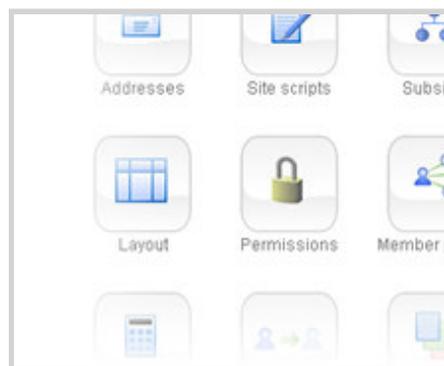# Notanant Update - May 2007

Notanant is a continuously improving web-application which means that over time new features and ideas are added to the system. The principle we apply is that changes to the system should not impact on the public visitors experience of existing sites. Consequently new items tend to appear in the administrator areas as extra options and so are easily missed if your site is only updated intermittently, or just visited as a member of the public would see your site.

To help keep everyone abreast of the latest developments, we will be sending out Notanant Updates on a reasonably regular basis so you can start to look out for and request the new features that have been added. The following is a summary of updates that have taken place since February:

User interface improvements

The user interface from an administration point of view has been improved with icons to help navigation and a complete review of the administration links to provide better consistency through a site

The site settings page now contains clear links to all the key areas of the site for site management. Images and audio and video have been allocated to their own site resources section and the links to the main parts of each site have been made more consistent so it is easier to navigate the site as site-administrator. New features such as the site mapper (see below) have been added to make site management easier.

On many pages, extra or advanced options have been placed into a 'full options' section making editing easier and less cluttered.

Improved accessibility options

You may not realize that access to websites has become a strong legal and moral issue in the last two years. To cater for the Disability Discrimination Act and equivalent legislation in the UK, Europe and the US, all the site templates have been checked and amended to allow for dynamic text sizes that the user can rescale and HTML that makes it easier for users with speech-readers and search engine bots to navigate the site. In addition, we have added new specific accessibility options that allow your visitors to tailor how they access your site to their needs.

Notanant sites and templates are tested cross-browser on Microsoft's Internet Explorer 6 and 7, Firefox, Opera and Safari. Notanant also delivers you site pages to Wap enabled devices such as mobile phones (eg www.notanant.com/wap.php).

Improved security

We have overhauled all site security to further reduce the risk from hackers attacking the site via SQL insertion or cross-site scripting attacks and in the process we have improved consistency in the way different areas of the site work. This restricts the ability of rogue-users to add-in

nefarious code to the system.

In addition, to reduce 'form-spam' - that is hackers sending spam via automated programs that fill in contact forms - we have made it a requirement that cookies need to be turned on to use such forms. For the general public this is the default browser setting. Form-spam is becoming a big problem across all websites and if it increases on Notanant we will implement captcha type technologies.

Improved site administration and site viewer data

From the site-settings section of your site, there is now a pop-up sitemap administrator tool which allows you to see your site structure and by clicking on pages navigate directly to the pages you want to edit, or add pages in places you want to add pages. In addition the site mapper page provides an at a glance summary of site statistics and variations in sub-site layouts and permissions to help maintain the consistency of the site.

Improved help system

The help section of Notanant has been overhauled and is now more extensive and reflects the changes listed in this update. In addition, in-line help has been added where pages are being updated or edited to provide page specific help when you need it most. As with all help systems, feedback to us is the best way to improve the help system. Visit www.notanant.com/help for more information.

One-click sites and our Try button

New users can now test Notanant directly without logging-in or needing to register via our one-click website button. Trial sites are valid for 14 days after which they need to be paid for, but are a simple way to introduce other people to Notanant. Trial sites are editable and can be reskinned and include components such as a gallery, calendar and so on. You can find the Try button directly on the Notanant home page.

Service and pricing packages are fully defined

We now have a fully defined price list with costs for site hosting and development together with a range of service packages for existing business clients which buy a certain number of hours support a month, direct telephone access and advanced site options including URL redirection, URL rewriting and site-statistics (see below).

Sales help needed

We would love Notanant to be introduced to more people. **We pay commission of 12.5% for successful new introductions** (total value of first year invoices for a new customer paid after the money has been received). If you can help let us know.

Improved HTML editor

We have updated the HTML editor (a third party piece of software) to the latest version, removing some of the copy and paste bugs that some people were experiencing. We are aware that the HTML editor does not work with Safari and so you only see a plain text box. At the moment there are no cross-browser solutions that include Safari. The open source community is working on this as you read this.

Improved Audio Video handling

QuickTime movies are now handled as well as .avi and .wmv and .mpg. You can also create a radio list of audio and video files using the %%avlist component. Currently there is a size limit on Notanant to reduce bandwidth drain. If you have large files for download we'd recommend using YouTube and then adding the necessary code into your Notanant page as their streaming servers are beefier than ours. Jacob can show you this in action if needs be.

Improved personal page with personalised news and navigators

When you log in, if you go to your profile, you will see a wider range of personal navigation and linking tools, including your site membership if you are a member of several sites, news and alerts from sites you are member of and any system messages or messages from the site. If you are interested in community aspects, then you can add friends, and add your own splashboard with information about yourself and pictures.
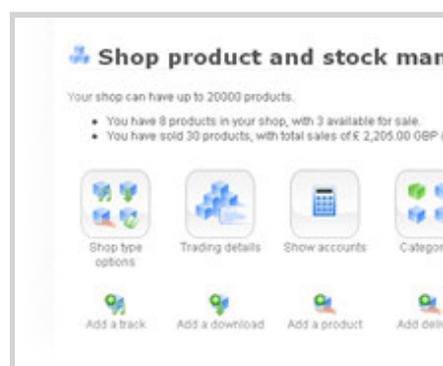
For businesses such as air sports where there is a community element to the business, these personal pages can be a means of allowing customers to join in with your website and evangelise about the services you offer.

Improved site statistics

In addition to the site mapper which gives you a simple summary of views by site, topic and article page, for clients using appropriate service packages there are now full site statistics (including downloadable logfiles). These include page tracking (showing page before) and also page counts, referring pages into the site and full user journeys. This section will continue to be updated.

Improved shop options

New shop options for different product types and different levels of e-commerce have been added. These range from a product catalogue without ordering or payment, to a product catalogue with ordering, off-line payments to full on-line shop with electronic payment and in the case of downloads and electronic products, download and product delivery management.

Smoother basket and ordering systems

Users can now place orders logged in or not and are taken through log-in or registration as part of the ordering process, plus delivery addresses are collected and held with the user to allow easier ordering for physical products.

Payment integration with your merchant accounts

Under credit card payment terms we are not permitted to take payments as Notanant on behalf of a third party client. However, we can now integrate third party client merchant accounts and IDs into the system so we can collect and pass-on orders on your behalf, whilst you collect the money directly.

URL rewriting options added and updated

For clients on the appropriate service package we can add friendly URLs such as www.abcd.com/news which would direct to a news topic directly. The URLs are independent of the actual Notanant site structure allowing you to fake items such as www.abcd.com/news/article1 or have multiple names for the same page. In addition, there are options for including custom meta tags and page titles that override the automatic ones generated by Notanant.

Friends system and improved privacy control

For clients running open membership systems, friends systems and open friends invitations are now handled allowing people to introduce their own friends to the system. In addition, site managers can impose privacy restrictions on views of member details in addition to members having their own privacy controls.

HTML email and attachments

For membership-based sites, if you are emailing to members of your site, emails are now been sent in HTML format and you can send attachments with your email. The attachments are not stored on the server however.

Improved components

Components are what we call the %% commands that enable menus and widgets to be placed on the page, maintaining the dynamic nature of the site without having to worry about coping with link spaghetti as the site grows. The range and scope of the %% commands is growing and is detailed in the help system but includes things like %%topics which displays a list of topics for the site you are in for instance, or %%image= etc.

One note is that %%...menu commands tend to be for the left and right navigation columns, while other components are better off in the main area where there is space for them.

We have now added more controls directly in to many of the commands to provide more flexibility over the way they display. Things to check out include:

%%image=…	can now take an alternative text (displays when you hover over the image) using %%image[alternative text]= %%rimage is an image floating right %%limage is an image floating left
%%articles[id]	Displays the articles for the topic with reference id. This displays it in the correct topic format and combined with the ability to hide a topic from a menu enables subsites to look as if they just contain articles.
%%fsites[id]-width	f-commands or featured commands enables bookmarking and editorial linking across the site using copy and paste commands (it's easier to see than explain). These cross-site links can be used to create dynamic front page elements for specifically controlled content.
%%updatemenu %%newsmenu	Update and new items from your site in a menu format.
%%calendar	All calendars now display long events more clearly

Improved topic control and commenting

Topics are basic building blocks that allow sites to contain and display articles as different types of object - for instance as gallery, forum, or different types of information. These options have been clarified, a variety of options to include article and topic logos in lists are now available.

In response to requests from users who just want sites with articles, topics themselves can be hidden from menus (full options for the topic) and the %%articles[id] used on the site front page instead. The same device can be used to make the topic tree deeper if needs be.

Also from the full options, you can turn on commenting which allows users to comment on articles for specific topics and so create a dialog with users. Comments are open to the public, but easily censored should inappropriate content be posted.

Improved history and backup management

Sites now have a page history for the main site page and topics that can be examined and used to revert a page to a previous state. We have also introduced an addition in the layout manager so you can back-up the old layout prior to experimenting with new ideas. If this is useful we will extend it to article pages and other areas of the site. We can also extend this to include saving a page to be committed live later. This is an area for future development.

Smaller and more specialist changes

There are a host of smaller changes throughout the site. As we receive feedback from end-users and customers we try to implement as much as we can.

- Addresses now link to Google maps for ease of finding locations which works internationally (you are advised to have an address with your site - see under site settings).
- For music sites the Flash music player will now pop-up in a new window and is integrated with dreamlist/bookmarked music to create personalized radio stations.
- Image resizing has been standardized across the site enabling any size of image to be uploaded, then resized on the server, rather than re-uploading (it is still faster to make a big picture smaller locally before uploading though).
- Contact forms can collect bespoke information in addition to the standard message field.
- Products now have more options of setting categories and keywords.
- Member specific sites can use %%member with a variety of options to show who is on-line, or recently viewed the site.
- The range and scope of standardized template options has been improved.
- Certain menu components can now have drop-down or pop-out sub-menus (we still need to confirm compatibility with this)

Future developments

- More customer service staff (being recruited now).
- More live Notanant communities to bring members together in a meaningful way (still being designed).
- More options for site internationalization.
- Email articles direct to websites (for knowledge management applications)
- Redundant server technology to increase site reliability and boost site performance as new people join.
- Seminars and training courses available in our offices in Bristol, or in Barcelona.

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