CREATING CONTENT CONSISTENCY

The Background

A large, multinational healthcare company had hired an equally large, multinational web agency to handle their site redesign. The site content was included as part of the overhaul.

The Challenge

It was immediately obvious that while the agency specialized in design, their editorial abilities were lacking. Content included cut-and-paste repeats, incomplete sentences, and no consistency in style and tone. The company had sought a fix from the agency, but subsequent rounds of edits still revealed the same gaps and errors.

The Request

"We don't have time to make it perfect, but can you make it better?" The rush project involved writing new, custom content for navigation and section headers, as well as bringing structural consistency to more than 150 product pages.

The First Step

Final site development could not proceed without completed content. Working closely with the team in Europe, my top priority was to create the text that touched the most parts of the website, allowing the development team to move forward with as much of the project as possible. The answer: begin with shorter, high-level category descriptions that appear throughout the site.

The client's products are used throughout the hospital – emergency, surgery, hybrid OR/cardiac cath lab, and the ICU. Understandably, each area has different requirements for the same products. Customized content highlighted benefits that were specific to each department's needs; in some cases the content was further customized to address the needs of medical subspecialties within the department.

What Changed?

- Generic category text was eliminated, replaced by features and benefits that were specific to a given audience.

- Lengthy brochure-style text was trimmed to a mobile-manageable length, delivering highlights where there had previously been an excess of detail.

- A preliminary style guide set forth a consistent voice and tone.

- Each product page followed the same structure: overview; features and benefits; clinical data (where applicable); media, such as instructional videos; and downloads of brochures, data sheets, case studies and other relevant collateral.

The Company

Revenue: $1.75 billion

Employees: 7,000

Industry: Healthcare

Image courtesy Alejandro Escamilla via Unsplash.com.

Product Content

The greater challenge came within the product pages.

The company had grown substantially through several years of acquisitions. As its portfolio grew, each acquired company's web content was simply rolled into the parent site, without review for consistency and tone.

Some product pages had just a few paragraphs of content. Others had thousands of words that had been cut and pasted from print brochures. Some product information was divided into neatly organized tabs. Others had a single page format. Some included the ability to supporting print collateral, such as brochures, data sheets and white papers. Others had nothing to download. Some were written and edited by native English speakers. Others were clearly not.

With six weeks to go until launch day, in-depth analysis and A/B testing of text and style wasn't possible. Instead, I examined the text and structure for several key products and identified what worked and what didn't. From that analysis, I developed a plan for consistency: creating content that followed a planned CMS structure, and setting forth a preliminary style guide to align terminology and tone.

The Result

The voice, tone and structural guidelines set forth in this content overhaul were able to carry the company through six years of smaller-scale design and system upgrades. It also guided the inclusion of new products, and streamlined the integration of products from several additional corporate acquisitions.

A full-scale responsive web redesign is in place for 2016, rebuilding the site from the ground up.