WP engine®

CASE STUDY

EARTH DAY NETWORK®

Company
Earth Day Network

Site
earthday.org

Challenge
Migrating website from Drupal host to WordPress host, improving site performance

Results
Painless site migration, 8-second drop in page load time, zero downtime on Earth Day 2017

"WP Engine has such great staff and help with onboarding is the most important phase. This was the easiest site migration I've ever had to do."

- Jason Gooljar
IT Director, Earth Day Network

How Earth Day Network Shaved 8 Seconds Off Page Load Time

MIGRATING OFF DRUPAL HOSTING, EARTHDAY.ORG EXPERIENCES SEAMLESS SITE MIGRATION AMONG OTHER BENEFITS

The Company

Growing out of the first Earth Day, Earth Day Network is the world's largest recruiter to the environmental movement, working with more than 50,000 partners in nearly 195 countries to build environmental democracy. More than 1 billion people now participate in Earth Day activities each year, making it the largest civic observance in the world. To learn more, visit earthday.org.

The Challenge

Earth Day Network's website, earthday.org, was originally built on Drupal. Their IT department eventually decided to move the site to WordPress, given WordPress' ease of use and user-friendly interface.

According to their IT Director, Jason Gooljar, "With WordPress, it's easier for everyone to manage updates. Even for end users who don't have to do a lot of the heavy-lifting, compared to Drupal, it's super easy for those with less technical expertise to add new content."

When Earth Day Network's previous host who specialized in Drupal began phasing out certain hosting capabilities, Earth Day Network knew it was necessary to migrate the site to a new hosting provider — one that specializes in WordPress.

This site migration was especially important to complete before the annual Earth Day event, celebrated on April 22. On this day, the site receives its heaviest number of site visitors for the year.

"In the past, we've experienced problems with moving web hosts near Earth Day and having the site go down," said Gooljar.

Given that their site was taking around 11 seconds to fully render at the time, Earth Day Network needed to have their site migrated to a faster loading solution and be set up efficiently without road bumps before the big day.

The Solution

"I had heard a lot about WP Engine and it was the second company I reached out to in the process of migrating the site. Once I learned how easy it is to migrate your site with its auto migration tool, it was the best decision we made. The site was up and running within a day," said Gooljar.

Gooljar also mentioned how seamless it was for them to update their DNS by going into Cloudflare and initiating CNAME flattening — something that's very important should you anticipate having to scale your site up or down against traffic influxes.

"If I did something like that with another host, it would be like changing an IP address. But in this case, I didn't do anything. It was very painless," said Gooljar.

Just weeks from Earth Day, Gooljar worked with WP Engine's onboarding team and their own personal developer to migrate the site. They used a number of tools like Pingdom, Google Analytics, and WP Engine's Page Performance solution to determine what specific factors were putting a load on the site.

"We spent about a month prior to the migration to optimize the site and reduce its load time by doing things like optimizing images and cleaning up our database. When we were ready to move, we moved with a better performing site," said Gooljar. He added, "WP Engine has such great staff and help with onboarding is the most important phase. This was the easiest site migration I've ever had to do."

The Results

Now that earthday.org has been fully optimized, its render to start time has been shaved down by eight seconds.

Earth Day 2017 also brought some stellar results. On April 22, the Earth Day March for Science rally on the National Mall in Washington D.C. was livestreamed, drawing hundreds of thousands of views and direct traffic to earthday.org.

"In addition to inspiring activism and building the environmental movement, a key goal of our site is to get donations and new email addresses. This year our site had zero downtime. We were therefore able to reap the benefits of all the traffic that came in around Earth Day," said Gooljar.

Whether anticipated or not, site uptime is crucial to the user experience — it retains site visitors and leads them into taking the intended action. As this story shows, prepping your site for optimal performance prior to the big day can make a huge impact.

"For organizations planning a big event or increase in traffic, having complete trust in their web hosting team's expertise will help put their mind at ease," Gooljar concluded.

About WP Engine

WP Engine powers amazing digital experiences for websites and applications built on WordPress. Founded in 2010, the company is headquartered in Austin, Texas and has offices in San Francisco, California, Limerick, Ireland, San Antonio, Texas, and London, England.