

Ibexa hits hole-in-one for French golf



The Fédération Française de Golf offers services and information to its membership of 420,000 French amateur golfers, more than half the total number of the country’s players. Membership fees make up the bulk of ffgolf’s revenues so retaining and recruiting members is the number one priority so ffgolf is focusing on its digital content and social media. The migration to a modern Digital Experience Platform was the cornerstone of this customer-centric strategy.

The Fédération Française de Golf (the French Golfing Federation) migrated its website to eZ Platform to modernize the customer experience. Its content-first approach and committed engagement with social media has boosted advertising revenues and led to an increase in business partners eager to affiliate themselves with the brand. Membership is up, and when a further move to v2.5 of Ibexa’s DXP is complete, personalization will amplify these excellent results.

The French Golfing Federation represents over half the country’s amateur players but its ambition is to sign up all of them. The strategy? To deliver relevant and increasingly personalized content to the website and social media. The tool? Ibexa Platform is at once robust and versatile enough to allow contributors to feed a huge range of content types to an intuitive backend.

The site generates a significant audience – we’re talking tens of millions page views throughout the year – and we had to present a quality user experience.

Michael Akrich, Head of Media, ffgolf



Challenges

- Implement platform that can deliver content, interactivity and member services while absorbing traffic spikes
- Ramp up activity on social media platforms
- Control and deliver multichannel content from a single source
- Improve user experience and increase traffic
- Develop more versatile search functionalities on the site
- Ability to generate content and new sites quickly.



Summary

- Migration from eZ Publish to eZ Platform 1.7 with Legacy Bridge
- Re-direct URLs
- Synchronization of content via APIs
- Implement SSO for federation members
- Embed search engine for events and nearest golf courses
- Ready to migrate to Ibexa DXP in Spring 2021.



Business Benefits and ROI

- Intuitive backend for 30 inhouse and external contributors
- Effortlessly absorbs traffic spikes during major tournaments
- Increase in visitors and diversity of relevant content is boosting advertising revenue
- Membership is up
- Stronger brand presence is attracting new commercial partnerships.



Why Ibexa?

One important way to deliver the future is to ensure continuity. A migration from eZ Publish to Ibexa DXP meant that contributors could familiarize themselves very easily with the new backend, while the Legacy Bridge provided the stability required by the Fédération Française de Golf, given the amount of content.

The Symfony framework was an important technical factor as was the robustness of the site which experiences considerable surges in traffic during important tournaments (not least the Ryder Cup in 2018). With Ibexa, the solidity of the system goes hand in hand with the virtuosity of its content delivery – and an emphasis on relevant content is the bedrock of the ffGolf's growth strategy.

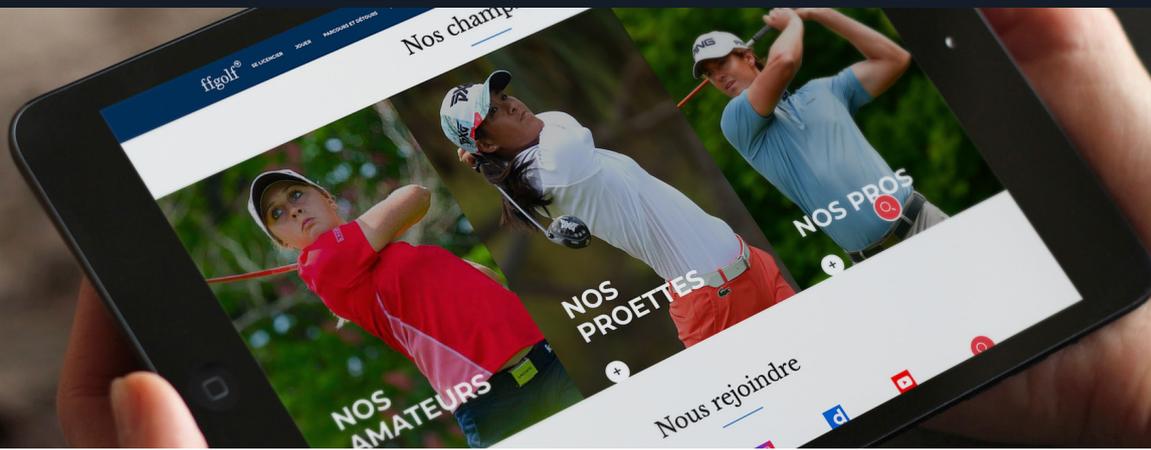
Membership rises by 20,000 with new digital strategy

In France, golf is a €1.5 billion industry — more than the annual box office receipts of French cinema. Of the nation's 800,000 avid golfers, almost 420,000 are affiliated to the Fédération Française de Golf (ffGolf). Although ffGolf has seen dramatic growth since the 1970s, it recently set itself the ultimate challenge: to persuade every French golfer to become a member or, in the words of Michael Akrich, ffGolf's head of media, "to mobilize ourselves every day to ensure that our membership is the gateway to services for all golfers."

The revenue model of organizations such as ffGolf depends to a large extent (80% in the case of the French federation) on membership fees. In the mature golfing nations, notably the US, Japan and the United Kingdom, license revenue is stagnating or declining steadily but thanks to the pro-active strategic stance of ffGolf — and the role Ibexa is playing in its implementation – this trend has been bucked: in 2019, membership rose by 20,000.

The ambition to enroll every French golfer as a member means that ffGolf needs a relevant message for every player. As with any other business in the age of digitalization, the federation has had to become more agile in the way it innovates its product and customer experience. "We have to be able to be in regular touch with golfers – all golfers — to tell them what we are doing with their membership, to inform them about our offers and services we provide," Akrich explains. "That is why we decided to focus on digital and social content and platforms."

The site attracts 250,000 unique visitors a month, with peaks of 400,000 during important tournaments.



A modern DXP enables a quality user experience

The ffgolf website is a principal pillar of the federation’s membership strategy. The site attracts 250,000 unique visitors a month, with peaks of 400,000 during important tournaments. ffgolf.org is a B2C portal that informs members and potential members about services and discounts offered by ffgolf partners and associated clubs. The site runs a calendar of golfing competitions that links to entry forms for the tournaments; the detailed results are extremely popular. “They generate a significant audience,” says Akrich. “We’re talking tens of millions of page views throughout the year.” A personalized “members only” space gives access to the offers and services accessible to members, and drills down to individual player statistics such as tournament performance and handicap.

This is how Akrich sums up why ffgolf needed a modern Digital Experience Platform (DXP): “It’s both an information and content site,” he says. “It’s also a services site. And this is where the biggest challenge lies. We have to successfully marry the editorial content with all these services to present a quality user experience.”

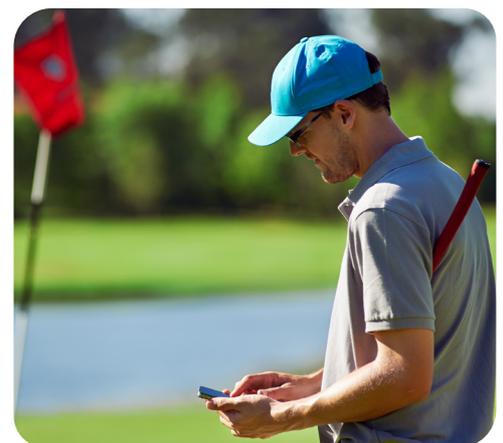
ffgolf opted for Ibexa’s DXP, at the time known as eZ Platform. Continuity was an important factor: the Federation had been using eZ Publish since 2011 and was happy with the system as well as the support offered. The collaboration with Ibexa Silver Partner, Codein, was exemplary. There were technical considerations also. The modular architecture of eZ Platform enabled ffgolf to implement what it needed, and not over-complicate the project. “Also, it is a real Symfony application. We now have all Symfony tools at our disposal,” says Akrich.

Initially, in 2017, the site was migrated to eZ Platform 1.7 with Legacy Bridge. “That backwards compatibility provided by Legacy Bridge was very important for us. We were really banking on stability, given the amount of content we had.”

The migration was a success and a project to re-launch the site on Ibexa DXP 3 is well underway and expected to be completed in the Spring of 2021.

The technical challenges of the v1.7 implementation centered around content retrieval and synchronization via APIs, and the re-direction of URLs. Functionalities for filterable geographical searches (for example: what golf courses are within 25km of my location?) and a searchable events calendar (what tournaments for my level of play are planned for October 2020?) were embedded.

A personalized “members only” space gives access to the offers and services accessible to ffgolf’s members as well as individual player statistics.





Great content transforms ffgolf's brand presence and revenues

Content is central to ffgolf's growth strategy and Ibexa DXP enables the Federation to focus 100% on its editorial range by seamlessly and intuitively managing 130 different types of content.

"The main strength of Ibexa DXP is the backend," says Akrich. "The content is already organized in a tree structure that really reflects what is happening on the front. There are also tools to customize pages with blocks — the Page Builder. The management of roles and rights allows us to segregate the activities of our many contributors — audiovisual production companies, journalists, our own content creators, photographers, community managers, we have around 30 different users."

"Above all," Akrich emphasizes, "there is no need for development of the backend. The backend meets 100% of contributors' needs. It meant we were really able to concentrate our efforts on the content."

This is already bearing fruit in different ways. Membership numbers are accelerating, as we saw. Advertising revenue is up significantly; ffgolf consistently and convincingly outperforms the golf verticals of Le Figaro and L'Équipe, two of France's most widely-read newspapers. The emphasis on great and up-to-date content is transforming the brand presence of ffgolf and attracting more and different business partners. This creates a virtual cycle where the Federation is able to extend its range of member offers and discounts which will boost membership and in turn persuade more businesses to come on board.

The introduction of eZ Platform 1.7 enabled ffgolf to implement an optimized multichannel strategy where integrated social media and relevant, multi-media content work together to engage members and potential members. The focus of ffgolf's digital transformation will shift towards finding out more about its customers, and to anticipate their needs — personalization in other words. "We want to be able to adapt our offer to what is actually going on in the market, and even fine-tune it to individual players," Akrich explains.

He has teed off the project of a site re-design and a migration to Ibexa DXP 3 which will empower the Fédération Française de Golf to do exactly that.

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