

Sizzle Legacies: Building a Digital Platform to Preserve Stories for Generations

Project Overview

Client: The Sizzleisland Company Limited

Project: Sizzle Legacies

Industry: Digital storytelling and media

Development Partner: SilicaSites

Technology: React, Node.js, Express, Supabase, FFmpeg, Fiserv IPG Connect, Coolify

The Challenge

Stories are an important part of how families preserve their history, share experiences, and pass knowledge from one generation to the next. However, turning those stories into something people can keep and revisit is not always easy.

Creating a polished video typically requires recording equipment, editing software, technical knowledge, and a considerable amount of time. For people who simply want to preserve a parent's memories, document a family's history, or share a meaningful message, the technical process can become a barrier.

Sizzle Legacies set out to make that process easier. The goal was to build a platform where users could answer guided questions, record their stories, and receive a finished video without having to edit it themselves.

The project also had to account for the needs of its Caribbean audience. This meant supporting local payment processing, providing a straightforward user experience, and building a reliable system capable of handling long recordings without losing users' work.

Our Approach

We approached Sizzle Legacies as more than a video creation tool. The platform needed to make an emotionally meaningful activity feel simple, while handling the technical work behind the scenes.

Our focus was on three key areas: creating an accessible recording experience, automating video production, and building a reliable commercial platform.

1. Making Storytelling Simple

We designed a guided creation process that takes users through recording their stories one step at a time.

Users can choose from themed templates, select curated questions, and respond using video, audio, or text. They can record answers of up to five minutes for each question, with up to ten questions in a legacy video.

The platform also includes a review process, allowing users to check their information and recordings before submitting their project.

To make the experience more approachable for a broad audience, the interface emphasizes readable text, clear steps, and minimal unnecessary complexity. The aim was to let people focus on what they wanted to say rather than worry about how to produce a video.

2. Automating Video Production

Rather than requiring users to edit their recordings manually, we built a server-side video processing pipeline using FFmpeg.

Once a user submits their responses, the system processes the recordings and combines them into a finished video. Depending on the selected template and plan, the output can include titles, visual elements, background music, cover art, and branding.

The platform also supports greeting cards through a separate, shorter creation process.

This approach allows users to concentrate on their stories while the application handles the technical work required to turn individual responses into a finished product.

3. Protecting Users' Work

A major technical challenge was ensuring that recordings remained available throughout the creation process.

Long recording sessions, accidental page refreshes, browser disconnections, and extended video rendering could interrupt the experience. In a product built around personal memories, losing a recording could be particularly frustrating.

We implemented browser-side recording persistence using IndexedDB and added cloud storage for clips and other video assets through Supabase. The backend can use stored assets to reconstruct a video when local recordings are no longer available.

We also improved submission handling to prevent duplicate question records, added safeguards against empty submissions, and extended support for long-running rendering jobs.

These improvements were designed to make the creation process more resilient and reduce the risk of users having to repeat their work.

Building a Business Around the Product

Sizzle Legacies needed to do more than create videos. It also required a commercial model that could support free users while giving customers clear options for purchasing additional features.

We implemented three plans:

- **Free Sample:** One legacy video per month using the basic template, with a watermark.
- **Pay-Per-Video:** A one-time purchase that unlocks a legacy video using the available themed templates.
- **Premium:** A recurring monthly subscription with unlimited legacy videos and access to all templates.

The application enforces plan-specific limits, including video allowances, template access, and recording limits. We also aligned the pricing information and in-app restrictions so that customers could understand what each plan included.

For payments, we integrated Fiserv IPG Connect through its hosted payment page. The integration supports one-time purchases and recurring subscriptions, with server-side notifications used to update a customer's subscription tier after an approved payment.

Because hosted payment gateways have specific requirements for request metadata, security hashes, and return URLs, the integration required careful handling of payment requests and responses. We also addressed differences between test and production environments, including currency configuration and payment redirect behavior.

This gave the platform a payment structure designed around its Caribbean market rather than relying exclusively on a generic international checkout experience.

The Technology Behind the Platform

The application combines several technologies to support the complete journey from recording to finished video.

- **React:** Powers the user interface and guided video creation experience.
- **Node.js and Express:** Handle application APIs, uploads, payment workflows, and video processing requests.
- **Supabase:** Provides authentication, database storage, file storage, and access controls.

- **FFmpeg:** Processes and assembles recordings into finished videos.
- **Fiserv IPG Connect:** Handles hosted checkout for one-time purchases and recurring subscriptions.
- **Coolify and Docker/Nixpacks:** Support deployment of the application and its backend services.

The production architecture brings the React frontend and Express API together in a unified service, while Supabase and Fiserv provide the supporting data, storage, and payment infrastructure.

This integration was important because the product needed to coordinate several different processes without making the experience unnecessarily complicated for the user.

Reliability Beyond the Recording Screen

Some of the most important work involved addressing problems that only become apparent when a product moves beyond its initial interface.

Payment redirects needed to return users to the correct production pages. Subscription limits needed to remain consistent across the pricing page and application. Video processing needed to continue through long-running jobs, and the deployment environment needed the dependencies required for FFmpeg and video rendering.

We addressed these areas through improvements to payment request handling, centralized subscription limits, recording persistence, server-side asset recovery, and deployment configuration.

We also incorporated additional requirements around user consent and control. Users can choose whether a finished video may be included in a public showcase, with that option disabled by default. Registration supports optional demographic information and marketing consent, while the application includes privacy, terms, and community-guideline pages.

Together, these features help establish a more complete foundation for a product that handles both personal content and paid services.

The Outcome

Sizzle Legacies brings guided storytelling, automated video production, and online payments together in one platform.

Users can work through a structured set of questions, submit responses in different formats, and receive a finished video through their personal dashboard. The platform supports both free and paid plans, themed templates, greeting cards, and tools for downloading and sharing

