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American Dental Association enhances member engagement with upgraded digital experience

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To kick off a largescale digital transformation initiative, the American Dental Association (ADA) partnered with Accenture and Avanade – a joint venture between Accenture and Microsoft – to design and deploy a holistic, user-friendly membership hub that keeps pace with its members' ever-evolving digital needs and expectations using the Sitecore Experience Platform hosted on Microsoft Azure. With remapped content and user experience (UX) design that makes finding information and resources easier than ever before, the ADA has reimagined its digital member experience.

This project benefitted from a close collaboration between the ADA's marketing and technology teams, so we spoke with a multi-disciplinary group of key project stakeholders to learn more about how this site upgrade has helped deliver value to the organization's members while making its internal processes more efficient.

Included in this interview are:

Amy Beschta-Newborn
Senior Manager, Digital Strategy and Web Operations, ADA

Jenn Sutherland
Senior Director, Digital Transformation and Visual Brand, ADA

Ken Zenger
Senior Director, Digital Member Experience and Agile Delivery, ADA

Joe Hoyle
Solution Architect, ADA

What kind of challenges did your members face on the previous ADA site?

Sutherland: We heard regularly that our members couldn't find what they were looking for because the site search didn't work. They knew the content was there, they just couldn't find it. It wasn't organized in an intuitive way.

Beschta-Newborn: One of the biggest problems that we had was an overload of content. It was difficult for people to know what to click on. We had lots of links on every single page, competing calls to action. We also had many old, obsolete pages that contained outdated information. Additionally, searching for content was difficult, as we had no tagging or taxonomy and multiple navigation options between pages. The big problem? We just weren't providing full value to our membership, so that was one of our main priorities for updating the site.

What was the ADA strategy behind developing a new website?

Sutherland: We had a request from the ADA board of trustees to make digital transformation a real focus for 2020-2025, and the website was the first part of the membership experience piece of that transformation. It's one of the first ways members and prospective members engage with us.

Zenger: We wanted to make a technology shift to move systems to the cloud for continuous delivery. Before, we were in this routine of redeveloping and relaunching a new iteration of the site every three to five years. We wanted to adopt an agile mindset and get the technology in place so that we could manage updates and upgrades continuously.

How did Accenture and Avanade help design a site that would deliver on your goal of giving users the maximum value?

Sutherland: They worked very closely with us. We conducted content auditing, prototype sessions, and brought in member dentists to give their perspectives regarding the user experience. Once we got into designing each section of the website, we took the UX designs that Accenture Interactive created and brought them back to our workgroup of dentists to gather feedback. They also did some SEO strategy with us, looking at which keywords would be used for searches to help shape the new taxonomy.

For your content managers, have there been significant improvements to site authoring and workflows?

Zenger: Definitely. Our content team has changed their whole operational model thanks to this project. They're much more successful now.

Beschta-Newborn: We have a new, dedicated web operations team to handle content authoring rather than having dozens of Sitecore authors going in to make updates. That wasn't working, so we changed the model. To help our employees create content more effectively, we also built a Sitecore reference site that has the same look and feel of our regular site. It has video tutorials, documentation, how-to guides with step-by-step instructions and all of our policies.

Zenger: We've figured out the right ways for writers to get their content on there and do it efficiently, while building in guardrails to make sure we don't end up back where we were before. We didn't want to just redesign the website – we also wanted to change behaviors and perspectives so that we can continue to evolve with the needs of our members.

How are your members benefitting from the new site?

Beschta-Newborn: Thanks to the tracking we're using, we can see that members are easily finding the resources they need. As we look at the terms that people are searching, they're usually finding their results on the first page.

Zenger: All the work we did in properly tagging content on the site has really had a huge impact. Before, something like only 20% of the content on the site was properly tagged, but now we have the proper architecture set up for that and it's really helping our members find what they're looking for.

What benefits is the ADA seeing from this? How are you measuring success?

Sutherland: Right now, we're monitoring topline metrics: page views, engagement, conversions. We're taking a much closer look at how we're performing in Google search rankings as well, and we've gone from zero to 1,900 new ranking keywords on our Dental Insurance Hub. That's a huge deal for us, and it's really been powered by UX design work and taxonomy.

Beschta-Newborn: Overall, membership marketing campaigns are seeing an increase in traffic and conversions to membership compared to the same period last year.

How did different business units within the ADA work together to achieve this success?

Zenger: I don't think this project would have been successful if we didn't do it as a cross-divisional team between our technology and marketing groups. Everyone understood their lanes and we worked really well together. That's how we pulled this off.

Sutherland: We really did work together as one team. We loved working together and respect each other's expertise.

How did the partnership with Accenture and Avanade help contribute to a positive outcome?

Hoyle: The work with Accenture and Avanade really raised our game so high from where we had been, as far as site architecture and DevOps. Testing that would have been done ad hoc in the past was brought together in a process that we continue to use now in other areas of our digital transformation. It really has been a sea change from the more informal way we used to do things.

With this foundation, the ADA can continue driving membership value as part of its broader digital transformation and modernization journey.

About the American Dental Association

The not-for-profit ADA is the nation's largest dental association, representing 161,000 dentist members. The premier source of oral health information, the ADA has advocated for the public's health and promoted the art and science of dentistry since 1859. The ADA's state-of-the-art research facilities develop and test dental products and materials that have advanced the practice of dentistry and made the patient experience more positive. The ADA Seal of Acceptance long has been a valuable and respected guide to consumer dental care products. The monthly The Journal of the American Dental Association (JADA) is the ADA's flagship publication and the best-read scientific journal in dentistry. For more information about the ADA, visit ADA.org. For more information on oral health, including prevention, care and treatment of dental disease, visit the ADA's consumer website MouthHealthy.org.

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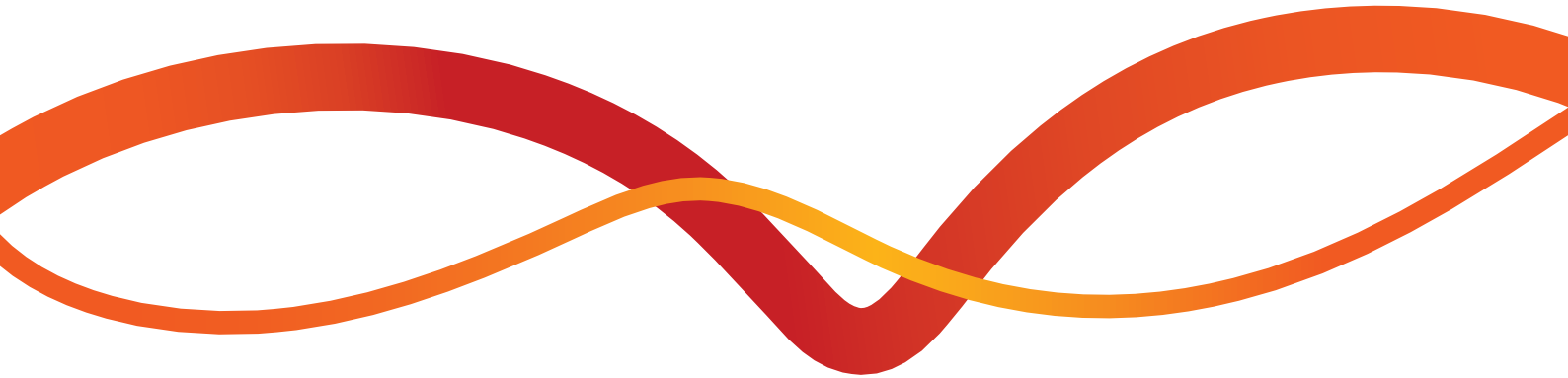
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