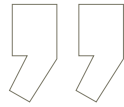
to modernize its website, it chose Liferay as a secure, affordable platform that would allow it to create customized solutions and add third-party plug-ins. A redesigned search capability makes it easier for people to find relevant funding opportunities, and microsites and communities of interest, and enables collaboration among colleagues throughout the grant application process.

The MyNavy Portal is a great example of an internal, employee-facing Liferay use case. The Navy moved several systems and databases to a single solution on the Liferay platform. The resulting portal helps sailors manage their military careers by consolidating human resources and education and training information via a personalized interface. As a result, the Navy was well positioned to handle the shift to remote work when government offices closed their doors during the pandemic.

By ensuring that digital interactions and websites are not encumbered by legacy systems or back-end processes, agencies can keep citizen and employee interactions relatively simple and straightforward. As a result, they can shift the focus to the user experience and what users want to accomplish. ∎

Kale Fluharty is the director of federal at Liferay.