

**CASE STUDY****Beyond academia: How 67 Bricks and Emerald Publishing created a modern, component-based platform fit for the digital age**emerald **insight**

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Back in 2017, all of Emerald's journals, and most of their books and case studies, were stored and managed by Atypon on the Literatum platform.

Atypon loaded the content and managed the user database and authentications. But Emerald lacked control over their own customer data and user experiences, and there was no flexibility to build new products or respond quickly to new opportunities.

**Existing vendor platforms a barrier to innovation**

How users discover and engage with information is dramatically changing. Emerald had a new vision - to become a digital organisation that continually delivered value based on content, data and a fantastic user experience. They looked at their content platform with a fresh set of eyes. Harriet Bell, Marketing Director, Emerald said: "We began playing with the ideas of reaching the user with video, audio, 3D models, chatbots, interviews, visualisations, interactive reports and image banks. We wanted to experiment with toolkits, infographics, expert briefings and interactive case studies. We let our minds run wild! We wanted to innovate but it just wasn't possible on the existing platform."

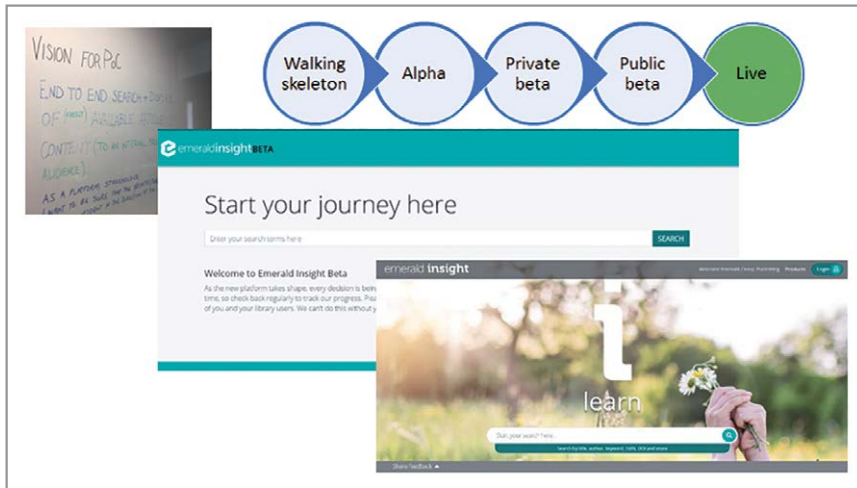
The team were faced with a choice - swap to an alternative vendor or build a completely new kind of platform, that suited the needs of the customer and underpinned their vision. But how and with whom?

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## Keeping the customer front and centre

Emerald weren't sure what this new platform looked like yet, but started by getting out of the office and spending time visiting and listening to users in their natural environments. This deep observational



behaviour would prove vital in designing a solution that really understood and solved user issues; every decision taken in the project that followed was made with these needs in mind.

## A new technology partnership

To deliver this vision a new way of working was required. Emerald partnered with 67 Bricks, a company that helps publishers become data-driven. 67 Bricks had the fresh approach they were looking for; jointly and whole-heartedly owning the vision with the Emerald leadership team and developing an outcome focussed mentality and worked closely with the product teams to ensure user needs translated into products and features.

A co-development style was used to deliver the platform and a component approach was adopted whilst devising a new architectural strategy. This enabled Emerald to use existing software and tools as well as best of breed software suppliers such as LibLynx for its authentication.

The project set a launch date from the outset and worked towards releasing a minimum viable product early, via an agile approach, which enabled the team to

test with users, build out capability early, and refine and hone according to the value delivered.

67 Bricks's role as 'critical friend' to Emerald was also essential. Technology Director for Emerald Alice Fleet said: "When user requirements ran into the thousands, 67 Bricks were not afraid to push back and call on us to focus. When it came to culture; they joined us in banging the drum and winning hearts and minds. And together we made it fun too!"

The solid partnership, mutual trust and strong prioritisation of features meant a complex vision was divided into manageable chunks of work, which were then delivered on time.

## A modern, digital platform

Emerald Insight launched in summer 2019 and user feedback has been exceptional. Emerald are back in control of their own customer data and user experiences, and have the technical capability to build responsive new products; a successful one just launched is from a partnership with Oxford Analytica, which offers users additional expert content via briefings.

The Emerald team has forged a whole new rapport with it's users and are closer to achieving their vision of helping research have a deeper, more meaningful impact.

*"Our DNA is the same but what we put emphasis on and how we deliver it has changed. Rather, we know what we are not here to do. Now, we're clear that there are a few things that we, uniquely, can do, really, really well. These are our focus."*

**Alice Fleet**  
Technology Director,  
Emerald Publishing

### Considering a new digital platform?

- Select the appropriate partners to help
- Run a focussed and phased implementation that builds out capabilities whilst delivering business value
- Prioritisation is key - don't try and do everything at once.

Contact us at [contact@67bricks.com](mailto:contact@67bricks.com) to discuss how we can help you.