



**Crafting and managing how content is presented can make a website a company’s most powerful and effective sales tool.** With forward-thinking organizations aggressively moving from the 1990’s “content is king” mantra to a more personalized community or customer approach, companies are demanding more from their content management systems (CMS). CMS help companies easily change and display all types of content from traditional text to videos to podcasts, and are playing an even greater role as business and marketing teams personalize, socialize and even analyze their customers’ website experience.

**IONA Interactive has helped a number of clients use CMS to transition to user-centric websites.** IONA’s CMS solutions range from tweaking “boxed” applications to creating dynamic, highly-specialized offerings. Though each project comes with specific requirements and challenges, the end result for each client employing a specialized CMS is the ability to leverage content to drive action (read: sales) and connections (more loyal clients).

### CMS Project Profiles



Baseball America started as a magazine in 1981 and has grown into a full-service media company complete with an avid (and large) web fan-base, a biweekly magazine, four annual books and a host of special publications. Baseball America presents the best, most up-to-date, as-it-happens information through the best writing in baseball. They sought IONA’s help in developing a CMS that would dynamically give baseball fans the news they wanted... fast.

[baseballamerica.com/today](http://baseballamerica.com/today)



Bell Leadership is a recognized leader in executive education and development. Since 1972, the Bell Leadership Institute has helped more than 500,000 leaders from 4,700 organizations in more than 30 countries through training programs built on Dr. Gerald D. Bell’s Four Laws of Leadership. Bell enlisted IONA’s help to create a back-end CMS that enabled efficiencies directly linked to their core training programs.

[bellleadership.com](http://bellleadership.com)



The University of Cincinnati (UC) HealthNews and Cancer Center started its relationship with IONA during a web project to create a media resource that presented dynamic, up-to-date information about the hospital, its healthcare professionals, research and news using reports, releases, images, videos and more. Building upon a solution IONA created for Duke University Medical Center, IONA leveraged its expertise to develop a specialized site for UC’s HealthNews that can now handle the media’s quick-attention demands.

[healthnews.uc.edu](http://healthnews.uc.edu)

(Note: IONA’s work for Duke University Medical center has been recognized by the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) as one of the world’s best online newsrooms and by the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) for Excellence in Electronic Communications/Website. The site’s CMS was fundamental to its success. DukeMedNews was cited in various publications as a “model web newsroom” and as an example of a “robust online newsroom.”)



### Challenges

Four factors offer common themes for why these companies looked to IONA and a CMS as part of the solution for improving their individual websites. Each company wanted to push fresh content - easily and quickly, enhance user experiences, improve how content is maintained and cut costs.

UC's HealthNews wanted a media-focused website bursting with information. Jill Hafner, UC's Public Information Officer for Web Communications, said her director had a great experience with IONA at Duke and wanted a similar resource for UC. "We wanted a site that offered better control and greater harmony between presenting UC's health news and engaging the media. IONA has been instrumental in helping us achieve our goals, including reducing our reliance on the school's internal IT department."



baseballamerica.com/today

wanted to post. Ensuring this flexibility was a challenge."

IONA faced a similar "content flexibility" issue with Baseball America whose site thrives on content - and lots of it. When writers couldn't find information easily (they would Google search to find their own articles), the company's IT team knew it was time to upgrade how it managed - and presented - content. Greg Levine, Baseball America's Technology Manager, said the company had outgrown its initial CMS and called on IONA to help identify a solution that would enable its editorial and production staff to improve how it categorized content, built web pages, streamlined maintenance and reduced costs.

"We've learned a lot about our needs through our first CMS - like how to keep website users on a specific navigation path and on the site longer. We knew we had to have a CMS that offered better searching and reporting," said Levine. Baseball America also wanted a solution that would make it easy to re-publish articles with the necessary back-end code used by popular search engines. "IONA understood these technology requirements and how they were influencing our business," said Levine. "IONA helped us evaluate how

2

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Greg Levine,  
Baseball America's Technology Manager

Once UC's HealthNews was live, Hafner and her public relations and communications team planned to dynamically present information that would give the media reason to return. "We couldn't do this without a CMS that offered control over the entire site from text to graphics to video to any format we



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Truly understanding business requirements is fundamental to a CMS success. Knowledge and trust has been the cornerstone during the eight-year partnership between IONA and Bell Leadership. Knowing Bell’s business

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*Kristen Leonard,  
Bell Leadership Institute Project Coordinator*

evolution, IONA was able to suggest a customized, back-end CMS that would help Bell put its first training assessments online. Kristen Leonard, Bell’s Project Coordinator, explained that competitors were moving toward online offerings and Bell wanted to make changes to maintain market position. “IONA understood our need for online tools that pushed and pulled down certain content while ensuring that this information remained confidential. IONA helped us see how a CMS could do both.”

### Answers

Content management systems, like the companies and websites using them, are not created equal. IONA invoked its proven, systematic design and development process to identify requirements and understand needs prior to researching, recommending or developing a CMS. The answers derived from this upfront analysis offered each client starting points and options.

Bell Leadership’s Leonard said this thorough review is exactly why IONA is a valuable technology partner. “IONA presented a CMS with options tailored to immediately mitigate the security and confidentiality issues inherent in the content we’re trying to manage,” said Leonard. “They also presented solutions in layman’s terms. This helped our team see the potential of some very interesting ways we could use our surveys and data.”

Bell Leadership’s CMS focuses on presenting information behind a password-protected area, not the company’s outward facing website. Initially, two leadership assessments went online and linked to Bell’s CMS. Now, more and more products are using Bell’s CMS as programs come online, including its Achiever Forum.

“The Achiever Forum added complexity because it focused on providing access and availability to different items on a limited or timed basis,” said Leonard. “Where IONA really made an impact was on how we presented and collected this information. Their recommendations, coupled with our CMS, brought our cost per participant way down. Our time and involvement on standardized information gathering is easily half the cost of what it was before implementing the CMS.”





Cost and specific functionality drove the approach for UC's HealthNews website and adding a CMS. "We looked at out-of-the-box CMS solutions and they were expensive and cumbersome. IONA has given us a tool that is easy to use and that has changed the way UC views content," said Hafner. "Now, because the CMS is simple, we can task specialized content creators with developing articles, releases, stories... you name it. Our entire team is engaged with using the site and looking for new ways to share information," said Hafner.

The UC site pulls down syndicated content and can push these feeds to other university department sites using its CMS administration tool. This has changed the way the university's entire medical school views HealthNews. Hafner says the "biggest win" is the feedback our site now receives from its core audience - the media. "We have reporters say 'this is where I come for information and sources' and more and more patients are visiting"



healthnews.uc.edu

"We needed a solution that took less time to publish, and we were no longer afraid to consider an open source option," said Levine. "We wanted something that would push content while keeping users on a navigation path longer in addition to improved search, article tracking and reporting.

Levine calls IONA Baseball America's "number one technical support" and credits IONA's willingness to find the right solutions - CMS and others - as one reason the company's site has seen a "definite increase in traffic." IONA also assists Baseball America with web servers, database development, programming and technology consulting as well as design services.

"We're marketing our site better now and, with our new tools, the editorial staff is much more involved in updating, creating and publishing content," said Levine. "Most of our content comes straight out of (Microsoft) Word and into the CMS making it where everyone on staff can use it. We have a couple of folks helping with some specialized HTML content, but - more than before - our editorial staff is driving content, not waiting for IT to figure out how to get it on the site."

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*Jill Hafner, UC's Public Information Officer for Web Communications*

A central database with multiple categories is great until the CMS becomes too small and slow. That's was Baseball America's situation. Simultaneous with a site re-design, IONA helped the company research and identify a new CMS that would grow with the site's new content plans.



Baseball America actually employs two CMS - one for primary content and another for their blog environment and when reporters are on the road. With IONA's help, they have added back-end code that better addresses search engine spidering. Levine said this has helped improve search rank and increase the accuracy of the site's traffic statistics.

Both Baseball America's IT and editorial teams are constantly seeking new ways to use their CMS, including ideas for some interesting, dynamic content. "We normally run these ideas by Mike (Mike Warwick - one of IONA's directors) or start a 'wish list' for our next project," said Levine. "Mike knows our environment so well and has been working with our servers for so long. It's just good to get his opinion before going off full bore."

### Results

IONA's clients have successfully positioned their CMS as a primary tool for transitioning their websites into a resource that offers a more personalized experience and fosters business success. A common theme across these different projects was the approach and careful consideration IONA offered in finding an appropriate, scalable CMS.

"I can't count the number of times that I've known something was possible to do, but I didn't connect the dots," said Levine. "IONA has helped validate our ideas and has either known - or figured out - how to do what we needed. They are just so positive in their approach."

IONA's CMS work with Baseball America continues as the site adds more content during the heart of baseball season - spring training, League championships and the World Series.

"There have been a couple of times our traffic was so high our servers couldn't handle it," Levine stated. "Mike knew instantly what was happening and how to fix it. Together, we've improved our architecture and infrastructure to be able to address this temporary upswing. IONA has had a lot of positive impact on our site, development and business."

Hafner with UC's HeathNews agrees that IONA's team is vested and committed to ensuring projects are successful and meet pre-set requirements - like flexibility. "We have multiple people using our CMS. With such a dynamic environment, we needed a partner who understood our business, took time to make our ideas better - all while keeping it simple," said Hafner. "IONA is that partner. They aren't order takers. They are real team players who always feed us back a better solution that what we thought."

Bell Leadership now sees its CMS as a tool for growth especially since they've realized significant cost savings by using the web. Leonard says that "IONA makes it easy. They don't hand us a 10-page manual and say 'here you go.' They make technical things simple so that someone who has never used a CMS can figure it out without a class or hand-holding. They've given us internal flexibility."