



CASE STUDY



Industry

Entertainment: Music

Site

CMAworld.com and associated CMA sites

Annual Traffic

More than 500 million hits in 2014

Challenge

Site crashes, complexity, stagnant content, downtime, mounting costs

Results

Scalability, ease of use, improved uptime, swift page loads, reduced costs

“Our sites are beautiful and more functional. I can sum up our combination of WordPress and WP Engine in three words: it just works.”

- Ben Bennett,

Director of Digital Strategy,
Country Music Association

CMA Site Scales To 70M+ Hits On ‘Country Music’s Biggest Night’

WITH SCALABLE, FULLY-MANAGED WORDPRESS HOSTING THAT ‘JUST WORKS,’ CMAWORLD.COM CAN FOCUS ON GREAT CONTENT

The Company

More than 7,000 music industry professionals and companies around the globe are members of the Country Music Association (CMA). Formed in 1958 as the first trade association for a single genre of music, the organization’s objectives are to serve as an educational and professional resource for the industry while advancing the growth of Country Music around the world. This is accomplished through CMA’s strategic imperatives: CMA Music Festival and the companion CMA Music Festival television special; the CMA Awards, which are recognized as Country Music’s Biggest Night™; and “CMA Country Christmas,” featuring the songs of the holidays.

The Site

CMA World (CMAworld.com) is the main website for the Country Music Association. CMA also hosts multiple other sites, including CMAawards.com, CMAfest.com, and CMA songwritersSeries.com. In 2014, the site drove more than 500 million hits.



The Challenge

CMAworld.com is the nation’s window into the Country Music Association (CMA). For years, the site was run on .NET, but making it perform the way CMA wanted it to became too complicated, time consuming, and costly. That complexity caused site content to stagnate, as updating and adding content became increasingly difficult. And with its old content management system (CMS), upgrades often ran roughly \$5,000 and required off hours international phone calls to track down the right person.

According to Ben Bennett, Director of Digital Strategy for the Country Music Association, he and the IT director would spend 10 hours to 12 hours per week hammering out server issues and working on site problems. It became a drain on already strained resources.

And then there was the crash. A few years ago, during the CMA Awards, billed as “Country Music’s Biggest Night,” CMAawards.com went down for roughly 30 minutes to 45 minutes. On the site’s busiest night of the year, CMAworld.com was sidelined by embarrassing downtime.

“If the fans can’t get to CMAawards.com on Awards night, we lose the opportunity to connect with them and secure future instances to promote the format,” Bennett said.

The Solution

To overcome those challenges, the Association migrated [CMAawards.com](#), [CMAworld.com](#), [CMAfest.com](#) and its other sites to WordPress.

“WordPress was the perfect solution,” Bennett said, adding that the CMA’s biggest need was the ability to update and populate news and other content quickly and sometimes unexpectedly due to the nature of the music business.

Once the Association decided on WordPress, it selected fully-managed WordPress hosting from WP Engine, which was able to customize a solution to help the Association meet its goals of easy content population and scaling for high traffic events.

The Results

Moving to managed WordPress hosting from WP Engine arms the CMA with a platform that is truly scalable and flexible. The CMA can now update the site content frequently without the threat of slow performance and crashes.

“We can concentrate on site content and functionality rather than if the site is going to work or not,” Bennett said.

In 2014, the site handled more than 500 million hits, more than 71 million of which came on Awards night.

“WP Engine flawlessly served over 71 million hits in 24 hours for the CMA Awards on ABC. It was THE BEST experience the site has ever had ... Even better than WP Engine said it was going to be,” Bennett said.

At the same time, the Association was able to improve page load times and eliminate the pricey development costs the .NET site required. Developing on WordPress saves CMA more than 50 percent in design and development costs for each site. And because WP Engine performs all platform updates, what used to cost at least \$5,000 and a month of development upgrade work now costs CMA nothing and takes a fraction of the length of time.

Overall, Bennett and his team no longer spend unnecessary time and money fretting about site performance.

The team can focus on providing great content and a great user experience to its users and members.

About WP Engine

WP Engine is a leading SaaS content management platform for websites and applications built on WordPress. Founded in 2010, the company is headquartered in Austin, Texas and has offices in San Francisco, California, San Antonio, Texas, and London, England.