

# Drupal Forums: A Case Study

Megan and Liam McDermott  
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# Overview

- Why choose Drupal for forums?
  - About The Webmaster Forums
  - Limitations of vBulletin
- Our implementation
  - Modules used
  - Configuration
- Forums in Drupal 8 and beyond
  - What needs to be done to make Drupal forums competitive?

# First, a history

- The Webmaster Forums (1998-present)

**the Webmaster FORUMS**

MyGeekCommunity™ Meet Network Date Collaborate  
My Geek Community - Where Geeks Come to Meet

<http://www.webmaster-forums.net> Home About Us Link to Us

NEW POSTS TODAY'S TOPICS CONTROL PANEL MEMBERS LOGOUT HELP RULES

**The Webmaster Forums**

Forum	Threads	Posts	Last Post
<b>Designing Your Website</b>			
<b>Webmaster's Corner</b> If it doesn't go anywhere else it goes here.	1,996	12,496	<b>spammers using my email...</b> by <a href="#">JeevesBond</a> Today 05:33 PM
<b>Web Design and Graphics</b> Graphics software, logo design, page layout, look and feel, Flash, multimedia and more.	1,490	10,207	<b>Advice on website for CEO -...</b> by <a href="#">Azam.biz</a> 7th October 2006 07:57 PM
<b>HTML, CSS, and Javascript</b> Questions about HTML coding, web standards, validation, WYSIWYG editors, CSS display problems and Javascript errors go here.	3,507	18,622	<b>CSS columns</b> by <a href="#">Megan</a> Today 02:05 PM
<b>Building Your Website</b>			
<b>Server-Side Scripting</b> Backend programming languages including PHP, Ruby, JSP, Perl, ASP, .NET, and Cold Fusion.	2,662	12,964	<b>Google's new Codesearch...</b> by <a href="#">italianninja</a> Today 12:23 PM
<b>Web Database Development</b> Database design and development using MySQL, Oracle, Access, MS SQL and others.	522	2,696	<b>Need Gateway Script</b> by <a href="#">highbids</a> 7th October 2006 01:13 PM
<b>Web Hosting and Domain Names</b> Registering and setting up domain names, finding hosting, experience with registrars and hosting companies.	1,105	6,193	<b>Looking For a Good...</b> by <a href="#">italianninja</a> 8th October 2006 06:01 PM
<b>Server Management</b> Setting up and managing your own web server, using Linux/Unix, Windows or any other OS.	617	3,119	<b>debian or fedora core 5</b> by <a href="#">italianninja</a> Today 12:32 PM

Private Messages: 0 unread, 716 total messages

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# First, a history

- The Webmaster Forums (1998-present)
- Operating on vBulletin since 2000
- Always wanted to add on a content site
- Just another “webmaster forum” (whatever that means ...)

# First, a history

- New ownership, 2005

# First, a history

- New ownership, 2005



# Limitations of vBulletin

- No CMS (at the time)
- Many features and options, poor usability



# Limitations of vBulletin

- Not standards-aware
- Cluttered, bloated design
  - Concept of “skins”



The screenshot shows a forum post interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with buttons for 'profile', 'pm', 'email', 'website', 'search', and 'buddy'. The post is by user 'italianninja', a TWF Member, with a small tree profile picture. The post content reads: 'are you using imap? or smtp to send mail? smtp needs to be locked down. imap uses native intergration.' Below the text is a red link: 'Site Submitter! Cheap Domains! PayPal!' and a red link: 'Report this post to a moderator'. At the bottom right of the post area are buttons for 'edit', 'quote', and a signature icon. The user's join date is '08 Oct 2006', location is 'United Kingdom', and they have '14' posts. An 'IP' button is visible at the bottom left of the user's profile information.



# Limitations of vBulletin

<p><b>DU-Squid</b> TWF Enthusiast <a href="#">DU-Squid's Avatar</a> Join Date: 17 Nov 2003 Posts: 59</p>	<p><a href="http://gallery.menalto.com/modules.p...ews&amp;file=index">http://gallery.menalto.com/modules.p...ews&amp;file=index</a></p> <p>Is pretty nice and I think not that difficult to customize either. You could probably get some ideas from that.</p> <p><a href="#">Deafening-Urge.net</a> - Great Hosting at affordable prices.</p> <p><a href="#">quote</a></p>
<p>18th November 2003, 09:10 AM</p> <p><a href="#">profile</a> <a href="#">website</a> <a href="#">search</a></p>	
<p><b>dhotchin</b> Master Yoda Join Date: 10 Nov 2003 Location: Ripon, UK Posts: 168</p>	<p>Thanks for that, nice one!!!</p> <p><code>C:\DOS C:\DOS\RUN RUN\DOS\RUN</code></p> <p><a href="#">quote</a></p>

[Post Reply](#)

[« Previous Thread](#) | [Next Thread »](#)

<b>Thread Tools</b>	<b>Search this Thread</b>
<a href="#">Show Printable Version</a> Email this Page <a href="#">Email this Page</a>	<b>Search this Thread:</b> <input type="text"/> <input type="button" value="Go"/> <a href="#">Advanced Search</a>
<b>Rate This Thread</b>	
<b>Rate This Thread:</b> 5 : Excellent <input type="button" value="Go"/>	

**Forum Jump**

Web Design and Graphics

– TWF Classic 3.5

# Limitations of vBulletin

- Not standards-aware
- Cluttered, bloated design
  - Concept of “skins”
- Difficult to change templates
  - Logic and JavaScript in template files
  - Frequent changes to defaults
  - Stored in database

# Limitations of vBulletin

- Poor SEO
  - URLs  
e.g. <http://webmaster-forums.net/showthread.php?t=127185813&page=1>
  - Duplicate content
- Limited extensibility; same feature set as competitors
- Closed-source, license fees

# Choosing Drupal

- Moved to Drupal in December, 2007
- Also considered Vanilla, PunBB
- Wanted something open source, standards-aware

# Why Drupal?

- Integrated CMS
- Open source
- Standards-aware
- Easy to customize design
- Only the features we need
- Better usability (esp. Admin interface)
- Better SEO (nice URLs)
- **Flexible, extensible**
- **Potential**



# Migrating to Drupal

- Challenges:
  - Migration (VB to Drupal module)
  - Feature set
    - User Stats
    - Signatures for Forums

# Tour of the site

The screenshot shows the homepage of theWebmasterForums. At the top, there is a dark header with the site logo 'theWebmasterForums' in white and pink, a search bar, and a 'Search' button. Below the header is a green navigation bar with links for 'Articles', 'Discussion', and 'About Us'. The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column features several topic sections, each with a title, a brief description, and a post count. The right column contains two 'Advertise Here' boxes, a 'Highlighted topics' section with a post about a long downtime, and a sidebar with various utility links like 'Recent posts', 'Favourites', 'Messages', 'My account', 'Create content', 'Log out', and 'Administer'. A 'Hire us!' banner is visible in the top right corner.

**theWebmasterForums**  Search

Articles Discussion About Us

## Designing Your Website

### Webmaster's Corner

If it doesn't go anywhere else it goes here.  
17557 posts in 2842 topics

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### Web Design and Graphics

Graphics software, logo design, page layout, look and feel, Flash, multimedia and more.  
12860 posts in 1864 topics

---

### HTML, CSS, and Javascript

Questions about HTML coding, web standards, validation, WYSIWYG editors, CSS display problems and Javascript errors go here.  
23401 posts in 4480 topics

## Building Your Website

### Web Programming and Application Development

Coding, scripting and programming languages including PHP, Ruby, JSP, Java, Perl, ASP, .NET, and Cold Fusion.  
16080 posts in 3339 topics

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### Web Database Development

Database design and development using MySQL, Oracle, Access, MS SQL and others.  
3539 posts in 673 topics

---

### Web Hosting and Domain Names

Registering and setting up domain names, finding hosting, experience

**Advertise Here** **Advertise Here**

### Highlighted topics

**We're back (after a really long downtime)**

Sorry I don't have time, right now, to explain everything that happened over the last ten days or so

**Code does not work in IE**

Hello,

Please let me know why this code does not work in IE. Works like a charm on Firefox, Chro

There are 2 topics waiting in the **Critique Queue**.

There are reported topics, reported comments and 56 reported users.

- Recent posts
- Favourites
- Messages
- My account
- Create content
- Log out
- Administer
- Moderator Manual

**InterMedia**  
PIONEERING BETTER WEB DESIGN

# Modules used

ACL Access  
Forum Access  
Comment  
Contact  
Forum  
Menu  
Path  
Poll  
Profile  
Search  
Syslog  
Taxonomy  
Tracker  
Update status  
Upload  
Flag  
Private messages  
Messaging  
Simple mail  
**vB to Drupal**  
Notifications  
BBCode

Better Formats  
Code Filter  
Comment mover  
Comment upload  
Fasttoggle  
Global Redirect  
Pathauto  
Quick Tabs  
Quote  
**Signatures for Forums**  
Site Verification  
Token  
User badges  
**User Stats**  
Video Filter  
Rules  
Smileys  
reCAPTCHA  
Piwik  
Wysiwyg  
Views  
Views Bulk Operations  
XML Sitemap



# How many modules?

```
SELECT COUNT(*)  
FROM system           = 85  
WHERE status = 1;
```

(sorry Khalid)

# vB to Drupal

- Started 2007
- 800 hours invested
- David A. Wheeler's 'SLOCCount' says:
  - 4,175 SLOC
  - 11 months development
  - \$121,152 cost
- First version sucked
- Later iterations suck slightly less

# Great, but what does it do?

- Forums
- Polls
- File uploads and avatars
- Blogs
- Private messages
- Social groups
- Visitor walls
- Birthdays
- Profiles

 **Bulletin™**

***InterMedia***  
PIONEERING BETTER WEB DESIGN

# Great, but what does it do?

- Photo galleries
- Categories and tags
- Comments
- Creates Node type with layout/fields similar to Photopost

**PhotoPost**

# **vBULLETIN™® TO DRUPAL™**



**WHY U NO USE MIGRATE?!!!!1!11!1one**

# The Competitors

Not only do they have shinier forums than us ...





# vBulletin®

4.0 PUBLISHING SUITE

UPGRADE: **\$250**  
NEW LICENSE: **\$285**

**ORDER NOW**

# The Competitors



## CMS built for Communities

Our new Content Management System was designed to enable your community members to easily create content and cross-publish between your forums, blogs, and site articles. [Learn more...](#)



## Forums

The most powerful forum software in the world. Includes all of the features of the new vBulletin 4.x Forum. [Learn more...](#)



## Community Blogs

vBulletin Blog makes it simple for members to create their own Blog within the community. [Learn more...](#)



## Widget Platform

Create your own widgets or add 3rd party widgets like Google Gadgets to your site. [Learn more...](#)



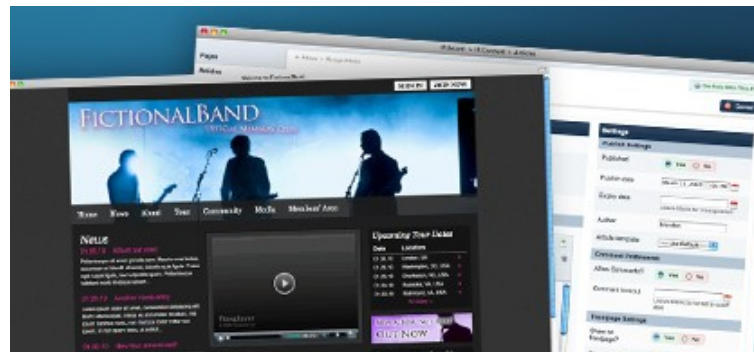
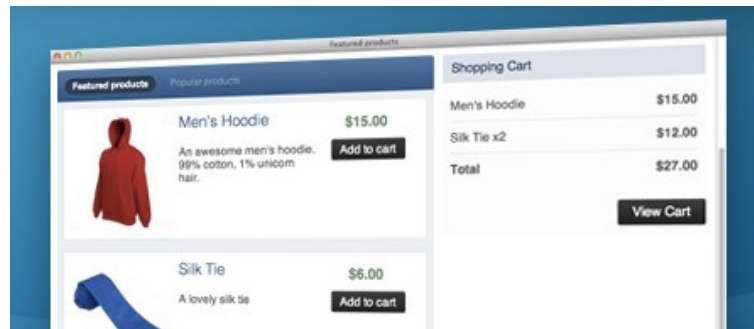
## Free Support

Includes free ticket support for the life of the 4.x product. [Learn more...](#)

vBulletin has a new **CMS**, plus:

- Blogs
- Social groups

# The Competitors



Invision Power Board has:

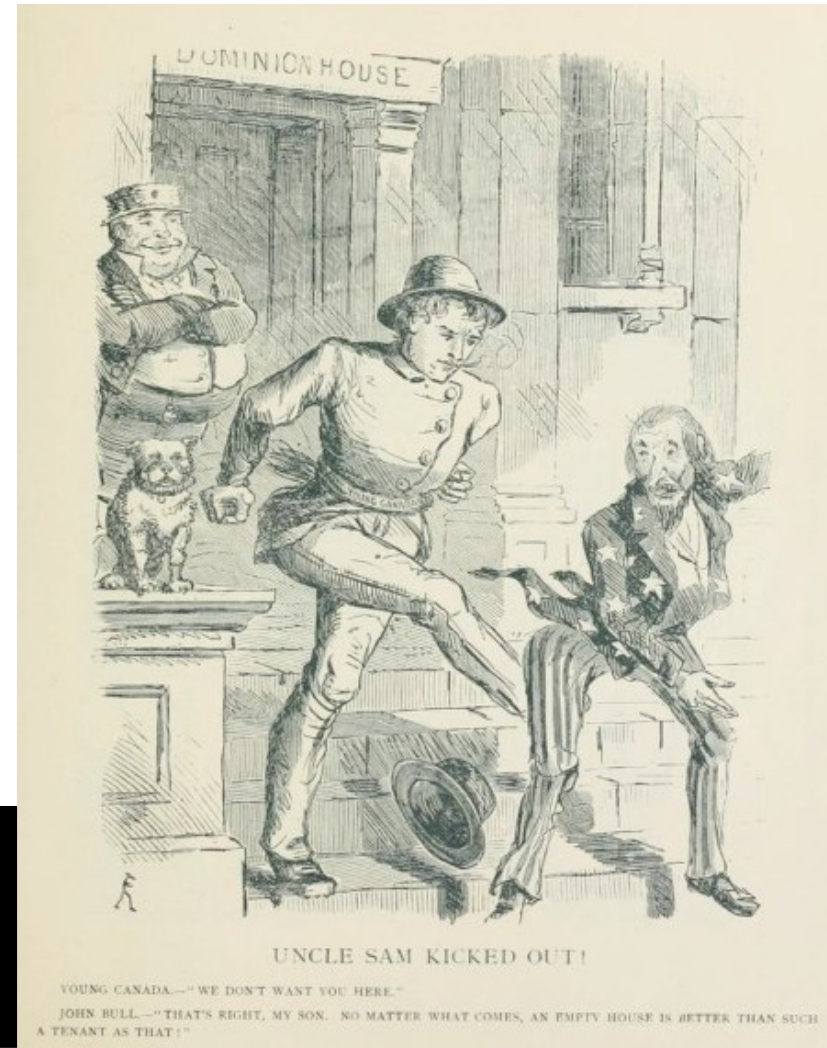
- CMS
- Blogs
- eCommerce
- Calendaring



# They're encroaching on our turf!

- Using strength of their forum software to get into the CMS/Commerce market
- Threat to Drupal's core market

**Let's give 'em  
the boot**



# Why are Drupal forums important?

- Competitors can't take our market share if we take theirs first
- Install profiles? But forums aren't a product!
- Drupal must diversify to keep growing
  - ♦ (if Drupal doesn't grow, Drupal businesses won't either)

# Challenges with Drupal Forums

- Performance
- Permissions
- Moderation
- Nodes + comments
  - separate templates; hard to theme & maintain
  - different forms; confusing for users
- Little things (tracking user activity; recent posts views etc.)

# Improvements to Drupal Forums

- Little things to start:
  - [#1285842] Templates for Forum nodes and comments
  - [#132446] Signature support for nodes
  - [#515034] Mark all forum topics read
  - [#1130276] Convert forum index page from table to list
- Big things for the future:
  - Forum posts + threads as entities
  - Artesian Forum?
- The problems of forums are Drupal problems too

Questions?

# More information

- Goodbye vBulletin, Part One: Reasons to Switch:  
<http://www.apaddedcell.com/goodbye-vbulletin-part-1-reasons-switch>
- Goodbye vBulletin, Part Two: How We Got Away:  
<http://www.apaddedcell.com/goodbye-vbulletin-part-two-how-we-got-away>
- The Webmaster Forums:  
<http://webmaster-forums.net>

# Contact us

Liam McDermott (“Liam McDermott”)

- Email: [liam@intermedia-online.com](mailto:liam@intermedia-online.com)
- Web: <http://intermedia-online.com>

Megan McDermott (“drupalchick”)

- Email: [megan@intermedia-online.com](mailto:megan@intermedia-online.com)
- Web: <http://meganmcdermott.com>
- Twitter: drupalchick