

Case study

Alzheimer's Society – website user research

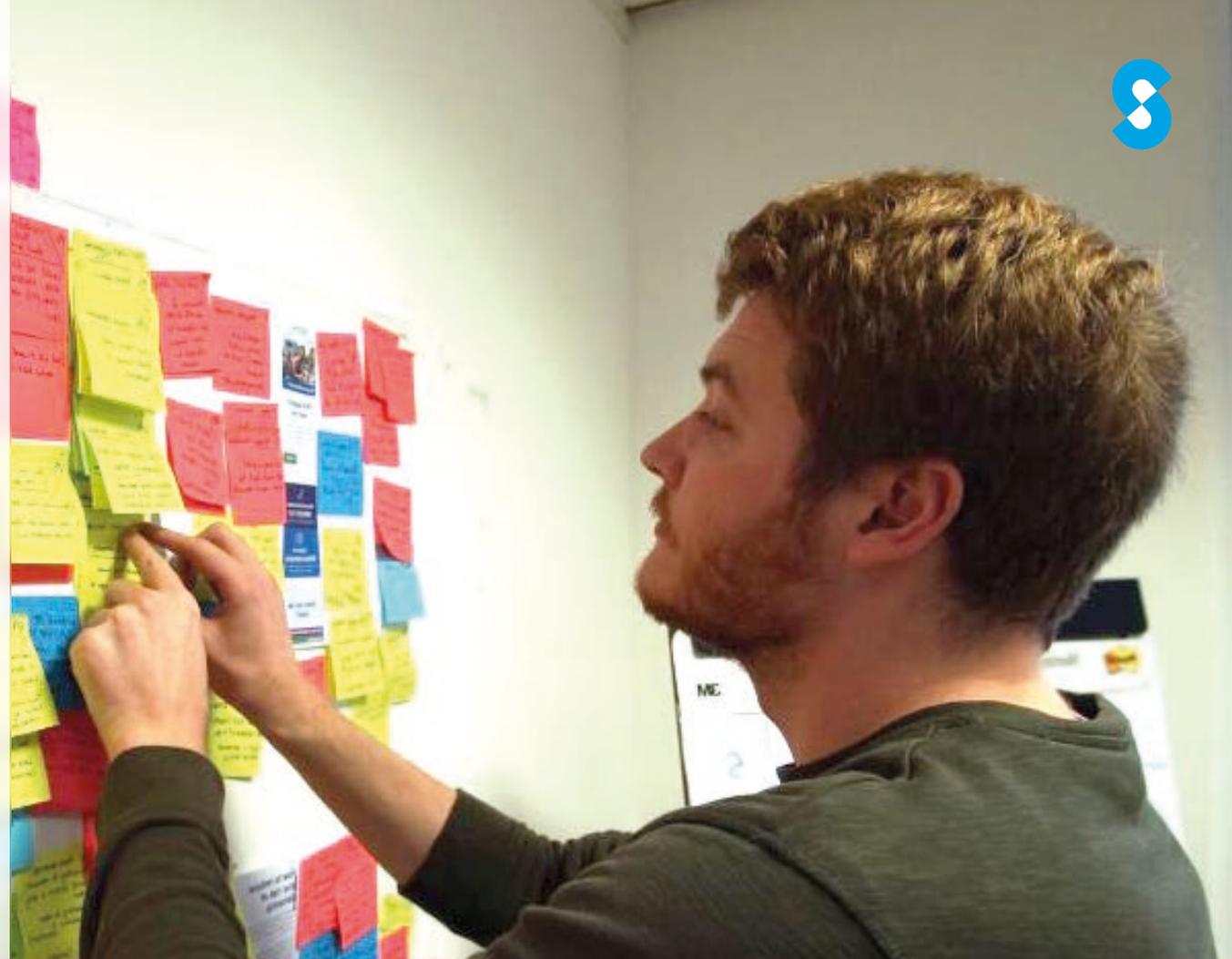




Applying UX to improve digital service delivery

One million people are forecast to be living with dementia in the UK by 2021. As the UK's leading dementia charity, Alzheimer's Society is working to find new treatments and, ultimately, a cure for dementia. It provides expert information, advice and emotional support, invests in research, and promotes a more dementia-friendly society.

In order to reach and help more people affected by dementia, Alzheimer's Society wanted to create a new website and better utilise UX research and design, to drive improvements in its digital services. Rik Williams, the charity's User Experience Architect, is at the centre of this commitment, and saw the potential to use expert external support to accelerate and extend the organisation's UX capabilities.



"System Concepts helped us continue to establish and grow our culture of evidence led, inclusive, user-centred work. Their additional accessibility expertise was invaluable."

Rik Williams, User Experience Architect,
Alzheimer's Society

The challenge

When Alzheimer's Society was redesigning its website and transitioning to a new CMS system, it recognised the opportunity to rethink the way it engineered content to meet user needs. Rik Williams wanted to enhance the accessibility and effectiveness of digital support and resources, particularly given the weighting of the charity's services towards older age groups.

Rik says, "A lot of the opportunity to deliver support and mitigate the impact of dementia, lies in digital services. The role of UX is to ensure that our digital services are fit for purpose, and that we optimise our use of resources to meet our strategic objectives."

The charity initially evaluated proposals from several leading user experience agencies, and was particularly looking for strong accessibility/inclusion skills. We were delighted when we were appointed – a decision Rik Williams puts down to System Concepts', "significantly better, more personalised approach to the project," as well as our proven credentials on accessibility and inclusion.

"The emphasis System Concepts placed on contextual research was a major differentiator from other agencies' proposals, who took a



simpler, cookie-cutter type approach to the brief and proposed research methods." Rik comments.

Governance requirements

Charities face strict governance requirements, which made the on boarding process a lengthy and arduous one. However, our willingness and ability to overcome the various hurdles kept the process on track, and helped to cement strong relationships with the Alzheimer's Society project team.

"The emphasis System Concepts placed on contextual research was a major differentiator from other agencies' proposals, who took a simpler, cookie-cutter type approach to the brief and proposed research methods."

**Rik Williams, User Experience Architect,
Alzheimer's Society**

What we did

We focused our research on the Alzheimer's Society website around four key themes:

1. Finding information
2. Ease of navigation
3. Content and layout
4. Language

User groups

Our methodology included contextual research, running face-to-face sessions in people's homes. This was especially pertinent given the challenges of accessing all those affected by dementia.

Using this approach we were able to evaluate

different user journeys, gaining insights across a variety of user groups. These included: family and professional carers; people affected by dementia; and those with visual impairments, dyslexia or upper mobility impairment. "Recruitment is always a challenge with harder to reach groups, but System Concepts handled it really well," says Rik Williams.

He continues, "All of the System Concepts consultants we worked with were very professional, organised and good to work with – we built a good level of rapport." Rik adds, "It all panned out as expected... the research method, plan and execution were all done well."

"Recruitment is always a challenge with harder to reach groups, but System Concepts handled it really well ... All of the System Concepts consultants we worked with were very professional, organised and good to work with – we built a good level of rapport ... It all panned out as expected - the research method, plan and execution were all done well."

Rik Williams, User Experience Architect, Alzheimer's Society





“The quality of the work that System Concepts did means that we’re that much more efficient at applying the research to actually fighting dementia through digital means.””

**Rik Williams, User Experience Architect,
Alzheimer’s Society**

Benefits

We delivered a detailed written report, recognising what was already working well on the charity’s website – along with actionable recommendations for areas where there was room for accessibility and usability improvements.

Softer benefits

Rik Williams acknowledges the value of our clear and specific recommendations. Equally, he is keen to emphasise an important ‘softer’ benefit of the project: it has helped establish a culture at the charity around the value of user research and user centred design practice. “System Concepts’ flexible and inclusive approach involved observers and other stakeholders from the charity. This gave

them valuable project exposure, adding value to our internal culture, and was really helpful to us,” he says.

Quality of UX makes a genuine difference

Praising the quality, insight and efficiency of our UX input, Rik concludes, “The quality of the work that System Concepts did means that we’re that much more efficient at applying the research to actually fighting dementia through digital means.”

Advice to other charities

Asked what advice he would offer other organisations, particularly charities, about to

partner with a UX agency for this type of project, Rik refers back to his organisation’s rigorous internal on-boarding processes. He advises that anyone from an industry with a high degree of regulation, should be prepared for the work involved to get through this necessary first stage.

Follow-on project

Since this first project was completed, System Concepts has undertaken further work for Alzheimer’s Society. We were able to use a very similar process for the follow-on project, which looked at user experience aspects of the charity’s local services online directory.

Could your business benefit from expert UX insights?

For friendly advice on how we can help
your business, just get in touch.

Call us on +44 (0)20 7240 3388

Email us info@system-concepts.com

Visit our website: www.system-concepts.com

System Concepts Ltd

Headland House, 72 Acton Street,

Kings Cross, London WC1X 9NB