Case Study

Southway Housing

www.southwayhousing.co.uk

Net Construct

Industry
Municipal Housing

Partner
NetConstruct Ltd
Riverview Court
Castlegate, Wetherby LS226LE
United Kingdom
www.netconstruct.co.uk

Jonathan Healey
JonathanHealey@netconstruct.co.uk
01937581123

Goals and Challenges

NetConstruct has over 10-years' experience in delivering digital solutions for social housing providers, and is responsible for websites and intranets for several of the sector's leading organisations.

One of these is Southway Housing Trust, which had recently transferred to independent status, and is responsible for many thousands of homes formerly managed by Manchester City Council.

Following competitive tendering, Southway appointed NetConstruct to design and develop its new public facing website.

The aim of the site initially was to establish the newly formed Southway Housing Trust as a reliable and supportive landlord, encourage tenants to build close relationships with them and for the website to become one of Southway's main means of engaging with their customers 24 hours a day.

From previous work in the sector, NetConstruct knew how important it would be to involve tenants in the decisions about the website right from the start, and to make the website extremely user friendly.

NetConstruct recommended that, before any decisions were taken, Southway should carry out online consultation across a broad representative cross section of customers over a tightly controlled seven day period, covering many key topics.

The survery was a great success. Being electronic, the results could be quickly analysed, and helped NetConstruct and Southway to agree many of the features and functions for the website.

Solutions

NetConstruct worked closely with Southway's brand agency to develop the now-infamous Southway 'Cat' symbol - a device that works across the site in a fresh, fun and engaging way.

NetConstruct supported the internal team at every stage, including the development of technical functionality. In consultation with Southway, NetConstruct wrote most of the content, and delivered full training on how to maintain and update the site.

The result is a site that is contemporary in style and design, highly usable and cost-effective. Most of all, however, it has been very well received by tenants and staff alike. NetConstruct has used the existing branding in an innovative way throughout the website by using the 'Cat' device in a variety of different guises to add focus to individual areas of the site.

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Later in the development NetConstruct were asked to work with Southway's internal IT team in developing the interactive password-protected tenant portal.

The portal provides tenants with access to many two-way services that enable them to work with Southway 24 hours a day, 365 days a year – including paying rent, checking accounts, reporting repairs, finding out when their property is scheduled for decorating and so on.

The site is hosted by NetConstruct on the Rackspace platform.

Key criteria for selecting Kentico CMS

Southway Housing Trust chose the Kentico CMS because:

• The organisation did not have a content management system previously. Their site had to be updated manually meaning it was slow to change, was out-of-date and offered no control – problems easily solved by Kentico CMS

• Southway Housing required over 40 forms to be set up and managed within the new website. Kentico CMS' BizForms function offered an effective solution.