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An Insight into Drupal Development by Zoltan Mesko

Article published on June 4th 2012 | Web Hosting

Drupal is designed from the ground up so site builders can delegate content creation, and even site administration, to users. All you have to do is define who gets to do what on your site (through user permissions), and then you can start collaborating.

The forms that Drupal provides to accomplish common administrative tasks do not themselves make tasks difficult to accomplish. This does not mean that Drupal is without usability issues. Several recommendations have been made throughout this document indicating areas where usability could be improved. In most cases usability was sufficient to accomplish a task, but could be improved by simply providing more robust tools (e.g. drag and drop menu ordering). In one case, usability was poor because a feature present in the system (creating views of

categories), had no administrative interface.

The issues related to attaching files to published content represented a special case where the current interface provided to accomplish the task was mediocre, but in general was found to be unusable because it lacked desired functionality. Technically speaking, this is not a usability issue with the upload module. The module was never designed to be a digital asset manager. Still, it is felt that a lack of digital asset management is a usability concern for stakeholders. Drupal has a history of following recommendations that improve usability. Historically, Drupal has made several usability improvements with each new release. Furthermore, there is growing evidence of a shift within the Drupal development community to focus more closely on usability. This may be a result of Dries Buytaert (the original creator of Drupal) urging developers to change their focus, or the efforts of groups like Civicspace that lead by example and persevere to have their usability enhancements included in the Drupal code base.

Regardless of the catalyst, there is a sense that usability will continue to be a priority among

Drupal developers and it will continue to provide sufficiently usable tools to allow administrators to effectively maintain their installed websites. It has been suggested several times within the Drupal community that the administration interface be the same across all installations of Drupal. The primary argument is that an attractive, standardized interface would improve user experience. The truth is that the default Drupal theme is rather bland, but this in itself does not affect functionality. Besides standardizing the look of the interface there has been a call to replace the menu driven administration interface with a â€˜control panelâ€™ approach that groups tasks by goal or objective. There is sound research that shows grouping tasks by task types or goals improves usability.

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Article Keywords:

Drupal Development Services, Drupal

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