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INTRODUCTION

The goal of this presentation is to provide an overview of using Joomla! to create your website. I assume that you are considering using Joomla!, that you have decided to use Joomla!, or you are already using Joomla!.

This presentation focuses on "What, Why, and Who". The large topic of "How" could keep us here for hours. Take a look at the Resources at the end of this handout for more information.

IS JOOMLA! FOR YOU?

What is Joomla!

Joomla! is a tool for creating web sites. Other site-building tools include DreamWeaver, FrontPage, GoLive, or any text editor. Many web hosting services provide site-building tools.

Why Use Joomla!

Content Management

Joomla! is a Content Management System (CMS). A content management system constructs each page from an online database when a visitor requests the page.

You can alter your content at any time via a secure administration interface with your web browser.

In contrast, a standard (non-CMS) HTML website is fixed. To change text and images, the page files that make up the site must be edited, then uploaded to the web server by a web developer.

Open Source Licensing

This means the software is free. There is also a very large community of users and resources backing the product, much of which is also free.

Who should use Joomla!

Joomla! is particularly suited to web sites where
- Content changes frequently
- Non-programmers create, update, and manage content

That said, you need a skilled technical person to install and configure the site, and to be available for trouble-shooting. If your techie is not already familiar with Joomla! or Mambo, expect a learning curve, as with any new tool. Joomla! makes it possible for less technical people to update the site **once it is made**. You need someone with technical chops to set it up.

DESIGNING YOUR SITE

Remember that Joomla! is a tool. The effectiveness of your site, and its usefulness to your audience, is determined by your content, information architecture, and graphic design.

Think about web sites you have visited that have attracted or frustrated you. What is it about those sites that you like or don't like? What makes you want to return to the site? This section is to help you create a web site that people want to come back to.

Information Architecture

Organizing your content: Sections, Categories and Content

This is the place to start. Once you know the content you want on your site and how it is organized, it will be much easier to set up Joomla! to present your information.

Joomla! offers three levels of content organization: Sections, Categories, and Content Items. You can think of these as an outline, or as a series of containers. You outline would look like:

```
Section 1.0
        Category 1.1
                Content Item 1.1.1
                Content Item 1.1.2
        Category 1.2
                Content Item 1.2.1
                Content Item 1.2.2
Section 2.0
        Category 2.1
                Content Item 2.1.1
                Content Item 2.1.2
        Etc.
```

If you like to think of containers, a Section would correspond to a filing cabinet, a Category would be like a file folder, and a Content Item would be a piece of paper in the folder.

There is also a content type called Static, which is outside the three-tier organization.

Navigating to your content: Menus

Now that your content is outlined, you need a way for your visitors to navigate to the content that interests them. This is done with Menus. Constructing Menus requires you to think about what YOU want to emphasize on your site. Prioritize your content from most important to least important. Then create your Menus to reflect your priorities.

In Joomla!, Menu items can point to Sections, Categories, or Content Items.

Naming your content

Give names and titles to your Sections, Categories, Content Items and Menus that will make sense to your audience AND engage them. Other than the standard menus that everyone expects to see on the site such as About Us or Contact Us, use words that convey either specific information or evoke a feeling. For example, "Issues" is a popular link on political sites. Try to think of something with more punch such as "What We Believe".

Structuring your content

Usability research has shown that most people can read text on a screen about 25% as fast as they can read a printed page. And, you have about 7 seconds to engage your visitor's attention before they click off your page. These findings call for structuring your content so that your visitor gets your message quickly and succinctly. Here are some tips:

- Preface longer content with a headline and abstract, then link to the full article on a separate page. The Blog Menu Type (described below) displays content in this manner.

- Condense long text.

- Make your most important point in the first sentence.

- Use bullet points.

- Make sub-headings to introduce topics: tell your visitor what the next paragraph or two is about.

Graphic Design - Templates

With Joomla!, the look and feel of your site is completely separate from your content. The graphic design elements, colors, fonts, page layout, and positioning of content are all determined by the Template you apply to the site.

Creating a Template from scratch requires knowledge of XHTML and PHP, as well as graphic design. However, there are hundreds of free and low-cost Templates available, and your biggest job is to sort through all the choices. Also, some templates are better than others. Choose one with documentation (how many columns, fixed or fluid layout, module positions), lots of downloads and good reviews.

IMPLEMENTING YOUR SITE

Web Host Requirements

Most modern web host providers offer a Linux hosting environment that satisfies the technical requirements for Joomla! Make sure your hosting service supports the following:

- PHP 4.2.x or above
- MySQL 3.23.x or above
- Apache 1.13.19 or above

If your web host does not meet the minimum requirements, you can subscribe to one that does for as little as $5.00 per month.

You need the following information to configure Joomla!. You can get it from your web host control panel.

- Database name
- User name
- Password
- Database host name

If your hosting account supports more than one MySQL database you can dedicate a database specifically to Joomla!. If you have just one database, the installation gives you the option to add a prefix to the Joomla! tables (such as jom_) to avoid stepping on tables you may already have in the database.

Download and Install

Joomla! installation is fairly straightforward. Follow the steps in the installation manual at http://help.joomla.org/content/category/15/99/132/.

Configure Information Architecture and Templates

Once Joomla! is installed, you can see it at http://www.yourdomain.com/index.php. It will look like this:

Voila! You have a Joomla! web site. But it is not YOUR site. At this point, arm yourself with your content outline and your chosen template, login to the Administrator screen, and make the site your own. Here's a Very Good Quick Start guide to get you to the next level: www.netshinesoftware.com/joomla-tutorial.html

Configure Sections and Categories

Start by configuring your Sections and Categories. When you link to a container in one of your menus, decide how you want the Content within that container to be displayed. Here's how the Menu Types work:

- **Section List**: Displays a list of Category links:
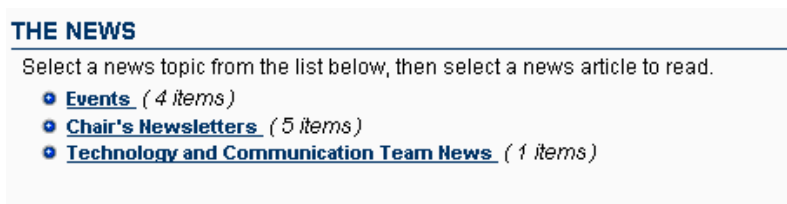
When you click on a Category link Joomla! displays links to the Content Items in the Category:
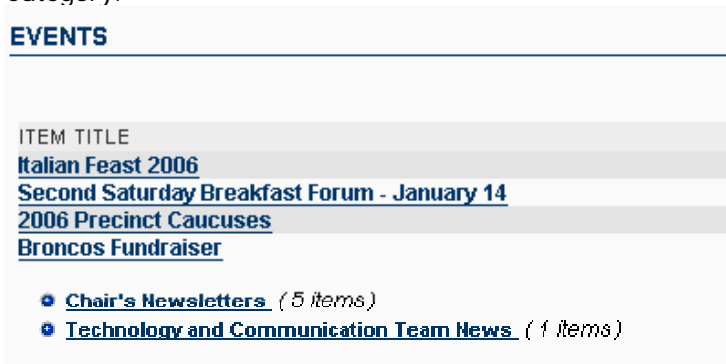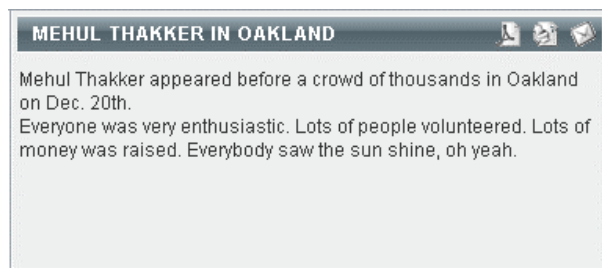
From here, click on the Content Item you want to see.

- **Section Blog**: Displays the Content Item title, the Intro Text, and a link to the main text.

When you link on Read more, Joomla! displays the main text:

Configure Content Providers

Now it's time to setup user permissions for your content providers. Joomla! supports the following roles for content (front-end) providers:

- Author: permission to post content.
- Editor: Author permissions plus edit content.
- Publisher: Editor permissions plus publish content.

Note that content is not seen on the site until it is published.

When an Editor or Publisher logs in, content items will have an edit icon next to the title. You can click on the icon to edit the content item.

For more information about User Access Control Levels go to:
http://help.joomla.org/content/view/228/153/

TIPS FOR ENTERING CONTENT

You enter content into Joomla! using the TinyMCE editor included in your installation. For best results, compose directly in the editor or cut and paste from an unformatted text file. DON'T CUT AND PASTE DIRECTLY FROM A WORD DOC. Instead, export from Word to a text file.

You may want to have one or two people responsible for entering content generated by your authors.

RESOURCES

Here is a list of online resources to take you further into Joomla!world. This list can also be found online at www.webtreedesigns.com/resources.

Portals

These sites contain all kinds of useful information, forums, downloads including templates, and tutorials.

- www.joomla.com
- www.mambohut.com
- www.mamboportal.com
- www.joomlatribune.com

Tutorials

- Very good quick start guide: www.netshinesoftware.com/joomla-tutorial.html

- Anna's Joomla! tips, a soup-to-nuts tutorial: www.teachmejoomla.com/joomla-mambo-tutorials-and-howtos/annas-joomla-tips.htm

- Template creation and Search Engine Optimization (SEO) among others: www.compassdesigns.net/resources/articles/

- Joomla! SEO for beginners: www.joomlaya.com/content/view/143/83/

- Tutorials & Reviews: www.joomlaya.com/content/category/1/16/83/

Templates

This is just to get you started. Search on Joomla templates and prepare to spend some time.

- www.mamboteam.com

Add-Ons

Start here in your search for Components, Modules, and Mambots.

- www.joomlaratings.com
- http://siteground.com/joomla_addons.htm
- Tutorial: http://siteground.com/tutorials/mambo/mambo_addons.htm

Terminology

- Component: Components are Core elements of Joomla functionality. These core elements include: Banners, Contact, News Feeds, Polls and Weblinks. Members of the Joomla Community are producing third party Joomla components on a continuous basis. They are available on http://developer.joomla.org for free download.

- Module: Modules are small content items that can be displayed anywhere that your template allows it to be displayed. Modules are very easy to install in the Admin Section. Joomla modules may include: Main Menu, Top menu, Template Chooser, Polls, Newsflash, Hit Counter, etc.

- Mambot: A Mambot is a small, task-oriented function that intercepts content before it is displayed and manipulates it in some way. Joomla provides a number of Mambots in the core distribution. Some examples are such are WYSIWYG editors, 3rd party component and module searchers, etc.