

McDonald's AccessMCD Global Intranet Portal
Global Web Communications
McDonald's Corp.
Oak Brook, Illinois, U.S.

NEED/OPPORTUNITY / In 2001, AccessMCD, McDonald's global intranet, was introduced as the company's internal "one stop shop" for employees to get the information they need to do their jobs on a daily basis.

In 2002, 400 people per week visited AccessMCD from around the world. In 2006, that number grew to 17,000. Page views were at 68,000 per week in 2003. In 2006, they were at 500,000. It was clear that not only were there more users, but there was also a significant amount of content being added to AccessMCD on a daily basis. In order to provide the best experience for users, a survey was needed to discover what they liked about AccessMCD and what needed to be improved.

1. The team conducted a usability study in 2006 and received over 2,200 online survey responses. From the study, two problems were clear:
2. People couldn't find the information they were looking for. They stated that the search tool didn't work well.

There was way too much information—both on the home page and throughout AccessMCD.

Because of users' inability to easily find information, the team had to simplify the user experience or risk that people would not use AccessMCD for their information needs. Improving search and simplifying the overall user experience became the top priorities.

INTENDED AUDIENCE(S) / The target audiences were users who fill all roles in the organization: global employees, U.S. employees, franchisees (owner/operators), McOpCo (company owned) restaurant managers, franchisee restaurant managers, suppliers and crew.

Based on the usability study results, the first step was to get a stronger understanding of what each role needed in order to enhance users' AccessMCD experience. The information a franchisee needs on a daily basis is different from what an employee or a supplier needs. Global needs also varied from national needs. The team decided to take a step back. They worked with an external agency to gather additional information from users and started to work on improving AccessMCD.

They used an external agency to gather the initial data because they knew their department was too close to AccessMCD, and it would be key to get candid, honest, in-depth feedback from users to truly change how information was delivered. An advantage was the fact that the audience was engaged. Users, while frustrated at not being able to easily find the information they needed, were still active users of AccessMCD, and they were willing to provide feedback to improve the experience.

To gather detailed user information and behaviors, 60 online surveys were held and 11 one-on-one

interviews (with all user roles) were conducted. In addition, the team analyzed a three-month review of search results and a six-month review of site statistics for the web pages within AccessMCD.

COMMUNICATION GOALS AND OBJECTIVES / Results from the usability study determined the areas of focus. Goals were to:

1. Improve the search function.
2. Provide “one click” information—get users to information they need with one click.
3. Clean up old content throughout AccessMCD.
4. Consolidate information on the AccessMCD home page.
5. Redesign the home page to highlight important information and to give a “fresher” look to AccessMCD.

Search. The goal was to ensure that users received the most relevant pages listed first when conducting a search. The team also wanted to ensure that users could do deeper searches or specific searches—e.g., modify their searches by document type, area of the world, or by topic, and search for images, videos, etc.

“One Click” information. Because time is valuable, the team wanted to ensure that all users could get to the most important information they need by clicking once and not having to dive into several levels of information. The timing of this initiative was important because the biennial worldwide convention, which hosts 15,000 McDonald’s franchisees and employees from around the world, was being held in April 2008. This was a key opportunity to get in front of thousands of people and gather their feedback.

Cleanup and consolidation of information. In order to have the best search results and focused, up-to-date information on AccessMCD, a cleanup and consolidation of information was imperative. If the site had a great search tool without great search results, the efforts would have been wasted. Similarly, if people were browsing and came across out-of-date information, they would be less likely to return or trust that efforts were truly being made to address their concerns. The team needed to engage content authors to deactivate old, irrelevant content from AccessMCD department web sites in preparation for the upgrades, and they needed to remove information from the AccessMCD home page if users were not using it.

Redesign of AccessMCD home page. In combination with the content efforts, the team thought that a redesign of AccessMCD was needed in 2008. A fresh and focused look was overdue, and their goal was to show that changes to AccessMCD, based on user input, were happening throughout the year.

SOLUTION OVERVIEW / To accomplish all these goals, the global web communications team worked closely with many departments, including U.S. communications, U.S. and global information technology, corporate system communications, and corporate department content authors.

The team also gained support and solicited feedback from a number of individuals and groups along the way, including the Global AccessMCD advisory board (a group of restaurant managers, franchisees, suppliers and employees that was created to help provide ongoing feedback about AccessMCD); the U.S. Communications Board (USCB), a group consisting of lead U.S. franchisees across the nation and key U.S. departments; and several senior leadership individuals, including the CEO.

SEARCH

Users wanted to be able to search *more* content, but at the same time, find the *specific* content they needed. The interface was designed to reflect the popularity of and people's familiarity with Google search. Tabs were used for different types of content.

The improved AccessMCD Search results come from internal AccessMCD web sites; the document management center (DMC); images and video from the media asset center (MAC); contact information from the AccessMCD phone directory; and discussions from the collaboration tool, Mindshare. Additional features like guide pages, quick links, type ahead (auto complete), thesaurus, and spelling suggestions help users quickly zero in on the right information.

Quick links are found in the "Try these first" section of the search results. Quick links are a best guess of what users might be searching for. Quick links are added for new business initiatives or after observing an increase in search queries for a specific topic over several months. The global web communications team is responsible for adding new quick links.

Guide pages are manually created based on a frequently searched word. They provide a horizontal view of related business information on a specific topic. A guide page topic might include links to web sites, documents, spreadsheets, presentations and PDFs. Guide pages are added when the team notices a need for grouping related information together based on monthly search reports. For example, "jobs" is one of the most searched terms on AccessMCD, but it's difficult to know if people want job listings, a job description, job profiles, salary information or other job-related information. A guide page helps organize this information on one page, and allows users to find the information they are looking for as well as related information.

"ONE CLICK" INFORMATION—TOP NAVIGATION WITH DROP-DOWN MENUS

Based on the surveys and interviews conducted, along with the examination of search results and statistics, the team was able to determine what information was most important to each target audience/user group. To organize this information, they introduced a top navigation toolbar with drop-down menus categorized for each user group.

Each user group has different main categories based on their role (there are 12 different views with different categories). Within the top navigation toolbar, the user can mouse over multiple main categories and browse the subcategories before clicking on the drop-down selection.

In addition, this toolbar travels with the user during their entire AccessMCD experience (i.e., the top navigation toolbar remains static on the top while the user is exploring the site and viewing that

information below). This allows the user to easily navigate to other top navigation, drop-down selections. Based on the initial surveys, interviews and statistics, the team placed approximately 80–85 percent of what users need on a daily basis in the top navigation.

CLEANUP AND CONSOLIDATION OF INFORMATION

The team did the following:

- ▶ Met with legal to review deletion or deactivation issues.
- ▶ Developed a cleanup “challenge” to motivate content authors to review their sites—authors had to submit what they did with their site (deactivating pages, adding key words for search, etc.).
- ▶ Sent “aging reports” indicating last updates to site pages to primary content authors for review and guidance.
- ▶ Arranged cleanup workshop time twice a day over a two-week period for content authors to review and clean up their content.
- ▶ Offered a training class on site metrics to help measure the effectiveness of pages.
- ▶ Sites were reviewed and evaluated with about 1,500 pages (out of 5,500) deactivated.
- ▶ Awards were presented at the June Lunch & Learn. The grand prize was an iPod Shuffle (the content author who won had reduced their site by 20 percent), and six participants were randomly selected and received either a US\$25 or US\$50 Shell gas card or American Express gift card.

Based on statistics, the team also removed from the home page several links—and categories—that were not being used. This helped focus on the important content (what users wanted) and remove the clutter.

REDESIGN OF ACCESSMCD HOME PAGE

After improving search, implementing top navigation, and completing the content cleanup and consolidation efforts, the team created a new, fresher, more focused design of the home page. They used lighter colors and positioned the most important information strategically on the page based on user feedback.

The team knew that the phonebook and access to e-mail were the most important applications for global users, so those elements were put at the top, “above the fold.” They also repurposed the “Featured Story” information to highlight more global stories and business objectives, including bigger and bolder images and interactive elements to engage users.

One element, “Have you Ever Been Asked?,” is a section that answers commonly asked questions about McDonald’s in “casual speak” to make it easier for employees to answer those questions when asked by neighbors, family and friends. Another interactive element is “Mindshare,” the online collaboration tool, which allows users to discuss topics highlighted on AccessMCD.

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

Along with the initial surveys and interviews conducted with all user groups, the team engaged stakeholders in a variety of ways. They worked with the global AccessMCD advisory board and asked for their input via e-mail. They also presented the proposed changes to the U.S. communications board

(USCB) members, key departments and leaders, including the CEO.

COMMUNICATION VEHICLES USED

E-mail blasts. Several e-mails were sent to employees, announcing the changes that were being made on AccessMCD and asking for their ongoing feedback on these initiatives.

Instructional video. To introduce the top navigation toolbar element, the team enlisted the help of the creative services team to create an instructional video in which a host walked people through how to use the new top navigation toolbar and explained why the changes were made.

Presentations. The team presented at department staff meetings, the USCB meetings and to key leadership, including the CEO.

Content author meetings. To keep content authors up to date on all the changes that were being made to AccessMCD, the team hosted several meetings to educate and engage them, in addition to sending e-mails.

Online scavenger hunt. The team created and filmed five video spoofs of popular YouTube content, using AccessMCD search messaging. The videos were “hidden” on AccessMCD, except for the starter video. Initially, 200 employees received a viral marketing e-mail with a link to the first video to begin the scavenger hunt and forward it to their colleagues. Each video ended with a code to use in “search” to find the next video. The fourth video provided a code for a chance to win a GPS unit (a “search themed” prize).

Postcard desk drops. For the search effort, employees in the home office (approximately 2,000) received a series of three postcards with a specific “mission” to try a new feature of search. Each completed activity earned a chance to win a GPS unit.

Over 1,000 employees, franchisees and suppliers participated in the contests, which generated over 2,500 entries. Search usage increased significantly, and users gained confidence in finding the information they need to do their job.

Podcasts. The team developed three one- to two-minute educational podcasts on search and its features.

Booth at worldwide convention (15,000 attendees). The team highlighted the search improvements and introduced the new top navigation toolbar (rolled out a few days before the convention) and gave a preview of the AccessMCD home page redesign to gain initial input.

AccessMCD home page. The team highlighted the improvements to AccessMCD in feature stories on the home page of AccessMCD.

AccessMCD help section. The team created help pages for all AccessMCD initiatives and directed users to these pages for additional training.

BUDGET/STAFF REQUIREMENTS/TEAM BIOGRAPHY

The global web communications team led the AccessMCD improvements. The team consisted of

nine team members, including the leader and administrative assistant, two designers and five strategic communicators. They worked cross-functionally with several teams to make these initiatives a success. These members include:

- ▶ U.S. communications (key leader input along the way).
- ▶ U.S. information technology (one key contact, providing input on the U.S. view).
- ▶ Global information technology (several individuals located at the home office, as well as the off-shore support team in India).
- ▶ Corporate system communications (two individuals who helped with the new “Featured Story” element and provided input on design).

IMPLEMENTATION AND CHALLENGES / The total project budget was US\$265,000.

- ▶ Usability study and research: US\$40,000
- ▶ Communication elements of search, technology work to implement changes/updates: US\$100,000
- ▶ Videos: US\$13,000
- ▶ Postcards and desk drop: US\$2,000
- ▶ Navigation and home page redesign: US\$80,000
- ▶ Worldwide convention: US\$30,000 (shared cost)

The team made efficient use of their budget by planning, developing, managing and producing elements of the project in-house.

Because they had an established and engaged audience for AccessMCD, the team didn’t face too many challenges when communicating the proposed changes. A key factor was that the changes were based on user feedback received from the usability study, online surveys and interviews. When they presented the proposed changes, the target groups supported the changes because they were based on user feedback. It was also important to engage these groups early for their buy-in and support and to allow time to incorporate their feedback.

EVALUATION AND RESULTS / To ensure that they had delivered what users asked for, the team evaluated their progress as they did when they started the project. They developed an online survey to ask users for their input on the key initiatives. When logging into AccessMCD, users received a pop-up survey, which they could choose to take or opt out.

The survey was conducted in October 2008 and was active for 10 days. Approximately 1,700 responses were received.

Key highlights:

- ▶ The overall satisfaction rate with AccessMCD was 96 percent.
- ▶ Eighty-eight percent found the search function helpful.
- ▶ Ninety-one percent use top navigation, and 98 percent of those who use it find it helpful.
- ▶ Seventy-nine percent thought the redesign was “excellent” or “good.”

The team received several write-in comments on the survey supporting the numbers, including:

- ▶ “I use AccessMCD as a place to obtain vital information as quickly as possible.”
- ▶ “It is a lot less cluttered now. I can tell an effort has been made to address the many operator (franchisee) concerns and provide relevant information. Kudos for a job well done.”
- ▶ “The pictures and headlines are catchy, similar to the way an effective leader and/or e-mail draws its reader to gather more content.”
- ▶ “I like all the improvements you have made to the search engine. It makes it a lot easier to find information faster. As a store manager, I am really grateful to have this resource to assist me in doing my job. Thank you.”
- ▶ “I like the quick links feature—it helps identify the national sites I am really looking for.”
- ▶ “[Content] is timely and gives me pride I work in a company with (a) global reputation.”
- ▶ “I believe the recent changes have made it more user friendly.”
- ▶ “Essential in my job—love it!”

In addition to the survey results, the team followed up with the USCB on conference calls and face-to-face meetings to get their feedback. As leaders, these franchisees reported positive feedback from their peers. Franchisees and other regional employees thought it was easier to find information, that the top navigation toolbar definitely saved time, and that the look and feel provides a more focused and inviting environment.

Search statistics more than doubled from 64,659 queries in April 2007, to 134,124 in April 2008, after the improvements were made.

The team continues to meet with various departments and leadership to gain ongoing feedback. The changes to AccessMCD throughout 2008 have provided an easier way to find information and a better overall user experience.