

Web Applications

innovation, ease of use, reliability

What's a web app? Wikipedia calls them 'an application (software) that is accessed via Web over a network such as the Internet or an intranet.'

Still not excited? Fair enough, but what about this - online business tools designed to reduce time and costs for critical tasks, reduce human error, improve access to information, improve and extend customer service and increase the value of your business. And it's not hype, these are the outcomes we have delivered to clients through our custom designed web applications.

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- What makes a great web application Determining value

Where a website can be difficult to assess in terms of value a web app often offers more in the way of measurable benefits as it exists to perform a function, often to streamline an existing set of tasks in your business. Something that took 100 hours a month to do now takes 20 - in this instance the value of the web app is obviously the labour cost saving.

We're happy to work with you up front to establish these sorts of performance measures to ensure the project delivers the required return, much like any other investment your business undertakes. Tech stuff

Drumbeat believe in the benefits of open source technology and develop their sites and web applications using PHP / MySQL. We support these with client side functionality delivered through AJAX, Javascript and DHTML, all wrapped in compliant CSS and HTML layouts.

Some examples of web applications

What a web app can be is an open topic but in this section we provide some common examples that we have produced for clients. Please use the links below to read more:

- Content management
- Intranet
- Product data management
- Labour management
- File and document management
- Email marketing
- E-Commerce

A Content Management System (CMS) allows you to manage the content of your website or intranet through a set of easy to use functions. The centrepiece of these functions is typically a Word-style text editor that allows you to change and format text, add links, images and anything else you want to to your website or intranet.

To ensure our clients have an intuitive and powerful CMS to manage and market their site Drumbeat developed the Ninja CMS. But Ninja is more than just a CMS, apart from giving you the tools to manage, add and edit everything on your site, it also allows you to easily market your site via a powerful set of SEO (Search Engine Optimisation) and email-based marketing features. [Click here to read more about the Ninja CMS](#) .Custom Built CMS

When your requirements become a little more specific a custom built CMS can be the right solution. The extra budget required is offset by the value of a system that does everything you need, the way you need it.

[Click here to check out our CMS Case Studies »](#)

2. Intranet

An intranet is a website developed to service the needs of your staff and other partners and can be run via the web or over your company network. In terms of the technology behind them they don't really vary from a typical website. Where they do vary is in the functions they offer.

If run over a company network where bandwidth is not a limiting factor, we can make large files and complex functions available at high speed.

[Click here to check out our Intranet Case Studies » 3. Product data management](#)

You have 100 - 100,000 line items in stock, each involving its own technical specifications, images, supporting documents, cross reference data and component parts.

These items may fit onto vehicles or some other equipment and the correct item for the Acme 'D' series is different from the Acme 'E' series.

These items exist in a potentially complex category tree involving multiple levels and relationships between categories.

And your sales staff and clients need this information at their fingertips on screen and in PDF wherever they are and whatever time of the day or night.

Sounds challenging. How do you solve this?

Our product data management systems consolidate the data you have in printed catalogues, CDs, Excel sheets and in the heads of sales staff and creates 'one version of the truth' accessible by all through an intuitive system. Behind the scenes you control the data, the categories, who has access and much more through a secure administration system. Make a correction at 10:00:30AM and everyone is seeing the correct data at 10:00:31AM.

This can also be used to populate your website's content and streamline the production of marketing material, printed catalogues and interactive CDs - meaning less production time and costs and consistent data to everyone, everywhere.

[Click here to check out our Product Data Management Case Studies » 4. Labour management \(rostering, timesheets and wages\)](#)

Managing staff is often likened to herding cats - an exercise that tests the patience of any business manager.

Our labour management systems simplify and speed up the difficult and time consuming labour management tasks of:

- Creating a roster
- Communicating the roster to staff
- Confirming who is available to work

- Providing work instructions
- Managing last minute changes
- Managing and auditing timesheet records
- Processing wages promptly

And detailed reporting lets you find out where you are at any point in the process via the click of a button.

[Click here to check out our Labour Management Case Studies » 5. File and document management](#)

A common issue in many businesses is duplicate copies of files and missing files. Often the biggest challenge is even knowing what file you are looking for.

A good file management system provides the ability upload all types of files, categorise and search files and control access by user groups and individual users. Like any web app these can be run over the web or over a company network and are often integrated into an Intranet system.

[Click here to check out our File Management Case Studies » 6. Email marketing](#)

Email is an important and highly efficient means of communicating with customers, media and many others. It is also a minefield in terms of technical and human protocol. The sheer volume of emails received also means that breaking through the clutter is an ongoing challenge.

It's not enough for an e-newsletter system to prepare and despatch emails to a defined audience. As a minimum it also needs to:

- Produce emails that are viewable across a range of email applications eg Outlook, Hotmail, gmail etc.

- Meet a range of quality standards covering email content and the subscription and unsubscription processes.
- Ensure personal data is protected.
- Minimise the risk of getting labelled as spam.

- Structure the email and despatch process to minimise the risk of your domain getting blacklisted as a spammer.
- Minimise file size.
- Protect from virus delivery.

- Provide for customisation of the email content.

- Provide for personalisation of the email.
- provide for easy management of subscriber data.

- Provide detailed reporting on results.

A well designed e-newsletter web app requires a combination of design, copy writing, coding, database and email server expertise to achieve these.

[Click here to check out our E-Newsletter Management Case Studies » 7. E-commerce](#)

A good e-commerce system does a lot more than just complete a transaction online. Just like a well designed store layout and experienced salesperson it guides a shopper through the sale in the way that reflects their decision process. The right information at the right time all set in a trusted and intuitive environment. Stretching the potential of web apps

Can a web app run an entire business? Sure can, and we've done it. We took an existing, successful business in the event management industry and through a detailed analysis of their processes and the broader goals of the business we developed a web app to run their entire operations.

The results are operational and strategic:

- The time taken for key tasks has been reduced by up to 90%.
- Error rates reduced to almost nil.
- Detailed operations reporting is at their fingertips.
- Communications costs reduced by up to 90%.
- A cost and service advantage over competitors.
- A bankable asset on their books.

What makes a great web app?

Technology is obviously critical, but it just provides the means. What really makes a great web app is what happens before any code is written - the specifications ie, what the system will do and how it will do it.

Our experience tells us that the first step of defining specifications is the most important and one in which we have a critical role. We can't just bring technology to the table, we need to understand what our clients talk about when the topics of operations, strategy and marketplace are discussed and we need to lead those discussions. We then need to contribute to the process with an opinion on what is possible, practical and impractical from a technology and business context.

Our team are not just technology experts. Our lead project manager has run successful businesses outside of our industry from start-up stage, consulted to business and government, has masters level business qualifications and extensive technical skills. It is this knowledge and experience that, when combined with proven open source technology, creates a really great web app that delivers real results for our clients.

What we regard as essential in any web app we produce includes:

- Intuitive ease of use.
- A detailed understanding of business logic.
- A modular design allowing for easy future development and extension.
- Clear business and operations-based outcomes.
- Built on proven open source technology.
- Stability.
- Performance.