# The 1-Hour Conversion: Conventional Website to WOW

## Introduction: The WOW II Pushbutton Website Platform

The Coast Guard Auxiliary's WOW II Website Platform permits the creation of "pushbutton" websites with no technical expertise. It literally allows units without experienced webmasters to immediately create a credible, attractive, basic unit website in as little as 25 seconds. Then as time permits, additional content may be added nearly as quickly, using the power features of WOW II (hereinafter "WOW").

WOW is not just for simple sites; 100+ page district sites have been successfully deployed with WOW and look outstanding.  And, if you are an experienced HTML programmer, you will find that WOW will make your life an order of magnitude easier. As a true Content Management System (CMS), WOW lets you concentrate on your *content*, while it does all the heavy lifting to create a modern, hierarchical menu system, with automated links to the National Website, Member Zone credential validation, accurate lists of your staff officers directly from AuxDirectory, available boating safety courses (from the national database), and links to allied units (flotilla, division and district sites).

The benefits of WOW are so profound to the unit and to the webmaster or CS officer, that it is surprising that every single Auxiliary site built with the old HTML, XML, or JavaScript templates has not already migrated. The only explanations are fear, misunderstanding, or inertia.

This application note is designed to remove that fear, clear up any misunderstandings, and get you going on a simple, fast move that your unit, and your successor to your office, will thank you for.

### Conversions in 1 Hour

To a literate computer user who also knows WOW II well, well over 95% of the flotilla and division websites in the country can be converted to WOW II in one hour or less. The few exceptions are those rare-but-beautiful conventional sites built to professional standards by extremely experienced Web designers, which are likely not candidates for conversion to WOW anyways. Such sites represent the Auxiliary well, and are an extreme source of pride for their units.

We are, instead, talking about the hundreds of other sites, many of which have not been maintained for years, ten pages or less, build by an FSO-CS perhaps long gone, perhaps not, who knew a smattering of HTML. Most likely, your site.

The one-hour conversion of such sites – typically 10 *internal* pages or less, and perhaps a few dozen or less external links – is possible through a *very mechanical and systematic process* that once learned, can have you converting one page of your old site to WOW *every few minutes.*

However, expect to spend at least an hour understanding this Application Note, and getting the first few pages done. After that, your pace will pick up, and you will find yourself done before you know it.

### The Conversion Model

Substantial amounts of experience have shown that it is *faster* and yields *better results* if you create your new WOW site from scratch, and only use the old one for reference, and as a live source for content (current, only), link directories (if you have them), and images.

You will open up your new, empty WOW II site in one browser window, your old site in another browser window, and a basic text editor (Notepad on Windows, TextEdit on OS X) in a third window. From there, following our procedure, you will systematically copy from old to new, page by page, until you're done.

Note that the following typical pages will *not* be carried over from your old site, as they are automatically generated by WOW:

- Meeting Location and Contact Information
- Links to your Division, District Site, or Flotilla Sites (if a Division or District)
- A list of your staff officers (and contact information for logged in members)
- Public Education Courses – yours or those nearby

WOW will also automatically generate your entire left menu (navigation) system, the top banner and links to National sites and departments, and the required privacy act statements, and other boilerplate. So, *do not move pages with such content on your old site.*

Here is the whole process, step by step. Figure and page references refer to the *WOW II User's Guide*, which you should have handy to see illustrations of the steps below.

## The Rapid Conversion Process

### 1. Save the Images from Your Old Site

Create a folder on your desktop. Open up a browser and navigate to your old website. Click through that site page by page, and simply drag and drop images that you wish to move to your new site from the browser into into the folder. Images that you don't want on the new site, ignore. We will use the folder full of images later.

### 2. Duplicate Your Old Site's Left Menu Structure

Open up a second browser window, and position it on your screen side by side with the window showing your old site (narrow each window as required). In the second window, browse to your WOW site, log in, and enter the Configure mode. If you don't know how to do this, stop, and read the companion Application Note *WOW II Pushbutton Website Platform Quick Start Guide* available at:

http://wow.uscgaux.info/user_docs/AuxiliaryWOW_II_Quick_Start_Guide.pdf

Now, for each item in the left menu of your old website, create the same menu item on the WOW site, *unless the entire page is stale content and you decide to omit the page entirely.*

Start by choosing a Menu Item type in the pulldown menu under "Add New Menu Item" in WOW. If there is a built-in type that is the same as an existing page (for example: Members Only), use it, otherwise select "Custom". [See Figure 10, Page 11, *WOW II User's Guide*]

In the MENU AREA box that appears, under Menu Name, type the same menu text (menu "name") that appears for that menu item in your old site. Use "Title Case" (Capitalize each word except "a", "and", etc.), and if necessary simplify or shorted so the words don't wrap (can do later).  For built-in types, this is already done.

For Custom menu items, also type in the Page Title, again in title case. This will be the main caption on that page. You may change it later (titles are automatic on built-in page types). [Figure 12, Page 12, *op cit.*]

Click the blinking "SAVE MENU" button.

*Repeat the above, until you have duplicated every item in your old menu.*

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Note: if your old site used the Auxiliary JavaScript template, and you have second-level pop-up menus, simply create the pop-up menu items in WOW II immediately following the parent, and set the Menu Level of those pop-up menus to "2" before clicking SAVE MENU.

### 3. Transfer Each Page of Content

Now it's time to move the content on each page of your old site to your new, in such a way that will strip all old formatting[1]. This prevents your new site from looking like a ransom note. Again, you will go page by page, starting with your home page.  Be brutal about *not* copying stale content.

Note: if the old page is a page full of external links (i.e., a "link directory"), skip it. There is a separate process, below.

To do this stage, you will have to open up a third window and fit it onto your screen – a basic text editor (Notepad or TextEdit).  Position the text edit window on your screen so you can easily get at it, as well as the two browser windows you have open.

In your old site, drag your mouse across all the content on the page, highlighting it.  Do *not* include the top banner and menus, the left menu system, or the bottom panel. *Only* select the pure content from the "content area". Don't worry if images are also being selected.

Copy the content that you have selected ("Edit > Copy" in the menu bar, or Ctrl-C on Windows, Cmd-C on OS X) and immediately paste the copied content into the open text editor window.

In the WOW II browser window, click on the menu for the page you are moving, under "Edit Active Items". The Edit/Update page for that item will open up. Click on the ADD NEW ANNOUNCEMENT button. The Announcement Entry Page will open up. Focus on the editing area, which is the open space *below* the two blue rows of icons. [Figure 13, Page 12; Figure 14, Page 13 *op cit.*]

From your open text editor window, select all the text you previously pasted there, copy it, and paste it into this editing area. By first copying the content *to* the text editor, you stripped it of all images and incompatible hidden coding. Now, when you copy it *from* the text editor *to* the WOW editor, it will be pure text. Note that if you attempt to use Microsoft Word, Word Pad, or any other word processor whatsoever for the intermediate copy, you will chowder the page.

Now, compare your old page with what you see in the WOW II editor (ignoring images). If you are missing paragraphs breaks in the WOW version, click into the text where they belong, and hit ENTER, just like any other text editor.  If you had internal paragraph titles that were bold, select them in the WOW II page, and pull down the "Normal" pulldown in the Icon Bar to "Heading 3" (use nothing larger).

Finally, scroll down the page and click SAVE.  You can always come back later to tweak. Right now, concentrate on getting a rhythm going of copying old page to new, quickly and efficiently.

Repeat this process for every page in your old site.

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[1] It is possible to copy HTML from your old page to your new, by putting the Announcement editor into the HTML mode, and copying the content – with all HTML tags intact – into the latter.  If you want to do some general cleanup on the copied code, return to the WYSIWYG mode, select all the content (Cmd-A or Ctrl-A), and groom the text with the "Clean Up HTML" icon (resembles a small brush or whisk broom) in the Announcement editor. In response to a "Clean up HTML" dialog box that appears, click in turn all options except "Remove all HTML tags" (unless that is your goal). Copying HTML is not recommended!

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TIP: if you'd like an aid to remind you what content is contained in each announcement (especially if you later have more than one announcement per page), type a simple description in the Caption field, but do *not* check the "Show on Page" checkbox.

### Inserting Images

You are now going to go back through each of the pages you created above, and add the images (if no images, skip that page and move on). You will be importing the images into WOW II from the folder of images you created on your desk top, above, positioning them left, right, or center, and deciding whether to have text flow alongside the image, or not. Proceed as follows:

Referencing your old page, decide where you want your image to go.  In the WOW II dashboard, click on the page you wish to edit, and then Click at the *end* of the text *after which* you wish the image to appear, and click ENTER to create a new paragraph at that point. Leave the cursor at this position. Now, click on the "Insert Image" icon at the top of the editing area (resembles a mountain with a pencil). In the dialog box, click "Browse for Files" and locate the image that you copied from your old site, in the folder you created on your desktop, and click "Open". [Figure 29, Page 24, *op cit.*]

Back in the Insert Image dialog box, you will see the image you are inserting. Before you do anything else, type some alternative text in the provided box, as required, that describes your image (e.g., "Photo of FC"). Now, you have a critical decision to make: *do you want the image on the left, right, or in the center?* And, if left or right, do you want the text in the *following* paragraph to flow *around* the image, or to start below it? If centered, with no flow, follow the next step.  If left or right justified, with flow, skip the next step, and execute the one after.

#### Centered, no flow

Simply click INSERT in the dialog box. The image will be insert below (or between) paragraphs, on the left side of the page. Now, click the "Center" icon in the second row of icons, and the image will center. Skip the next step.

#### Left or Right-Justified, with flow

In the Insert Image dialog box, locate "Alignment" in the Layout box. From that pulldown menu, choose either "Left" or "Right", and click INSERT. You will note that any text after the image (if any) will be adjacent to the image, and not below it. Your only problem is that the text will be *touching* the image, which looks unprofessional.

To fix this, *double-click* the image, and a Properties dialog box will open up. Click on "Style Builder", then "Border".  Your goal is to add 10 pixels (10px) of *margin* to either the *right* side of the image (for *left* justified images) or the *left* side (for *right* justified images). So, in the pulldown menu under "Borders" that says "All", choose "Left" or "Right", as appropriate, type "10" (no quotes) next to "Margin", and the click the OK button. [Figure 30, Page 25, *op cit.*]

Before you SAVE this page, you may adjust the size of the image simply by grabbing it by one corner (click and hold the mouse button) and dragging the corner towards the center of the image to make it smaller, or away from the center to make it larger.

Finally, scroll down the Announcement Entry page, and click the SAVE button.

*Repeat this process for every image from the old site you wish to transfer to the new site.*

### Link Directory Pages

Link directories are pages with lists of external links. To move these, you will want to open up the Announcement editor in the WOW Dashboard for the page where you wish to put the link directory, and switch

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the editor to the HTML mode with the provided button. Then paste the HTML representing *only* the link directory itself (no page headers, footers, or menus) into the Announcement editor, and click SAVE.

If you actually have the original HTML (on your computer, or downloaded via FTP from your legacy website), then just copy and paste that in the Announcement editor. If you do *not* still have the HTML, then simply ask your browser to "Display Source" or "Show Source", or equivalent, and copy just the HTML that represents the link directory according to the instructions above.

Note: In order for this page to be harmonious with the rest of your site, you should strip it of all hidden font tags that were carried over from your old site. To do so, while in the announcement editor for the page you copied, right-click anywhere in the body text and choose "Select All" from the popup menu.  Then, from the icon bar, select the BRUSH icon. In the "Clean Up HTML" dialog box that opens, select "Clean up <Font> tags". Close the dialog box, and click the SAVE BUTTON.

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