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Pittsburgh Utility Speeds Up App Development with User-Centered Style Guide Created by OpenArc

DUQUESNE LIGHT CO.

Duquesne Light Company (DLC) is a leader in the transmission and distribution of electric energy, serving more than half a million customers in southwestern Pennsylvania. Following a large IT transformation and corporate rebranding initiative, the company found itself without a technical style guide and brand standards for internal applications.

DLC enlisted the UI/UX design team at OpenArc, a technology consulting firm specializing in software development and IT staffing, to create a technical style guide and toolkit using the Company's existing brand style guide and specifications. Now developers, designers, and marketers within DLC have a living document that outlines all the digital design patterns they must work from, streamlining the development process by enabling the team to build applications more quickly and efficiently.

By having OpenArc establish design patterns and a toolkit that includes a set of components in Bootstrap 4, the team at DLC has the foundation to provide a consistent experience within and across applications. The visual design and interaction feedback considers the needs of visually impaired users and component code contains ARIA tags to present content through screen readers. A project team now can focus more of its efforts on Human-Centered Design methods to understand the unique needs of end users and align them with the needs of the business.

"Before the guide, every developer did their own thing in relation to style. Now our development team can focus more time on functionality since they don't have to think about design. With the common functionality of the built-in templates, our applications now have a similar look and feel and function the same way."

Taryn Malavite
Manager, Corporate Solutions, Duquesne Light

109 VIP Drive, Suite 200
Wexford, PA 15090

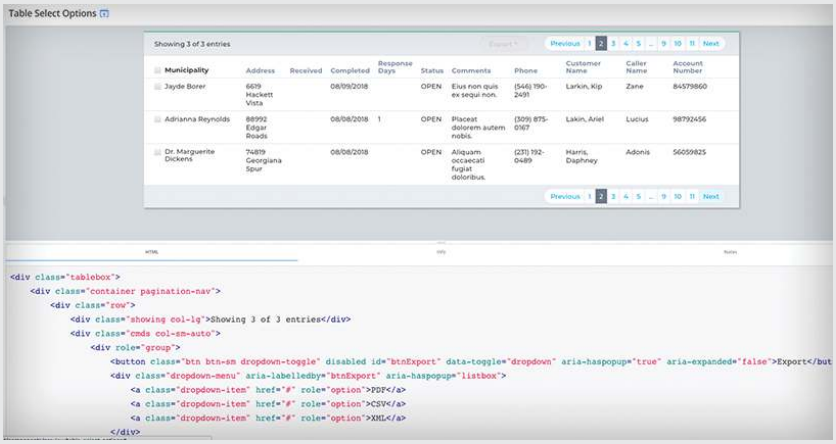
724-602-0286

info@openarc.net

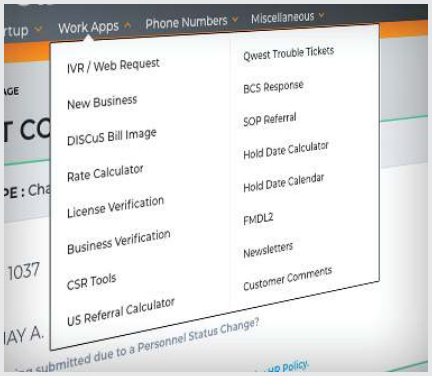
www.openarc.net

An underlying grid structure and modular components provide a framework for page creation.

Dynamic menus with alerts provide access to key statistics as needed rather than taking up persistent screen space.



Common navigation and menus streamlines development and provides consistency that supports learning with users.



Components are displayed alongside rationale and Bootstrap 4 code snippets for developers to understand the system and reuse code.

The roadmap for DLC includes replatforming legacy applications and rolling out new external facing applications. The style guide will evolve as new needs arise, and new UX patterns emerge. The company predicts that the implementation of the style guide will significantly reduce the overall number of development sprints and that team members will be able to produce new apps quicker than they have ever been able to do before.

The technical style guide already is being well-received by DLC's corporate communications group and the software development teams. "We're preserving our brand while cranking out applications at a record pace and saving a lot of time," said Malavite.

The DLC style guide is built using Bootstrap, an open source toolkit that increases speed of development using pre-built blocks of code. The underlying grid supports responsive behaviors for different display sizes.

LEARN MORE

Find out more about the Pittsburgh-based utility at DuquesneLight.com.
Learn more about OpenArc's services at openarc.net

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