

## Leader Values

A leadership development organisation.



### Complex CMS Made Easy for Leader Values

When leadership guru Mick Yates needed a major update of his world-class Leader Values website, he appointed Evergreen to combine an online-sourced design with a complete database and content management system overhaul - and enhanced socialisation of a nearly-2000-page site that attracts devotees from around the world.

### Evergreen rises to a complex 2000-page leadership challenge

*It's another day, another hour, and somewhere in the world, someone's Googling 'leadership development' and finding Mick Yates's Leader Values website. Launched in 1997 and developed by a globetrotting entrepreneur and consultant with a passion for leadership, the site has grown into a huge resource of inspirational articles and other resources. After more than a decade of haphazard expansion, the site needed a major overhaul...*

By 2010, Mick Yates, who runs the not-for-profit Leader Values site as a hobby to complement his work as leader of business development at consultancy group dunnhumby, realised that more than a decade of accumulated wisdom, in various formats, needed a major update. To do so, and to complement the new design that he'd sourced in an online contest on 99designs, he required a special web development and online database partner.

Appropriately enough, Mick's search began online, then led to a shortlist of three firms and the selection of Evergreen Computing Limited. Not only did Evergreen impress with their online database credentials, but with their location near his Gloucestershire home. He awarded the Charfield, South Gloucestershire-based team the contract and the project began.

### Nearly 2000 pages of challenge ahead

Evergreen's main challenge was bringing order to the complexity of a site that had evolved through several iterations and recordings over the years. With some 600 articles and hundreds of quotations among nearly 2000 pages of content, this was never going to be easy. Evergreen had to match complex coding and advanced database skills to the already-agreed design. The brief also demanded a robust new content management system and more social elements in a site which already appears in the global top three for leadership. Even with a comprehensive brief and input from a code and computing-savvy site owner, this was always going to be a stern test of coding and project management skills.

### 'Confidence from first contact'

'I had confidence from our first meeting,' says Yates. 'The Evergreen team had clearly got plenty of experience. I was impressed with them, and with how they responded to my brief. And with their obvious professionalism, coding skills and good value too. The latter became all the more apparent with time as, with hindsight, I think we all slightly underestimated the magnitude of the task ahead. I certainly got my money's-worth.'

As the project progressed, the challenges were increased by Mick's enforced preoccupation with other business commitments. In particular, this led to his realisation that insufficient work had been done on the social elements of the site – and more work for Evergreen. Added to the sheer volume of work, the complex reorganisation of the underlying databases and other challenges such as matching text to images, and handling the site's sophisticated online assessments, this stretched both parties.

### 'The experience bears out their ability as coders'

Yates describes the process of working with Evergreen: 'Although we had a few delays and minor issues due to both of us missing details off the brief, the overall experience bears out their ability as coders. I know a bit about code and they are definitely good – and quick too. The results are robust and completely in line with what I'd expected. Throughout the work, the team was always responsive to my requests, and to my direction on the site's visual design.'

With the site now live, Yates says he's also pleased with Evergreen's ongoing support. 'They've had to tie up some loose ends and polish some of the coding, but that's not unusual with a site of this size and complexity.'

### The benefits for Leader Values

Ultimately, the project took longer than both parties envisaged. But eventually, the new Leader Values site went live in May 2012. Asked to quantify the benefits, Yates admits that it's hard to do – particularly given what he wanted the site to do. 'We already had a huge volume of traffic, so it wasn't primarily about increasing visitors or search engine rankings. Success was more about making the site cleaner, faster and more robust. And saving me time with a much-improved content management system. I wanted better visitor engagement too, through tools such as the Disqus comment platform and Twitter. In all these areas, it's clear to me that Evergreen succeeded.'

### Positive comments from around the world

It isn't just Yates who's pleased with the site. Online visitors from around the world comment positively, and prove the site's improved usability with much greater article feedback and interaction through its social components.

### Reaping the rewards of Evergreen Computing's work

It's been a challenging eighteen months since this leader in leadership thinking met the Evergreen team to plan the latest stage of his website's development. Now he's reaping the rewards of their input and Leader Values is engaging with its devotees as never before. Recalling a project high spot, Yates comments on the team's coding and their contribution to interpreting the brief: 'They were excellent when trying to figure out the brief and achieve my strategic objectives with design. As ever, they were very good and very responsive – and extremely good value.'

'Evergreen Computing,' he concludes, 'were very professional, worked closely to the brief and brought real hard-core coding and database skill to the job. I'd recommend them.'

Click here to visit [www.leader-values.com](http://www.leader-values.com)



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**Mick Yates, leadership guru**  
Leader Values

