

BobVila.com

Adobe GoLive takes leading home improvement site from design to walk-through

PROFILE

- The leading home improvement Web site, headlined by Bob Vila
- Employees: 25
- Location: Boston, Massachusetts
- www.bobvila.com

BENEFITS SUMMARY

- Adobe GoLive supports BobVila.com's increasing use of dynamic, interactive content through its handling of rich-media files and database content.
- The tight integration of Adobe Photoshop, ImageReady®, Illustrator, and GoLive helps BobVila.com designers move rapidly from concepts to finished Web pages.
- The Snippet Components tool in GoLive increases designer productivity with a ready palette of frequently used site elements.
- Site management and bug reporting capabilities in GoLive identify discrepancies and allow designers to reconcile them quickly, improving the overall quality of the user experience.

Bob Vila has long been known for his ability to take a project home, be it a ramshackle Victorian in Martha's Vineyard or a warping beach house in Malibu, and transform it into an ideal living space with fresh paint and shiny fixtures. For two decades, millions of do-it-yourselfers have tracked Vila's building and remodeling projects from design to walk-through, first on PBS's *This Old House* and since 1990 on *Home Again*, his nationally syndicated television program.

Vila's expertise in home improvement laid the foundation for his success on the Web. The extensive, rich-media BobVila.com site was named a Forbes.com 2001 Best of the Web winner. BobVila.com recently underwent its fourth and most comprehensive renovation, and it continues expanding with dynamic and interactive components. Knowing the right tools are critical to the success of a job, the Web team at BobVila.com relies on GoLive, Photoshop, ImageReady, Illustrator, and After Effects software to build, remodel, and expand the site.

Framing the design

The creative process behind BobVila.com begins with brainstorming ideas, which quickly become comps in Adobe Photoshop. Photoshop takes the Web team 80% of the way through the initial design, facilitating discussions and revisions of working screen shots. The team makes extensive use of the Layers palette in Photoshop to view design variations and to add depth and richness to final comps.

In fact, art director Trey Simmons and his team use all the Web automation features in Photoshop, especially Contact Sheet and Web Photo Gallery. "We shoot around 2,000 digital photos per season, and in Photoshop we can quickly batch a photo session and have it ready to view through Web pages in a matter of minutes, with zero programming," Simmons explains. Support for vector graphics in Photoshop enables the team to scale and reposition design elements created in Illustrator. ImageReady and the Save For Web feature in Photoshop allow quick and easy transfer of designs to GoLive.

Construction in GoLive

When the Photoshop design files are finalized, Adobe ImageReady is used to slice the images and drop them into GoLive. "ImageReady lets us view changes on-the-fly and has a very intuitive Slice tool and Styles palette," notes Simmons. For the site's Bob on TV section, designers take footage from the original beta tapes of *Home Again*, digitize it, and bring it into Adobe After Effects. The files are then streamlined for the Web and embedded in GoLive pages. "GoLive handles our many dynamic media files well and cleanly. I am always surprised by tasks GoLive handles intuitively, like updating links within a Macromedia® Flash™ (SWF) file by simply dragging the link to the new file. GoLive has become more robust with each version," says Simmons.

Another GoLive tool that speeds the building process is Snippet Components, which stores



With its fourth and most comprehensive renovation yet, BobVila.com continues to expand with dynamic and interactive components. Adobe GoLive was a key tool in the site development process. For example, selecting files within the Files tab and In & Out tab enables point-and-click file updates, while the Extras tab displays the components of BobVila.com, allowing rapid site-wide changes. With more than 1,000 pages of editorial content that increases daily, the site management and bug reporting capabilities in GoLive are crucial.

Interactive walk-through

Recent statistics indicate that BobVila.com pulls in an average of 340,000 visitors per month. The goal behind the site's ongoing expansion is to help this growing audience navigate cleanly to locate content within a vast information repository. The site's seven main sections (including Bob on TV, How To, Special Features, Design Tools, and Expert Advice) offer a wealth of features, such as an archive containing 6,000 home plans. BobVila.com is highly interactive, giving shoppers access to any product in the Sears catalog, along with features like a bulletin board, estimators, calculators, paint sampling applications, and 3D online room and garden designers. And viewers can follow *Home Again* episodes online, or watch the building of the dotCom dreamHome over a 24-hour Webcam or through video files.

As the site expands with ever more complex content, Simmons says Adobe GoLive remains the best tool they have for the job. "To me other Web publishing packages don't even play in the same ballpark as GoLive," he says. "With GoLive we can work with a vast range of interactive and dynamic content. This plus its ease of use makes it an ideal choice for a site that is always remodeling."

TOOLBOX

Adobe After Effects Production Bundle
 Adobe GoLive
 Adobe Illustrator
 Adobe Photoshop with Adobe ImageReady

Power Macintosh G4 systems
 PowerBook G3 notebook computers
 iBook notebook computers
 Intel® Pentium® PCs running Microsoft® Windows® 98 and Windows 2000

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Trey Simmons
 Art director
 BobVila.com

a palette of custom design elements such as logo mastheads, modular sidebars, JavaScript, and table code and drops them wherever designers need them in the site. "Snippets increase our productivity," says Simmons. "Each designer stores snippets by section; it creates a great toolset."

GoLive checks work in progress

Quality-checking work is critical to any remodeling effort. With more than 1,000 pages of editorial content that increases daily, the team at BobVila.com depends on site management capabilities in GoLive to uncover broken links and other discrepancies. "GoLive makes it simple to do global updates to text, links, and artwork," says Simmons. "For a site as large as BobVila.com, the bug reporting facility is crucial, and GoLive lets us identify errors before they're published." Simmons added that the team would soon take advantage of support in GoLive for Microsoft's WebDAV collaboration environment. "Through WebDAV support, GoLive gives us a very inexpensive way to maintain a source-safe development environment."



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