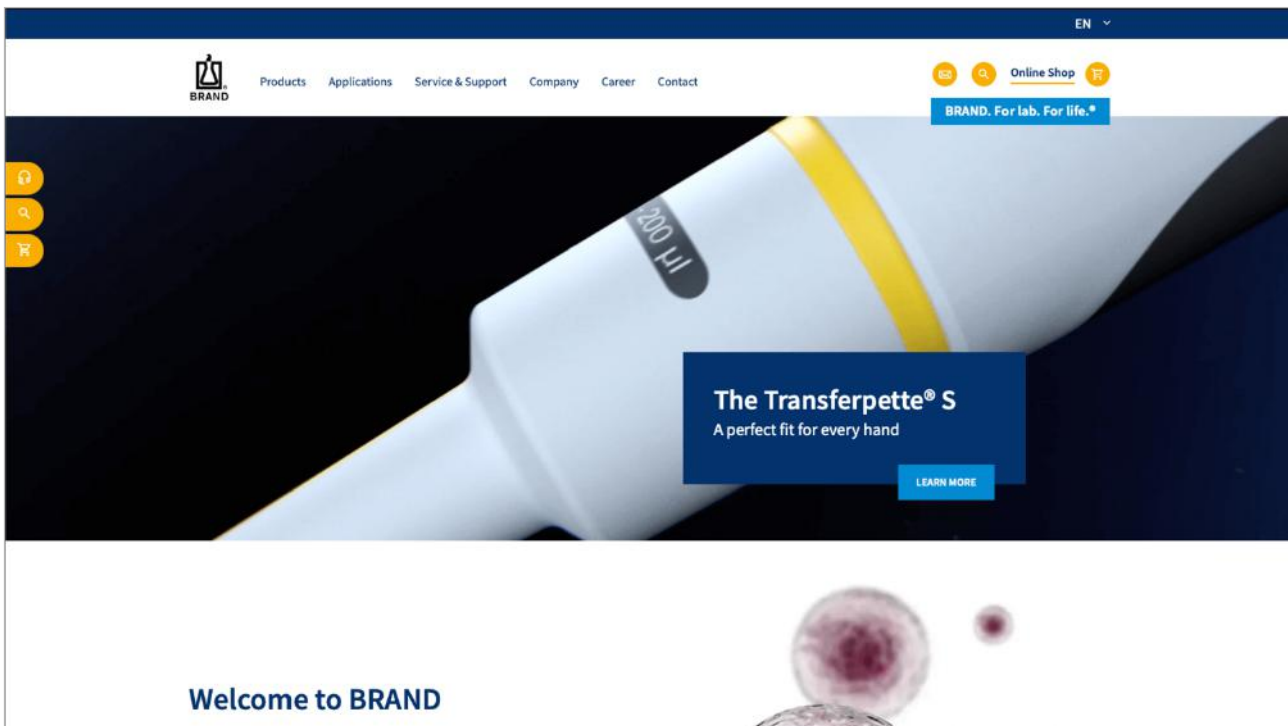# BRAND brings TYPO3 expertise in-house

With the help of Senior Developer David Herber, our client BRAND chose to bring TYPO3 knowledge in-house to make them more self-reliant. We were delighted to share our knowledge while relaunching their international website together. This shows how everyone gains when they live the open-source ideal: resilient businesses, satisfied employees, and a thriving community.

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BRAND chose to upskill staff while relaunching TYPO3 website

BRAND, a manufacturer of laboratory equipment and supplies, was founded in 1949 and has since grown into a worldwide company with offices in Germany, the USA, India, China, and the UK. When they needed to relaunch their corporate website, they wanted to try something new. Instead of handing the work off to an agency, BRAND and the Shared Services company BRAND INTERNATIONAL chose to upskill their own developers to build in-house capacity while boosting employees' job satisfaction along the way.

One such employee is David Herber, a Senior Developer, who was keen to update his TYPO3 skills so he could work with the latest version. He was impressed by b13 when he saw their sessions at the TYPO3 Camp Stuttgart in Autumn 2019:

"We were looking for a web agency that would enable us to do parts of the development on the new website on our own. Not your typical catalogue of requirements! Our aim was to build the new website in a team consisting of b13 and BRAND developers, based on proper code versioning and deployment."

After the camp, he did some research on the agencies he'd seen there. "I went away with a list of people," he recounts, "and did some research on them."

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>
> — David Herber

A powerful CMS optimized for speed

His main reasons for choosing b13 were their use of a powerful CMS in the form of TYPO3 and their expertise in making TYPO3 faster—in particular their knowledge of Accelerated Mobile Pages (AMP). "It's well known that TYPO3 can quickly become sluggish unless you use it properly," David acknowledges.

Alongside this, he needed a team with enough capacity to work on the scale a company like BRAND requires. "I wanted an agency with about 15-20 people so if a developer is ill or something, they can continue working," David adds.

But as a developer, one thing gave him goosebumps: "To have a direct line to an agency where a CEO is a TYPO3 core developer was very impressive. I was blown away when Benni answered the phone and we could talk about really detailed technical questions."

Workshops, workflows, and working relationships

Claus-Peter Eberwein, Project Lead for b13, explains what happened next. "We got the project started before Christmas, starting with workshops to get to know the customer's needs. Laura, our designer, did pre-design work and gave the designer from BRAND lots of feedback. We got there together, step by step."

He continues: "We set up a workflow that we still use for any changes and additions now the site has gone live. BRAND can do their development, and then issue merge requests. We then review them and give feedback, and when the code quality is right we merge it into the live site." For some complex or time-critical parts before the launch date, b13 did the work and showed David their solution.

Once the website was ready, b13 also supported editors to manage content effectively.

Right from the start, David was energized by working with TYPO3 experts. "The workshops were much more interesting than what I've experienced before," he says. "I really value the team's lateral thinking to find solutions. Throughout the project, we always knew we could solve every problem that came our way; I never felt we had our backs against the wall."

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High-frequency feedback for effective learning

Once the project got started in earnest, David was "very impressed with the high frequency of feedback—the large number of iterations helped me learn fast. There was lots of teaching, calling back, saying this is not how we do it—all very interesting and helpful."

In particular, David is proud of the Solr search solution, which he worked on. This pulls in data from a Magento shop and shows results from the shop within the website search. Overall, the website was an ambitious project with wide-ranging, often custom, functionality including integration of the company's internal data sources, a downloads area, a newsroom, careers portal, and more—all available in five languages.

The project went online on time on the 7th September 2020. "The whole process of going live—switching from one server to another—was very smooth. This is what everyone involved in the project says," David recalls. "Now we try to keep b13 out of development for the most part and see whether we can transfer what we've learned to real-life stuff."

For the most part, BRAND can develop new features without calling upon b13. Nevertheless, b13 reviews all their code before it is deployed; this gives BRAND cost-effective independence as well as peace of mind that their code is of a high quality. Meanwhile, their skills improve with every code review. As of early November 2020, BRAND has put in nearly 600 merge requests and the number continues to grow.

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Happy customers, happy staff — happy BRAND

With their new website up-and-running, BRAND successfully bolstered their in-house expertise. They have even trained up a frontend developer who, until now, mostly did marketing but was motivated to explore technical work.

David considers BRAND's openness for this alternative approach part of BRAND's employee benefits scheme, as he was really motivated to bring his own skills up to date. This is in line with BRAND's culture of treating employees well and giving them control over their own careers, to boost staff retention and continuity. At the same time, BRAND has given back to the TYPO3 community by supporting the sharing of knowledge.

Not only that: BRAND, and the Brand Group to which it belongs, save money by developing features in-house, are less dependent on external agencies, and have control over every aspect of their international communications.