

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 any 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 the more complicated setups. Druplet is one such manager that takes advantage of Installation Profiles.

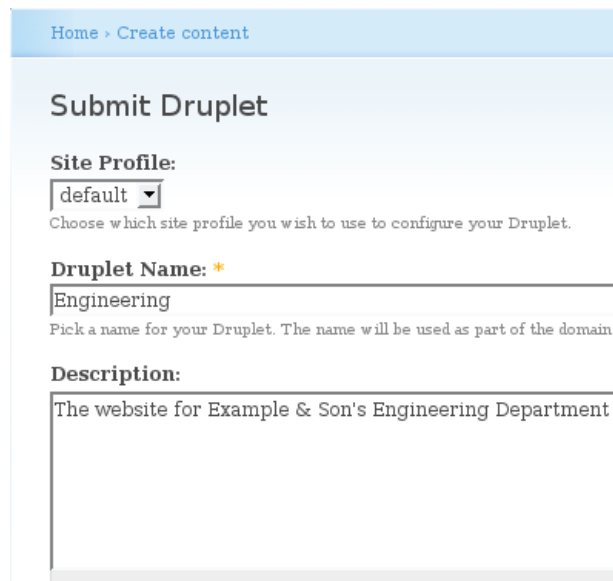
Druplet

Druplet is a Multisite Manager that is best suited for simple site creation. It has not yet seen any official release, and requires checkout from the CVS repository. However, it does seem very stable. 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

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

² As of 1/5/2008

extremely flexible with the creation of sites. 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. 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. For more information on Druplet, see <http://drupal.org/project/druplet>.



Home > Create content

Submit Druplet

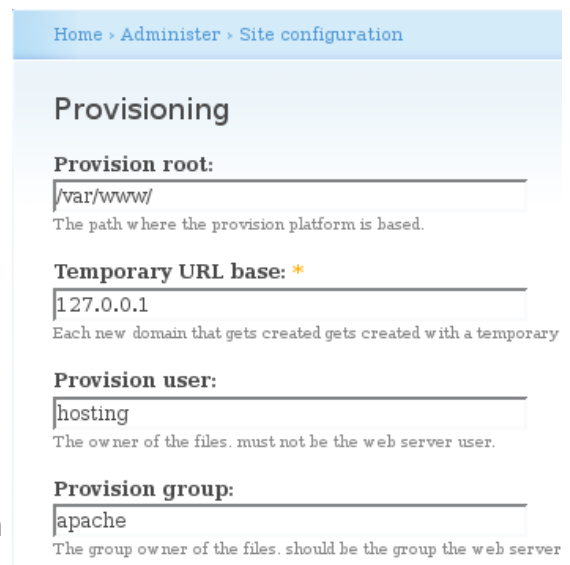
Site Profile:
default
Choose which site profile you wish to use to configure your Druplet.

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 complicated than Druplet, and thus is somewhat hard to learn. Once past the installation process, Hostmaster2 is the most powerful way to manage Drupal sites. Installation of Hostmaster2 is difficult because it requires checkout of the correct things from a subversion repository shared by different projects with a similar purpose. 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 when it works. 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



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

<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. 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 interface for a multisite. At the top, there is a 'Home' link and the site name 'Example Site' with 'View' and 'Edit' buttons. Below this, there are three main sections: 'Title: *' with a text input field containing 'Example Site'; 'Shortname: *' with a text input field containing 'example' and a note below it stating 'This short name will be used in the database as a unique identifier and also'; and 'Profile: *' with two radio button options: 'Drupal: Select this profile to enable some basic Drupal' (which is selected) and 'Run Drupal Sites' Cron' (which is checked). A note below the second option states '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 choice when managing multiple Drupal-powered website.

	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

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

	Multisite Manager Module	Druplet	Hostmaster2
Security	Secure, unless the option to create separate databases is enabled	Can have a security risk associated with Database creation	With provisioning, pretty secure
Flexibility	Very Flexible	Very Flexible	Very Flexible
Ease of Upgrade	Not available for Drupal 6	Not available for Drupal 6	Not available for Drupal 6
Development	Stable development	Still in development, very stable	Still in development, not very stable