



## Child Advocacy Organization Gains New Funding, Lowers Costs with Updated Web Site

### Overview

**Country or Region:** United States

**Industry:** Public and nonprofit sector

### Customer Profile

Headquartered in Colorado Springs, Colorado, Compassion International is a nonprofit children's advocacy organization that supports more than 611,000 children through sponsorships and contributions.

### Business Situation

Compassion International wanted to relaunch its Web site to improve site manageability, increase sponsorships, and reduce IT costs.

### Solution

Compassion employed Microsoft® Windows Server System™ software—including BizTalk® Server, Exchange Server, Content Management Server, SQL Server™, and Systems Management Server—to redevelop the site.

### Benefits

- Increased contributions substantially
- Lowered cost of operation
- Improved manageability
- Created new sponsorship/partnership opportunities
- Established flexibility for growth

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John Vargas, IT Project Manager, Compassion International

Compassion International, one of the largest Christian child development organizations in the United States, overhauled its Web site to increase sponsorships, expand advocacy outreach, and control IT costs. The old site was expensive to manage and did not do a good job of connecting Compassion to sponsors and prospective sponsors. Compassion looked at several ways to rebuild and add functionality to the site, specifically searching for a solution that enabled site flexibility and multiple-site authors. After careful research, Compassion implemented a solution using Microsoft® Content Management Server 2001. The solution also uses Microsoft Windows® 2000 Advanced Server, BizTalk® Server 2002, and Exchange 2000 Server. As a result, online contributions to Compassion increased significantly, IT costs decreased, and the organization developed better methods of reaching new sponsors.



## Situation

Compassion International, a large Christian child development organization, works with more than 65 denominations and indigenous church partners in developing nations around the world. Compassion's goal is to break the cycle of poverty for children in the world. Since 1952, Compassion has helped more than 1 million children by providing educational opportunities, healthcare, supplemental nutrition, and personal attention.

Compassion connects sponsors in the United States with impoverished children in more than 20 developing countries. To help do that, Compassion depends on the Internet. In 1996, Compassion launched a Web site to update sponsors on their sponsored children, motivate Web site visitors to sponsor a child, and give all participants a central resource for information about Compassion's activities.

In 2000, thanks to sponsorship marketing efforts, Compassion's sponsorship base began to double each year. As a result, the organization outgrew the old site. As the number of child sponsorships grew, the organization needed the site to have more sections so that it could reach new types of sponsors. But the old site—which included static Web pages built on Macromedia Dreamweaver and an outdated navigation engine—was cumbersome to update.

The outdated technology of the site meant that only employees with the appropriate technological knowledge could update it. As a result, Compassion's site was maintained by Web developers: two who edited the site and another who made technical improvements with complicated Active Server Pages (ASP) code. The three-person staff could not keep up with the amount of work required to update the site, which frustrated Compassion's marketing and sponsorship development teams. "The technology was a

train wreck," says John Vargas, IT Project Manager for Compassion. "We desperately needed to add content for sponsors and potential sponsors, but updating the site was very labor intensive. Even making a simple editorial change had an extensive review process, so it could take weeks for a change to be made."

Compassion's team could not add staff to support the site. "As a nonprofit organization, Compassion operates on a lean budget," says Vargas. "We simply could not afford to expand our communications and IT department." The team also considered reorganizing employees' workloads to meet the intensifying requirements of the site, but this idea was also unfeasible: Few staff members were knowledgeable enough to work with the complicated Web architecture, and the company's burgeoning growth kept even those few busy.

So in 2003, Compassion's technology and business teams identified several goals for overhauling the Web site. The technology team required a site that would be easy to update and maintain. To conserve resources, the organization planned to push more control of the site to employees in each department. Therefore, the architecture had to be easy to learn. The technology team also wanted a reliable site with minimal downtime.

Compassion's marketing, communications, and sponsor and donor relations teams wanted to increase sponsorships by improving communication with potential sponsors. For potential sponsors, the site needed to articulate the organization's mission and success, so that visitors to the site could feel confident about their donations. Compassion also needed the site to help current donors form a relationship with a child thousands of miles away. As a final consideration, the sponsor and donor relations team wanted to serve current sponsors and donors better.

“The new site opened many new doors for us. It is amazing that sponsors can have such a personal relationship with a child who lives on the other side of the world.”

Dustin Hardage, Web and Interactive Communications Manager, Compassion International

## Solution

To address its Web site challenges, Compassion partnered with Dell Professional Services, a Microsoft® Certified Partner, to launch a new site based on Microsoft Windows Server System™ integrated server software. The new site provides a high level of functionality, low cost of ownership, and solid foundation for Compassion’s future IT deployments.

The site, which runs on three servers, is built on the Microsoft Windows® 2000 Advanced Server operating system and uses Microsoft Content Management Server 2001. The solution also includes BizTalk® Server 2002, Exchange 2000 Server, Internet Security and Acceleration (ISA) Server 2004, and SQL Server™ 2000. Compassion has a Microsoft Services Premier Support contract for on-going site support.

Compassion carefully researched several options before choosing a solution from Microsoft. The organization is always looking for ways to conserve its resources and wanted to maximize the use of the Microsoft technology it already had in place, including the Microsoft Visual Studio® .NET development system. The organization looked at NCompass as a possible solution but found the Microsoft software to be more affordable.

## Benefits

Compassion launched the new site in mid-2003 and saw immediate results from the Microsoft Windows Server System integrated server infrastructure software. Benefits included increased sponsorship requests and online contributions, lower IT costs, and improved communication with new and potential sponsors. Compassion says that it also gained a tool that will help it expand its child advocacy efforts.

Compassion attributes much of the success of the new site to the interoperability of

Microsoft software with internal and external IT systems. Compassion has found Microsoft technologies to be cost-effective, scalable, and manageable.

## Increased Child Sponsorships

The new system has enabled Compassion to increase the effectiveness of its online fundraising. During the first 11 months of the fiscal year, sponsorship requests and online contributions increased substantially. “The results of the site implementation happened after only a few weeks,” says Diane Sawdey, Internet and Intranet Communications Specialist for Compassion International. Online contributions continue to grow consistently.

Sawdey says that the Windows Server System software has delivered better site navigation, more up-to-date information, an easy method of updating content, and improved functionality, all of which have contributed to the increase in sponsorships. A controlled search process enables visitors to enter the geographical area and age group of the child they are interested in sponsoring. The system then provides options for individual children who might benefit from the support. Sponsors can also write letters to their children online. “The new site opened many new doors for us,” says Dustin Hardage, Web and Interactive Communications Manager at Compassion. “It is amazing that sponsors can have such a personal relationship with a child who lives on the other side of the world.”

Hardage says that a major benefit of the new site is that it is easy for sponsors to find important information. The Compassion team also likes that potential sponsors can research the site one day, think about what they want to do, and come back later to finish the sign-up process. “When it comes to giving money, many people like to consider it and come back later,” Hardage says. “Because the new site allows them to do this, our conversion rates have increased greatly.”

“We feel that we have a solution platform that will grow with us and allow us to focus on our very important work.”

John Vargas, IT Project Manager, Compassion International

### **Improved Manageability**

The collaborative Web-authoring approach employed by the new site distributes the workload and enables employees from different departments to make changes to their own sections of the site quickly and easily. Today, Web authors can post news and photographs and other updates in a day, rather than wait weeks for those updates to be completed by the communications or IT teams.

Vargas says that site errors have decreased because employees own their content and can give it the attention it needs. The site remains fresh and attracts as many visitors as possible.

Additionally, although changes are made daily by site contributors across the country, Vargas and his team have control over the site at all times and can monitor how the site is being altered. “Windows Server System has dramatically improved our Web site,” Vargas says. “Business users can make changes to the Web pages, and IT doesn’t have to divert precious resources to Web maintenance.”

### **Lowered Cost of Operation**

The site has helped Compassion not only increase sponsorships, but also cut costs considerably. Today, the Web team comprises numerous staff members spread throughout the organization instead of two overworked IT professionals struggling to maintain the site. “We thought we would have to hire at least four to six full-time employees to manage the site,” says Vargas. “Because Content Management Server is so comprehensive and easy to use, we did not have to hire anyone.”

Vargas says that the training of the site administrators was straightforward. “Content Management Server is extremely user friendly,” he says. “Even employees with very little IT experience picked it up quickly.” Today there are 26 Web authors and one

editor maintaining the site. The Web team is spread out among marketing, sponsor and donor, and communications groups, which publish new content daily.

Finally, the new Web site technology makes it easy for visitors to make donations and eliminates much of the paperwork associated with traditional ways of giving. The new technology has also helped lower administrative costs.

### **Created New Partnership Opportunities**

The new site has also helped Compassion’s marketing efforts that are external to the site itself. For example, the organization works with radio stations to host radio marathons publicizing Compassion’s work and opportunities for sponsorships. “The radio marathon efforts have been tremendously successful in getting children sponsored and spreading the word about children in poverty,” says Tom Emmons, Internet Marketing Manager. “The custom-cobranding sponsorship pages have helped combine the visual element with an audio medium. Often radio personalities will visit Compassion’s projects in a specific country. The custom-cobranding feature has allowed us to easily create Web pages including child photos and biographies from the country that the radio personalities have visited. This provides a much more compelling presentation and has helped to increase the success of our radio marathons. In the past, the radio personalities relied on only an audio description of their experience and the children they visited.”

### **Established Flexibility for Growth**

With the new Web architecture in place, Compassion feels confident that it can meet the future technology and business needs of its Web site. Compassion already plans to expand its site to reflect its marketing efforts with concert events and online fundraising drives. Looking ahead, Compassion’s technology team is considering updating the architecture to the Microsoft Windows

## For More Information

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Server™ 2003, Datacenter Edition, operating system; BizTalk Server 2004; and Content Management Server 2002. The team also plans to add Microsoft Operations Manager, and Microsoft Office SharePoint® Portal Server—also part of Windows Server System—to its solution.

Compassion is pleased that the site is flexible enough to support new sections and features that advance the organization's short-term and long-term goals. "We are very happy to put the worries of site management behind us," Vargas says. "We feel that we have a solution platform that will grow with us and allow us to focus on our very important work."

## Microsoft Windows Server System

Microsoft Windows Server System integrated server infrastructure software is designed to support end-to-end solutions built on Windows Server 2003. It creates an infrastructure based on integrated innovation, Microsoft's holistic approach to building products and solutions that are intrinsically designed to work together and interact seamlessly with other data and applications across your IT environment. This allows you to reduce the costs of ongoing operations, deliver a more secure and reliable IT infrastructure, and drive valuable new capabilities for the future growth of your business.

For more information about Windows Server System, go to: [www.microsoft.com/windowsserversystem](http://www.microsoft.com/windowsserversystem)

## Software and Services

- Microsoft Windows Server System
  - Microsoft Windows 2000 Advanced Server
  - Microsoft BizTalk Server 2002
  - Microsoft Content Management Server 2001
  - Microsoft Exchange 2000 Server
  - Microsoft Internet Security and Acceleration Server 2004
  - Microsoft SQL Server 2000

## ■ Services

- Microsoft Services Premier Support

## Partners

- Dell Professional Services

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