



Calcasieu Parish Police Jury Case Study



Louisiana Parish Brings Big Gains to Small Screens

Mobile-Enhanced Website Redesign Reflects User Experience

Today's citizens are constantly on the go, and the governing Police Jury for Louisiana's Calcasieu Parish recognized that without a mobile-ready website, it risked being out of step with its constituents. After all, its mission is "to consistently and efficiently provide the highest quality of services to the people of Calcasieu Parish in a manner that is responsive to the will and needs of its citizens."

The Challenge: Turn an Outdated Website into a Community Engagement Portal

In the research phase of the website redesign, Calcasieu Parish learned that a large portion of its website traffic came from mobile users. Yet, the 8-year-old platform powering the site did not display pages well on a mobile device.

"The biggest takeaway from our user experience research was that nearly 45 percent of our website visitors were accessing our site through their mobile phones," said Tom Hoefler, director of communications & media for Calcasieu Parish. "We were thrilled that Vision's software allowed us to create a customized mobile view that displays like the apps on the home screen of a smartphone. We were confident that this was the best way to approach our upgrade."

Vision's website development process is firmly grounded in community research, which allowed the Parish to see its new website through the eyes of citizens, rather than government employees.

"Most local government officials want their website to prominently position what they feel is most important," said Hoefler. "But the research didn't back up all of our assumptions. Accessing minutes, agendas and the local government channel were not among the top 3 reasons people were coming to our website."

The Solution: Trust the Research and Think Like a Citizen

The research process guided the Calcasieu Parish team to redesign their homepage to prominently position the topics people search for most often. The top 3 items on citizens' search lists were: Geographic Information Services (GIS), Permits & Forms, and Jobs.

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Calcasieu Parish has a very strong GIS department, and businesses and real estate professionals heavily use its online mapping features and information, Hoefer explained. While its popularity was not surprising, other findings, like the volume of traffic for permits, jobs, parks & recreation, animal services and even mosquito control were more of a revelation.

"Most typical homeowners doing a repair had no clue where to find the Permits page," said Hoefer. "We knew where to go because we work here. But the average person working on their house and searching for a permit on the old site had no idea they first needed to click on Departments, then Division of Planning and Development, and then Permits. It was not easy to find. It took three clicks and two of them were not intuitive. On our new homepage we assigned a large icon button as well as a menu link for Permits, so now it's really easy to find."

In addition to Permits, other large "one-click" buttons are positioned across the middle of the redesigned homepage to take users to Jobs, GIS Maps, Parks & Recreation, Animal Services and Stream C-Gov Live. Elsewhere on the homepage, News, Meetings and Events can be viewed at a glance.

Another big driver behind the Parish's interest in Vision's mobile-friendly design was to make it easy for people to report issues that needed attention.

"We wanted people to be able to report issues with just one click on their phones," said Hoefer. "With the mobile platform, it's now very easy for people to click on the "Report a Problem" button, which takes them to a Mobile Resident Request Form. They just fill it out on their mobile device, click submit and we distribute their request to the right people."

Calcasieu Parish's mobile custom icon buttons are easily modified and currently include GPS Maps, Jobs, Permits, Pet Adoption, Mosquito Control and a Be Prepared button for emergency alerts and information.

The Result: Big Gains for Small Screens, High Praise for New Site

Calcasieu Parish Police Jury launched its new website in September 2016. From day one, the mobile-friendly site received "high praise" both internally and externally.

"Our elected officials were thrilled with the new website, and we've had some great feedback from the community as well," said Hoefer.

Responsibility for keeping the revamped site up-to-date is shared among various departments, along with a web content specialist who supervises the overall site. The Parish will use Google Analytics to monitor the most popular pages, and will continue to adjust and reorganize the homepage as needed to make it easy for people to find what they're looking for.

"The new back-end tools to update the site are so much easier to work with," said Hoefer. "They're more intuitive, better organized and faster to use than the previous tools."

Another plus Hoefer highlighted is the new site's accessibility features. "With our old site, making information easily accessible to people with various disabilities was difficult," he said. "The new site is almost 100 percent ADA compliant."

"We enjoyed the process of working with Vision," Hoefer added. "They're good people; very skilled. They know a lot more about government websites than we do, because they deal with people that are running them all the time. We would not have been as successful in developing our new site without Vision's expertise."

