

Perfect Sense and Univision: Building a Platform for Growth

Perfect Sense is a full-service product company that capitalizes on its enterprise digital application development platform, Brightspot®, to drive innovations in web and mobile development for corporations worldwide.

“ We really look forward to having a long-term relationship with Perfect Sense. We definitely see this as being a strategic partnership for us. ”

NATE LANDAU, VICE PRESIDENT OF PRODUCT, UNIVISION

In 2013, Univision had run as far as it could on its legacy digital platform. The largest Spanish-language media company in the United States was growing exponentially, expanding its offerings across nearly 100 national and local TV stations. But the digital business wasn't set up to keep pace with the growth.

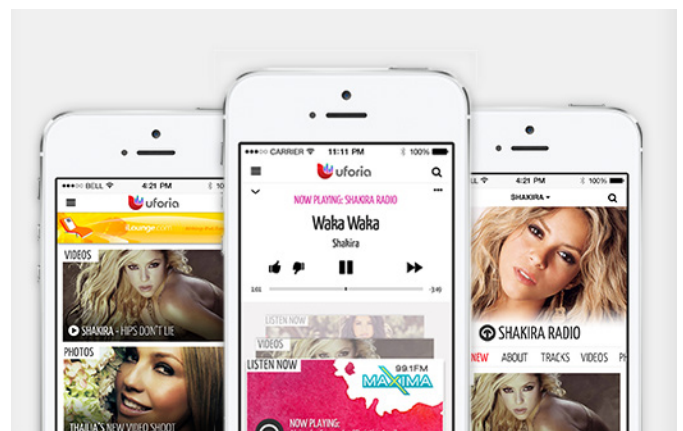
Stuck on a content management system from a defunct vendor, Univision.com did not want unsupported patches to its legacy platform. It needed a whole new solution that was designed around its current business needs.

“As a major broadcaster and digital destination, it's really key for us to be able to not only have a great consumer experience for our users and our viewers,” says Nate Landau, Univision's vice president of product, “but to also have amazing technology set that's really extensible.”

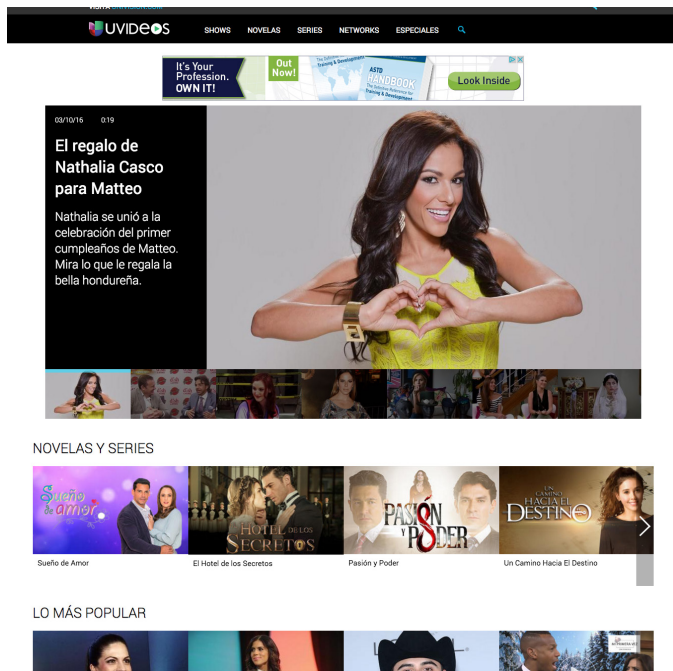
The Challenge

Perfect Sense was already working with Univision on smaller projects such as the launch of its highly rated Uforia music app, but this global project was much more challenging. It involved taking the diverse needs of all Univision.com's channels—including news, sports, entertainment, and at least 60 local TV affiliate sites—onto the Brightspot platform, and migrating the existing content in time for the portal launch.

“It's probably one of the largest projects that Perfect Sense has ever completed,” says Lisa Edwards, principal product manager at Perfect Sense, referring to the scope and the range of experiences involved.



Major vendors, including Adobe and Acquia (Drupal), competed for the project too. “We looked at a number of different platforms,” says Landau, “and finally decided that Brightspot was the right product for us.” It had the functionality Univision was looking for, the underpinnings to push it even farther, and the right people to make that happen.



Beyond the technology itself, the team’s commitment to their partner’s success “explains why Perfect Sense and Brightspot are really a different offering,” says Manu Fontaine, Perfect Sense’s director of business strategy. “It’s a combination of technology, of energy, and our commitment to deliver.”

Univision had a broad group of internal stakeholders to manage, each with their own ideas and specific requirements. Changes emerged that required Perfect Sense to pivot in major ways: Univision’s new bilingual digital video portal, UVideos, became an immediate priority. That “changed the entire landscape of what the project was going to be,” says Edwards.

Adding to the complexity, Univision was undergoing a major site redesign. “Not only did we build a new platform for the portal, we built the platform in addition to the launch of a completely new user experience,” Edwards says.

The Perfect Sense Solution

Work on the new platform for Univision began in spring of 2014. By late fall, the company’s video portal had moved onto Brightspot, and by October 2015, the entire site experience was on the Brightspot platform.

The new portal fulfilled Univision’s list of requirements, which included:

Modern, flexible architecture. Univision needed a system that would “allow us to iterate rapidly on the consumer experiences and revenue products that we have,” Landau says. Brightspot is built to support growth from a strong base of functionality.

“ It’s a very useable system that looked good and felt good for our editorial team. They all felt very at home there. ”

NATE LANDAU, UNIVISION

Easy to use and understand. “We have hundreds of concurrent editors that are in the system,” Landau says. With such a large and diverse team, the publishing interface had to be intuitive and nimble.

On the old system, it took an editor five minutes just to preview an article before publishing it. With Brightspot, it’s instantaneous. Publishers can move faster and can create new layouts and section pages without needing a developer’s help. The legacy publishing platform made those tasks “fairly cumbersome,” Edwards says, while the new system became “something that’s a lot more user-friendly for them, which was a big deal.”

“ This project was incredibly successful. When we launched it, we really didn't see any problems that I've seen in other major CMS migrations in past lives at other companies ”

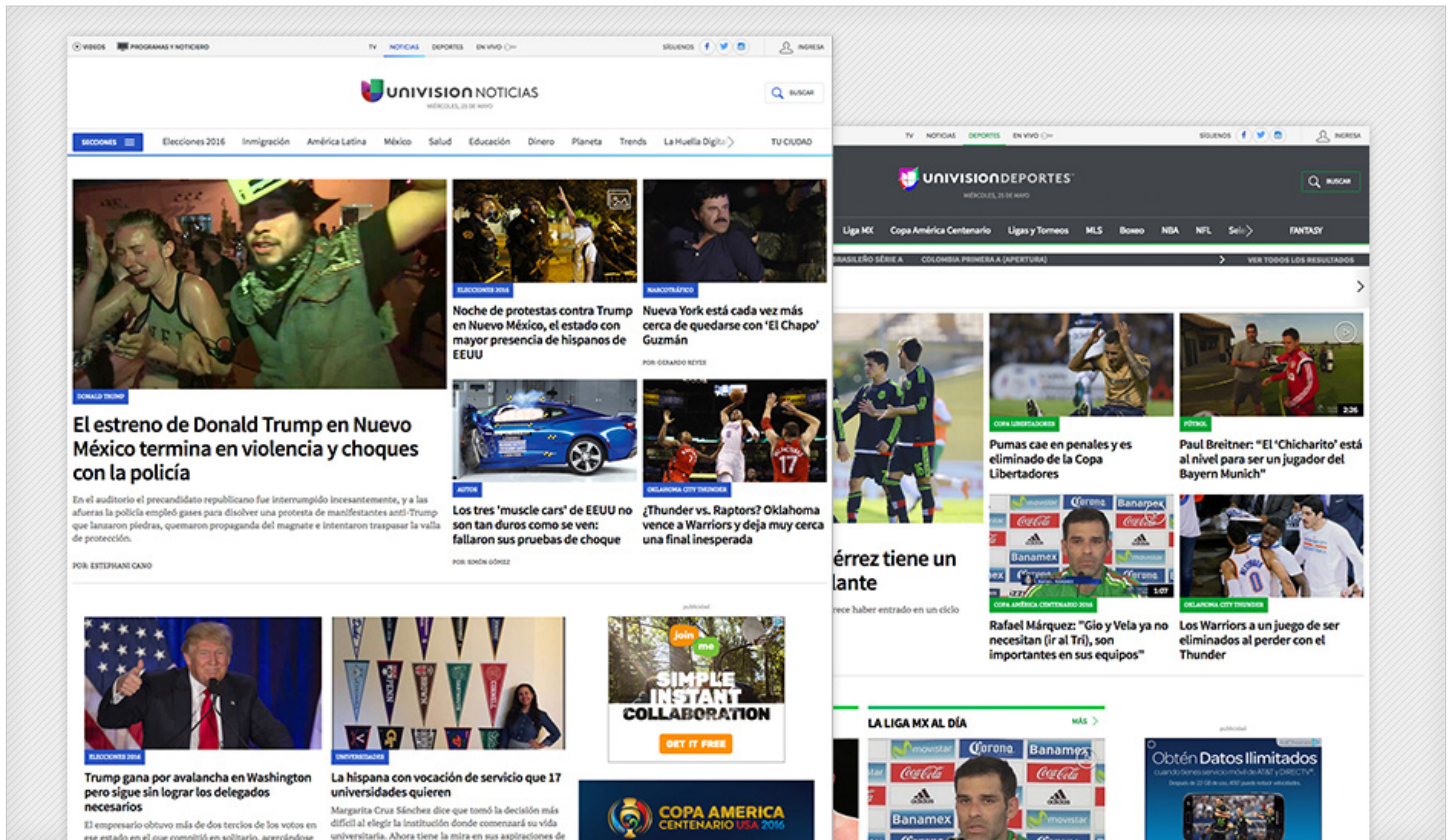
NATE LANDAU, UNIVISION

spikes triggered by live broadcast TV shows required a level of dynamic scaling difficult to achieve in an on-premise environment. Perfect Sense used Beam, its groundbreaking DevOps tool, to automate the deployment and auto-scaling of all Univision environments in the Amazon Web Services cloud.

A holistic, integrated approach. With multiple third-party feeds coming in, and its own content feeds going out to syndication partners, Univision needed a real-time publishing system that could manage a large number of content streams. “We needed something that could really be the center of our digital enterprise,” Landau says.

That also meant creating a system that could help integrate diverse types of content across different channels. Before, content was siloed, stuck in one place. Now, Edwards says, “It's easy to surface content on a specific topic in multiple areas across their site.”

The transition was remarkably smooth, Landau notes: “We didn't see traffic drop into a hole. We didn't see our editorial staff confused about what they were supposed to be doing. We didn't see reporting problems [or other issues] that really got in the way of us operating our business.”



One Team

Perfect Sense plugged seamlessly into Univision's team, making sure the network's engineers had a solid grasp of the system and how to develop on it.

"Univision really wanted to make sure at the end of this that their onsite teams knew how to support this product and all the aspects of it," Edwards says, which is why Perfect Sense got them involved early in the project.

Univision also wanted its design team to handle the creative and user interface parts of the site, which it did with key assists from Perfect Sense. "We wanted to design it," Landau says. "That said, [Perfect Sense] did a lot of design for us. They did 90 percent of the videos product. It was definitely run as a combined team."

“ For three months, I thought Lisa Edwards was a Univision employee. ”

NATE LANDAU, UNIVISION

“ We partner with people. We're not just a supplier to a customer. ”

MANU FONTAINE, DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS STRATEGY, PERFECT SENSE

"We wanted to have a co-development model for this and succeeded in doing so," Landau says. "Perfect Sense was a great partner in working with us in that embedded way and continues to be today."

Edwards agrees. "We are really one team," she says. "The lines between Univision and Perfect Sense are very blurry. They think of us as part of their team, and we're very accountable."

Positioned for the Future

Univision.com's audience is much larger than its competition; At about 15 million monthly unique visitors, the site continues to increase its reach in the market.

The portal now has a flexible platform with a unified taxonomy that drives everything from content curation to ad sales, Landau says: "This is a huge win overall for the business."

The partnership has helped Perfect Sense grow as well. The Univision.com project "really helped to push and evolve the Brightspot platform," Edwards says. "We've made some changes to Brightspot and how we do things based on Univision and some of their important requirements and valued feedback."

All of Univision's online publishing is powered by Brightspot. Perfect Sense continues to be part of the team.

"It is the piece of software that is sitting between every system we have," Landau says. "It is the digital brain of Univision."

“ Univision is a fickle beast, like many organizations. It was great working with Perfect Sense throughout the process. [They were] a great partner in being able to pivot and help us solve problems incredibly rapidly. ”

NATE LANDAU, UNIVISION
