

Case Study

Scottish Life – Content Guideline Workshop November 2005

The Brief

Following usability testing of the Adviser hub of the Scottish Life web site, a number of issues were identified relating to site content:

- Not all content was presented or written in a way that made it easy for users to achieve their goals
- A content 'good practice guide' was required, and the content contributors needed to 'buy-in' to its development

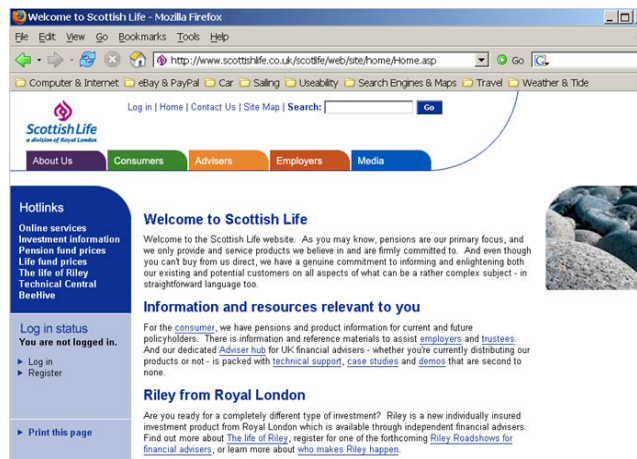
How we responded to the brief

We proposed a 'Content Contributors Workshop', to be attended by content contributors, and ideally also by some senior managers with line responsibility for the content contributors. The objectives were:

- To gain a shared understanding of the principal problems with the site, especially those that relate to content and how it is presented
- To develop a first draft of the content guidelines

What we did

In order to provide participants with a first hand understanding of users' needs and behaviours, we started this workshop by showing edited highlights of the recent user testing; while viewing the video, the participants identified issues about content. Using cognitive mapping techniques, the facilitators led a subsequent discussion so that participants could develop a collective view of the key content-related issues, the implications of these, and the required actions and priorities.



With the target users in mind, the participants then considered, through a series of exercises and group sessions:

- User goals and the content required to satisfy these goals
- How the content should be 'scoped' and 'scaled'
- How content should be 'chunked' and labelled
- Where specific content should be located within the information architecture of the site
- The effect on users of sentence length, language complexity (FOG index), tone and acronyms and jargon

The outcomes

During the facilitated discussion, Scottish Life staff gained a shared understanding of the issues, and agreed on the areas to be covered in the development of web content guidelines. Subsequently, Scottish Life issued a Web Guidelines Good Practice Guide to the content contributors

"Extremely valuable in helping us develop a shared understanding of usability among our content contributors." Richard Spence
Online Marketing Consultant

Timing and costs

The project was conducted in November 2005 and took just 2 weeks to complete from proposal to workshop delivery, at a cost of approximately £1,750 (note this cost did not include the user testing which was part of an earlier project).