

Developing a web site that your customers can maintain

Users need to be able, either collaboratively or individually, to author, review, and publish web content in order to keep it current, while maintaining their site's integrity.

The goal is to provide a simple graphical interface for users to operate without them having to learn HTML (which, historically, has been necessary). The environment needs to be easy to access, and allow users the appropriate permissions to update dynamic areas of the site, and leave static areas unaltered and unharmed.

Alternatives investigated to date:

Adobe InContext Editing (ICE)

This is a managed service from Adobe, tied in to Dreamweaver. You use Dreamweaver to develop the site, define the screen areas that you will permit editing of through ICE, define the editing permissions such as the text properties and whether images can be replaced (text editing itself is the minimum property for an area), and an include file will be generated that must be uploaded to the web site along with the rest of your site files.

The second part of implementation is to set up users and their level of access. First, set yourself up as administrator at <http://incontextediting.adobe.com/> then define users as either publishers or editors (i.e. they can create draft content but not publish it and change the site).

PRO's

- Easy to access – user enters CTL E to launch and edit the desired page.
- Easy to administer – users are sent an invitational email to sign up for access.
- Free (if you are already a Dreamweaver user).

CON's

- Any update you make to a page that would be published from Dreamweaver after implementing ICE editable regions causes ICE updates to be lost, so site updates have to be applied with caution. (FTP the updated files back to your development environment first, for example).
- Adobe haven't indicated whether they will charge for this service at some point, so there is some risk)
- You have to set up your FTP details on the ICE site, which appears to worry commentators on the service.

I have implemented an example at <http://www.insightbuilder.co.uk/ice/> - send me an email to try out as an editor.