

## **TOPIC: TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS TO INCREASE EFFICIENCY**

### **QUESTION: Describe the technology and tell its background/purpose?**

“It’s an open source content management system called Exponent. It was designed with simplicity in mind. And, essentially it employs some technology known as LAMP, L-A-M-P which stands for Linux, Apache, MySQL, and PHP. MySQL and PHP are the two main technologies that are used. MySQL is an open-source database system which is what is used to store the information that’s gathered on the web site. And then you have PHP which is a programming language which, without getting too technical, it’s a service side programming language. So, when you write a page in PHP, the output of that file is HTML which is what the web browser reads. But, this page gets written dynamically every time it gets loaded. And, included in that is information that comes from the database. So, a combination of these two things, gives us the content management system. So, physically on your server, it looks like a folder that contains seven or eight other folders that themselves contain PHP files. It contains java script. There will be images, there will be a whole lot of other ancillary files as well. But, this collection of files and folders is the content management system. What brings it to life is when you, then load that in a web browser, it then connects to the database and allows you to then, insert information into the system.

Probably the most common kind of module that you have is a text module. And text can be pictures. You can copy and paste stuff out of a word processing program. Although I would caution that some word processing programs do add a whole lot of other stuff to the code that gets copied and pasted, and it can end up with some interesting results. In the new version of Exponent it has a rich text editor that has some buttons that will let you paste things as plain text which, tend to get you around those problems.

The overall appearance of text is controlled using CSS, cascading style sheets. And you can specify this module by module. It’s not complicated but, it does require, you know, a certain amount of knowledge of HTML. The advantage of that is that you usually have a tech coordinator that has been doing the website already, knows HTML. And, one of the really simple things about Exponent is, developing a template can be done in days rather than weeks.

I spent two hours with someone that had been doing a traditional website which wasn’t even using CSS. And, I basically got him up to speed on how to uh, create the template. And, in a lot of cases, uh, I think what they’re gonna have to devote to it is time to experiment and to play around and get things to look the way that they want.

The teachers can probably embark on a project like this and within a two month period they can probably have something that was ready for content. Which would be comparable probably to doing that in a regular web—web editing software.”

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