

Drupal Multisite Management Tools

Drupal has featured the ability to run multiple sites easily since Drupal 4.6. Drupal's Multisite features can help with the administration of many different sites at once, the grouping together of many related websites in one place, and saving disk space by not having multiple copies of Drupal running from the same location. Different third-party tools exist to make multisite easier to manage. These tools perform differently based on what needs to be done. Drupal's multisite powers can be useful to create infinitely many Drupal-powered websites from the same code base and can be configured using different tools, such as Druplet, Hostmaster2, and the Multisite Manager Module.

Installation Profiles

Installation Profiles, introduced in Drupal 5.0, are the basis for many multisite managers. Installation Profiles do not manage installations, they simply precustomize the site as part of the installation process. Installation Profiles are somewhat hard to create for those that prefer not to program anything. Installation Profile generators¹ have been created that allow one to generate an installation profile based off of an existing site. These generators, for the most part, work extremely well, and only require hand tweaking for more complected setups. Druplet is one such manager that takes advantage of Installation Profiles.

```
function default_profile_tasks(&$task, $url) {  
  // Insert default user-defined node types into the database. For a complete  
  // list of available node type attributes, refer to the node type API  
  // documentation at: http://api.drupal.org/api/HEAD/function/hook_node_info.  
  $types = array(  
    array(  
      'type' => 'page',  
      'name' => st('Page'),  
      'module' => 'node',  
      'description' => st("A <em>page</em>, similar in form to a <em>story</em>  
      that rarely changes, such as an \"About us\" section of a website. By de  
      is not featured on the site's initial home page."),  
      'custom' => TRUE,  
      'modified' => TRUE,  
      'locked' => FALSE,  
      'help' => '',  
      'min_word_count' => '',  
    ),  
    array(  
      'type' => 'story',  
      'name' => st('Story'),  
      'module' => 'node',  
    )  
  );  
}
```

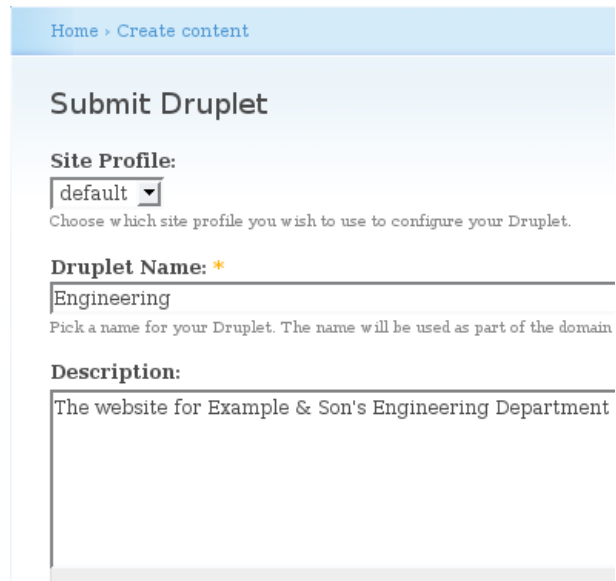
Druplet

Druplet is a Multisite Manager that is best suited for simple site creation. An

¹ Drupal.org Handbook page on Installation Profile Generators - <http://drupal.org/node/180078>

official development release is listed, but no stable release as of 1/17/2008. Currently, it is not compatible with Drupal 6². It is relatively easy to setup, as the hardest part is to create the installation profile that it will use. The use of Installation Profiles allows it to be extremely flexible with the creation of sites, called *Druplets*. Using these installation profiles, it creates a new site by putting a new directory in the /sites directory. The author of Druplet does

recommend that it not be used in a production environment, as it may allow users to read the settings.php file from another site. This is a **HUGE** security risk, and anyone using this should definitely not use it in a production environment. However, PHP Input (The root cause of the security hole) can be safely disabled with Paranoia Module, thus closing that hole. Druplet has two options: Single User and Multiple User. Single User mode works by creating directories and files in the sites/* directory. Multiple User mode also adds SFTP users. Druplet seems pretty stable, and according to Matt Konglin (Maintainer) will see a development release soon. For more information on Druplet, see <http://drupal.org/project/druplet>.



Home > Create content

Submit Druplet

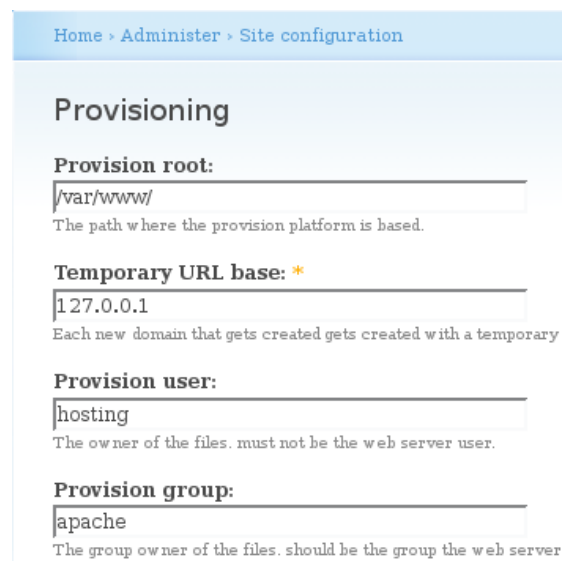
Site Profile:
default
Choose which site profile you wish to use to configure your Druplet.

Druplet Name: *
Engineering
Pick a name for your Druplet. The name will be used as part of the domain

Description:
The website for Example & Son's Engineering Department

Hostmaster2

Hostmaster2 is yet another Drupal Multisite Manager. It is somewhat more complected than Druplet, and thus is somewhat hard to learn. The trade off of this is that Hostmaster2 is the most powerful Multisite Manager of these. Installation of Hostmaster2 is difficult because it requires checkout of the correct things from a subversion repository where different parts of the same project are



Home > Administer > Site configuration

Provisioning

Provision root:
/var/www/
The path where the provision platform is based.

Temporary URL base: *
127.0.0.1
Each new domain that gets created gets created with a temporary

Provision user:
hosting
The owner of the files. must not be the web server user.

Provision group:
apache
The group owner of the files. should be the group the web server

stored. People who are used to SVN may still find problems navigating the repository to find the correct modules. Documentation on the Installation Process and usage also seems to be lacking, but understandable for a project still in early development. Many different things related to Hostmaster2 are still under heavy development, and the modules do not always work correctly. However, Hostmaster2 is a great Multisite Manager after all of the initial installation issues have been dealt with. Like Druplet, it uses Installation Profiles to precustomize a site as part of the site creation process. For more information on Hostmaster2, see <http://groups.drupal.org/hm2> and <https://svn.bryght.com/hostmaster>.

Multisite Manager Module

The Multisite Manager module is also similar to Druplet, but without the security problems³. The current stable release is not compatible with Drupal 6⁴. Using the Multisite Manager module is extremely easy, as it uses the standard Drupal Content creation mechanism, in this case, *Create content > Site*. Installation Profiles allow it to do further customization to the site while it is being created. The Multisite Manager module is an easy way to manage multiple sites, but it is not as powerful as Druplet and Hostmaster2, as it lacks the ability to create SFTP users and other such features. The Multisite Manager module is available at http://drupal.org/project/multisite_manager.



The screenshot shows the configuration form for a new site in the Multisite Manager module. At the top, there is a 'Home' link and a 'View Edit' button. The form fields are: 'Title: *' with the value 'Example Site'; 'Shortname: *' with the value 'example', followed by a note: 'This short name will be used in the database as a unique identifier and also'; 'Profile: *' with a radio button selected for 'Drupal: Select this profile to enable some basic Drupal'; and a checked checkbox for 'Run Drupal Sites' Cron', with a note: 'This sets whether this drupal site's cron jobs will be run when the master'.

Drupal's Multisite capabilities can help make the running of many different sites easier using tools such as Druplet, Hostmaster2, and the Multisite Manager module. When these tools work correctly, they can simplify the administration process substantially. The use of installation profiles allows these managers to further customize the output site. The Multisite Manager tool is easily the best

³ In the default configuration; There is an option that will cause the Multisite Manager module to have the same problems as Druplet for the same reasons.

⁴ As of 1/10/2008

choice when managing multiple Drupal-powered websites, for reasons of stability and usability.

	Multisite Manager Module	Druplet	Hostmaster2
Ease of Installation	Beautiful	OK, after the CVS checkout	Extremely Difficult
Ease of Use	After Installation profile creation, very easy	After Installation profile creation, Beautiful	Hard to get working
Security	Secure, unless the option to create separate databases is enabled	Major security risk, unless PHP code is disabled with paranoia.module	With provisioning, pretty secure
Flexibility	Very Flexible	Very Flexible	Very Flexible
Ease of Upgrade	Not available for Drupal 6	Not available for Drupal 6	Being developed for Drupal 6
Development	Stable development	Still in development, very stable	Still in development, not very stable