

CASE STUDY



BACARDÍ®

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Pragmatic Raises Bacardi's Spirits With Global Digital Innovation WordPress Programme

Originally known for its famous Bacardi Rum, Bacardi was founded in 1862 and has been family-owned for seven generations. Now one of the largest privately-owned spirits companies in the world, Bacardi employs more than 6,000 staff and sells its products in over 160 countries.

The Bacardi portfolio includes in excess of 200 brands and labels, including iconic names such as: Bacardi rum, Grey Goose vodka, Dewar's blended scotch whisky, Bombay Sapphire gin and Martini vermouth.



A need to improve consistency across multiple digital presences

Globally, each country or local market had responsibility for its own brands. The websites all looked very different, even when they were for the same brand, and had differing functionality. Plus, they were the responsibility of numerous digital agencies around the world, meaning vast sums were being spent, and effort often being replicated.

Bacardi wanted to introduce a level of consistency across these digital assets and sought a standardised way of working. It required an approach that was both more cohesive and more cost-effective.

“One of the things that convinced me to choose Pragmatic was the company’s transparent and straightforward approach.”

Chris Windebank, Bacardi’s IT Director,
Global Marketing,

To achieve this, Bacardi changed its internal policies so that all brands wanting a new website would be required to arrange the

work through the global IT department. Simultaneously, Bacardi undertook a process to choose a digital partner to lead the transformation.

Chris Windebank, Bacardi’s IT Director, Global Marketing, was responsible for the project. He had already identified WordPress as a suitable platform, due to its flexibility and the wide availability of integrations for it. Because of its ease of use, WordPress also opened up the possibility that all the Bacardi stakeholders across the globe would be able to update and manage the local websites themselves once the build stage had been completed.

Bacardi was looking for a digital partner that deeply understood its brief and all the requirements and would work closely with all stakeholders to make that a reality. The company has numerous stakeholders across different territories for each brand, and some brands have third-party interests too. So it was vital that the digital agency Bacardi chose could demonstrate an ability to handle a project of such complexity, with its extensive reach and multiple, global touchpoints for both input and approval.

After a comprehensive pitch process, Pragmatic was chosen to handle the programme. Explains Windebank, “One of the things that convinced me to choose Pragmatic was the company’s transparent and straightforward approach.”

A scalable master WordPress theme, with customisation options

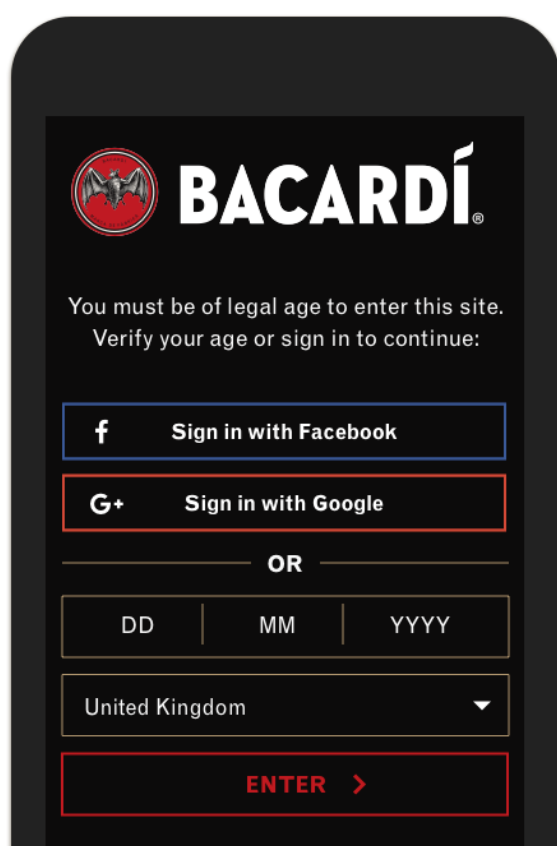
The first step towards the final goal was to come up with a scalable template that could be applied in whole or in part to each website. This would be the case for reasonably small sites like the one for Oakheart spiced rum, as well as the much larger, high profile brands such as Bombay Sapphire. Once completed, this template could then be sent, along with design guidelines for that specific brand, to one of the design agencies that Bacardi partners with, or could be worked on internally. It was imperative that all designs matched this initial template, so that all resulting websites would be consistent. Smaller brands could be rolled out relatively quickly, but the template would also serve as a starting point for the larger brands, which required a degree of extra customisation.

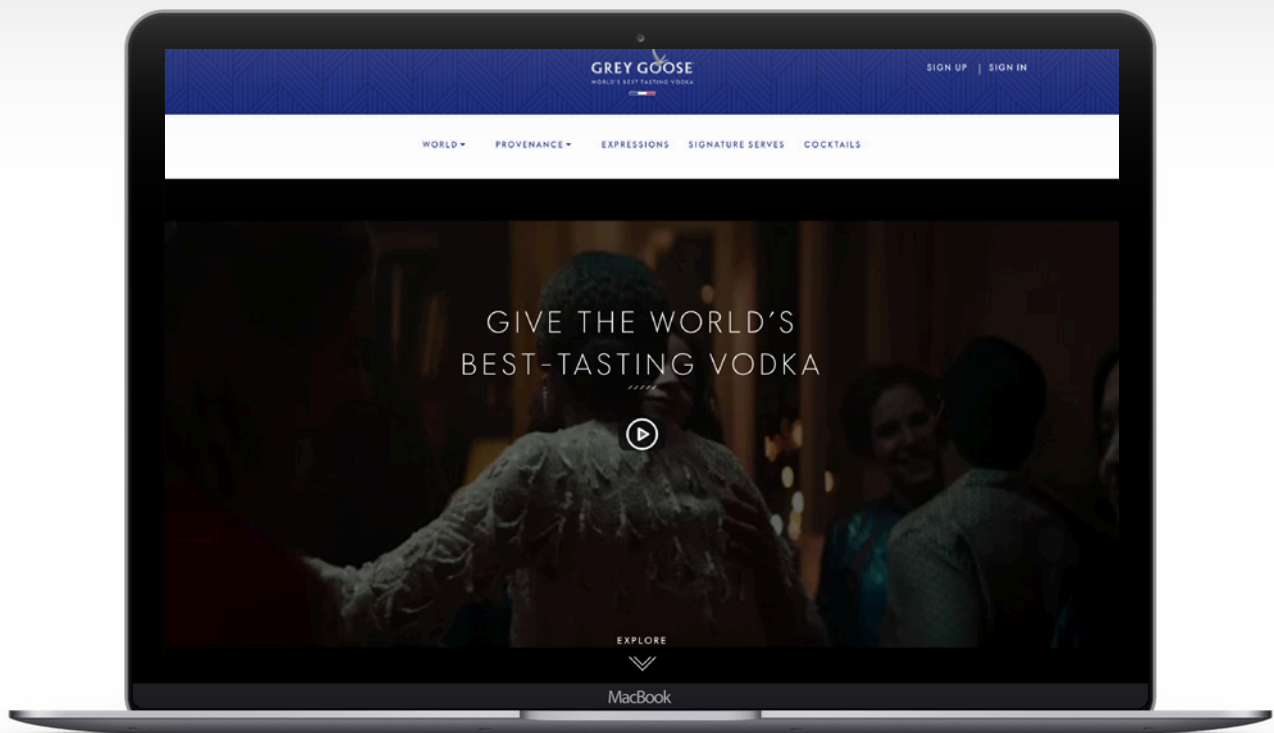
Recounts David Lockie, Managing Director of Pragmatic, “Working with Bacardi was all about building the partnership and developing the processes, which we worked through together. The aim was of course to build websites, but there was a pretty intensive rollout plan for these websites that needed some serious planning and collaboration between everyone involved.”

“The approach that we agreed on”, continues Lockie, “was that we would build a custom WordPress theme for Bacardi. Each website would be based on this, so they would all have a similar structure, but there would also be the flexibility to handle market-specific requests and to incorporate the input of multiple market stakeholders.”

The new web template started life as a user experience (UX) document and was a collaboration between Pragmatic, Bacardi and a number of relevant third parties and agencies. It was based on a lengthy discussion about possible site requirements and how Bacardi’s target audience would likely interact with the site. The UX document included a complete site map, and typical user interactions and wireframes for each page. Integrations for a number of custom, third-party workflows and software, such as a store locator and a ticketing system were also identified.

Once all the elements of the site had been defined, Pragmatic project managers were able to define the workflows and could pinpoint what deliverables they would need to get started, how long each stage of the integration would take and what information would be required in order to proceed.





Next, it was up to Pragmatic to solve the technical challenges involved in quickly rolling out the websites, while simultaneously ensuring they were built to a high quality. Due to the intensive nature of the rollout of sites, Pragmatic had to make rapid progress on a standardisation framework, but also ensure that this did not jeopardise projects that were already underway.

Reveals Lockie, “We decided that a web template framework would be built in phases that could be reused and iterated on, using each site build to add context to the requirements of the framework.”

The technological approach Pragmatic took was to use a stripped down starter theme, not

a child theme. This meant there would only be a single CSS file, decreasing bloat and ensuring the site loaded quickly. This would also increase the stability and control of the sites.

The priority was to focus on building websites for the global brands first. To date, 77 separate installations of WordPress websites have been built, covering 15 brands and a handful of corporate sites.

Although the master template continues to evolve as new requirements are identified when new sites are built, it underpins each of the websites. Each market and each brand can however include its own customisation in terms of language, design and branding, along with other localised features.

Cost-efficiency through consistent sites with equivalent functionality

New Bacardi owned brand websites now all have a cohesive look and feel, and all sites adhere to strict international alcohol marketing regulations, with age-gating where necessary.

The sites were each implemented rapidly and Pragmatic standardised the third-party built integrations as well as the ways of working between agencies.

Using WordPress across the board has significantly reduced the skill gap needed for updating sites with new content. This usability means that local brand managers are empowered to perform updates themselves, not needing to rely on a digital agency and meaning that any content changes can be made immediately.

All the newly created sites now adhere to global IT policies and are security and performance tested, benefitting from standardised quality assurance test plans.


Each site differs significantly enough in structure and design that a good degree of flexibility was required. The technological approach that Pragmatic used means that, although each site is built to a master

template, customisations can still easily be made. Yet these customisations don't change the master template and so do not update across the other sites, perhaps adversely affecting them. Keeping all Bacardi websites in sync is therefore not an issue.

Acknowledges Windebank, "Working with Pragmatic, we now have the same quality and the same functionality across the Bacardi websites. And it's brought greater cost-efficiency to the as we are now only building sites via a master theme."

Lockie expands on this point: "It is also simple for new features that are required across the board to be rolled back into existing sites quickly and easily, and in a controlled way. And we can instantly change the layout, for example, without affecting the current content of a site – and vice versa."

Concludes Lockie, "Pragmatic and Bacardi have now been working together since October 2015 and have built a strongly collaborative relationship. As Bacardi's WordPress technology partner, we are always on hand to provide consultancy and our full range of WordPress services – from strategic planning of new WordPress sites to supporting existing work."



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