



Drupal™

«We see a great future for Drupal in Microsoft system environments.»

Drupal is a PHP-based open-source content management system (CMS) and content management framework (CMF). As such, it is becoming the talk of the business world, with its Microsoft orientation. Recently, the Swiss Drupal specialist Amazee Labs set up a complete Drupal website on Windows® Azure™, the Microsoft cloud platform. What is prompting the Drupal community to rely more on Windows Server® and Windows Azure as a hosting platform? Jos Doekbrijder, Miro Dietiker and Michael Schmid, of the association Drupal Events, and Peter Kiowski, Platform Strategy Manager at Microsoft Schweiz GmbH, explain why.



Drupal is both a system and a framework for managing open-source content. What does this entail?

Jos Doekbrijder: Drupal is high-performance software for creating web shops and for building up and servicing large communities. The software offers broadly flexible design and a differentiated set of roles and rights. Drupal is free open-source software used by millions round the globe. Examples are the White House and Congress in the USA, and big organisations and corporations such as UNICEF, The Economist or TNT Swiss Post. Drupal runs on industry-standard hosting platforms and is compatible with nearly all legacy systems. A large and committed community of developers lies behind Drupal, and there is an impressive ecosystem with thousands of functions and add-ons.

What are Drupal's particular strengths?

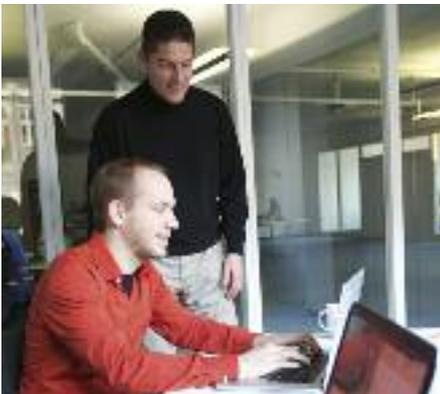
Miro Dietiker: Drupal is highly flexible. It can be used both for small websites and for very large corporate and organisational web presences. A simple Drupal web shop, including checkout, can be up and running in half an hour. At the same time, such a web shop can be extended at will, to accommodate ranges of merchandise on the scale, say, of Migros. You are also totally free in designing the web pages and can respond very flexibly to customer requirements. One example is compliance with CI/CD guidelines.

So far, Drupal has largely been hosted in Linux environments. Why is that?

Miro Dietiker: For historical reasons. Open-source developers mainly work with LAMP environments, so Drupal was originally optimised for that system environment. As Drupal became more widespread, there was growing interest in optimising it for other systems. This demand came both from customers and from the community of developers.

Drupal Events – the Swiss Drupal community

The association Drupal Events organises events to make Drupal better known as open-source software. Miro Dietiker, Michael Schmid and Jos Doekbrijder founded the association in spring 2011. Drupal Events can be contacted via www.drupal-events.ch or by telephone on +41 79 211 24 46.



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The Drupal community and Microsoft have been converging for a while. What is the background?

Peter Kiowski: Microsoft invests heavily in interoperability and in the openness of its own platform to open-source software workloads. It is well aware that many customers have heterogeneous technology environments. Given the trend towards cloud-based platforms, openness and interoperability are gaining in significance. Microsoft has everything to gain from bringing successful, future-oriented open-source software like Drupal onto its Windows Azure cloud platform.

Jos Doekbrijder: Drupal is now a hot topic in major organisations and corporations, many of which have already invested in Microsoft technology. If we optimise Drupal for the Microsoft technology platform, we remove technological and financial barriers for these companies.

What form of practical support does Microsoft offer in the case of Drupal?

Michael Schmid: Microsoft has backed a number of initiatives, such as the international conference DrupalCon and our CodeSprint, during which we have developed a tool for managing multilingual Drupal-based websites. Microsoft lent its support to make Drupal 7 fully compatible with Microsoft® SQL Server® for the first time. Microsoft has also recently provided support to make "drush", another management and productivity tool, fully compatible. These two components are decisive in Drupal's continued successful spread into Microsoft system environments.

The Swiss Drupal specialist Amazee Labs, from Zurich, recently implemented a complete Drupal website on the Windows Azure cloud platform. What advantages does Drupal offer in the cloud?

Michael Schmid: Drupal projects can be set up very fast with Azure, because it is highly scalable. If the project is successful, it is no problem to manage the peak loads that can occur, say, in marketing activities or when there are press articles. On the other hand, less successful projects can quickly be scaled down again, without major losses of investment in hardware. The risk is controllable and the cost very much lower than for one's own hardware.

Managing multilingual websites poses a major challenge. The Drupal community from multilingual Switzerland has done pioneering work on this ...

Miro Dietiker: At MD Systems, we have dealt with complex multilingual projects for years and are actively sharing in the development of the typical Drupal components of multilingualism. During this process, we identified weak points and inefficient processes. I had the idea of overcoming the existing limitations with the help of a new tool. That is why I initiated a CodeSprint with the team of Drupal Events. The aim of the CodeSprint was to develop a module which customers can use to manage dynamic multilingual content without having to learn Drupal-specific skills. Furthermore, we wanted to make it possible to link a customer's Drupal website direct to professional translation services, including quality, financial and financial control functions. The new Translation Management Tool (TMGMT) module, developed in the context of the CodeSprint, is generating keen interest among online translation providers. Many providers with worldwide activity, such as MyGengo or Native, want to ensure optimum inclusion in Drupal. For this purpose, MD Systems has entered into partnership with many providers. The module is already used in over 100 projects.

How does the future look for Drupal and Microsoft?

Peter Kiowski: The latest release enables us to offer IaaS (infrastructure as a service) on Windows Azure. This further expands the possibilities of flexible, highly scalable, cloud-hosted Drupal solutions.

Jos Doekbrijder: Thanks to close cooperation with Microsoft, the popularity of Drupal is spreading even faster throughout the business world, especially across big corporations and organisations. Unlimited operability allows firms to make the best use of their investments in Microsoft technology and maximise the returns. Drupal, in conjunction with Windows Azure, is the solution of the future for dynamic, highly scalable web shops and community portals.