



NASA

Inspire, Inform and Involve.

NASA reconnects with the public.

+ www.nasa.gov

How does a major government organization the size of NASA unify more than 3,500 different sites into a single information portal?

It started with Critical Mass and partner eTouch Systems, and evolved into an award-winning site launched just hours before the Columbia disaster.

Executive Summary

Out of a field of over 26 competing firms, NASA selected Critical Mass and our partner eTouch Systems to transform NASA.gov into a branded network that elevates the NASA brand and unifies over 3,500 disparate sites into a cohesive information gateway. The new site, which launched just a few hours before the Columbia shuttle disaster, is fueling NASA's overall efforts to reconnect with the public and re-capture significance as one of the world's most visionary and imaginative organizations.

The Challenge

While NASA is an organization that has built its reputation on awe-inspiring events, missions and programs, the agency historically delivered an underwhelming online experience. There were some outstanding features on NASA's massive network of sites, but they tended to be buried in places that were not in visitors' typical path of travel. The site's complex navigation and inconsistent visual structure detracted from the overall experience. And the brand identity and visual design did not live up to the image of visionary innovation and exploration NASA wanted to recapture worldwide.

The Solution

Starting with the key goals of inspiring, informing and involving, we developed a strategy and design for the new portal to help NASA connect with people like never before. We developed a clear architecture, user-centered design and editorial management system to help push NASA's engaging content to the right segments. Focusing on the NASA image, we also worked with the ten NASA centers to unify their fractured Web presence across the entire NASA network, giving them one clear voice to reach all key constituents, especially students, kids, educators and the media. The new NASA.gov conveys the NASA message and vision – to improve life here, to extend life there and to find life beyond – in an accessible, exciting and rewarding way, drawing users into the NASA universe and reminding them of the agency's extraordinary contributions to the world.

Results

Since we launched NASA.gov, the site network has become a revitalized part of NASA's communication and outreach efforts. It has served as a key communications vehicle for NASA to connect with the world, both in low points such as during the Columbia shuttle disaster when the site received 512 million hits, to high points such as the landing of the Mars Exploration Rover. Traffic to NASA.gov has almost tripled since the launch, with annual page views in the billions. Our work has received acclaim throughout the NASA organization and beyond, and has been honored with multiple awards, including the peoples' and critics' choice Webby Awards for the Best Government Site.

