

Case Study: The United States Naval Academy Alumni Association and Foundation

“Nonprofit Garden pushed us as an organization to rethink the ways we were doing things — from what was on our website, to how to get ready for going mobile, to our internal processes. We wanted to stay relevant, and that’s exactly what we needed. Because they were Blackbaud experts without actually being Blackbaud, we felt they could be more objective — and we had the right fit.”

- Ken Kurz, U.S. Naval Academy Alumni Association and Foundation

Challenge

The U.S. Naval Academy alumni website needed a facelift. As Blackbaud® users for more than 10 years, USNA staff members knew the ins and outs of the database system, but their website was showing its age. Outdated content, internally focused navigation and a web 1.0 aesthetic all held the association back from accomplishing its communications goals with the site. The site also did not present well on mobile devices.

A redesign was in order. But first, the IT and communications departments re-assessed the online community software landscape to determine whether another software package might better fit their needs. They also looked at in-house vs. consulting implementation scenarios. Ultimately, they chose to stick with NetCommunity™ and decided that outsourcing the redesign to Nonprofit Garden offered the most objectivity and value for their investment.

Solution

Lisa Lane led a team that worked in partnership with USNA to develop a site that accomplished the organization’s alumni engagement and networking objectives within a clean, fresh and modern look with all the gravitas of the United States Naval Academy.

- **Strategic and structural planning:** Through a series of meetings, online surveys and onsite interviews, the Nonprofit Garden team explored audience and content-contributor needs. We developed a more user-friendly and audience-oriented navigation structure as well as page template wireframes that incorporated the features and functionality that would drive engagement in the alumni community.
- **Design and development:** Working in partnership with design firm Phinney Bischoff, the team revamped the site to add both “out of the box” and custom features to the NetCommunity™ implementation, ensuring that each worked within mobile viewports as well. We also worked with USNA to ensure that each new feature remained easily maintainable by in-house staff after site launch. Specific customizations included:
 - Dynamic content controlled by user login
 - Java-driven slideshows and videos
 - Multimedia integrations throughout the site
- **Migration and training:** As part of the redesign process, Nonprofit Garden provided significant data migration assistance of all content that would be ported over into the new website. We then came onsite for a full refresher course NetCommunity™ training to prepare the staff for success.

Results

The redesign of the U.S. Naval Academy Alumni Association's website presented an opportunity for the organization to re-consider many of its core practices and approaches. The new mobile-friendly site presents alumni with a modern and easy-to-use way to find information about their classmates and peers, and to engage with the alumni community at large.

Visit the website at: www.usna.com