Case Study: no. 40

American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA)

AMERICAN IMMIGRATION LAWYERS ASSOCIATION

Main Challenges:
1. Large amount of content and difficult navigation
2. Multiple audiences with very different needs
3. Poor user experience and lack of continuity between multiple sites

Main Goals:
1. Implement audience-focused taxonomy to help users find and consume information
2. Create a new design to focus on architectural hierarchy
3. Improve advanced searches, and provide multiple paths to content

Project Timeline: 10 months

ABOUT AILA: AILA is a not-for-profit organization that provides continuing legal education, information, professional services, and expertise through its 39 chapters and over 50 national committees.

Staff: 65
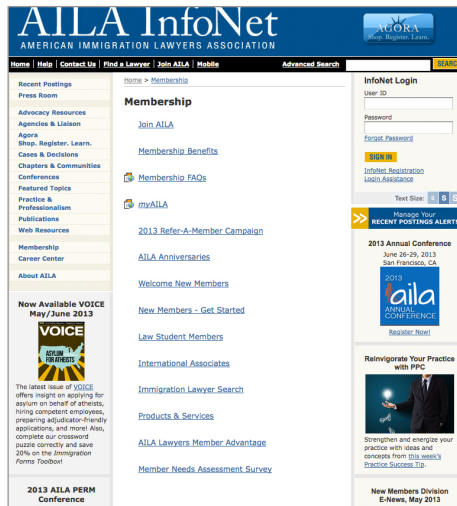**Operating Budget:** $12.8 million
Membership: 13,000 attorneys & law professors who practice & teach immigration law

"We had to face the fact that we have 6 vastly different audiences that our site has to serve. This forced us to stop looking at our content the way we thought it should be organized, and really focus on how our members needed it to be organized."

—Andrea Chempinski, Associate Director of Online Services, AILA

Visitors to the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) website were overwhelmed by the depth and breadth of information on the site. For the organization, maintaining a large amount of content was challenging. AILA is required to publicly post and maintain a number of notices from government agencies so that they can be referenced in legal cases. They needed a systematic way way to distribute and maintain this information so that users could easily find it.

Another challenge came with their various audiences. Some audiences, such as members and students, would log in to the site. Others user—mostly the general public and media—would not. Finding a way for all of these audiences to easily find the content they needed and that was appropriate for them was a challenge in and of itself. AILA's main goal was to organize, post, and disseminate content effectively for their various

BALANCE INTERACTIVE

8136 Old Keene Mill Road, Suite A-207, Springfield, VA 22152 | T: 703.451.8675 | F: 703.783.0392 | www.balanceinteractive.com

Member Benefits

Read about the benefits of AILA membership.

Benefit	Keep Me Informed	Save Me Time/Money	Enhance My Practice
AILA's Website	✔	✔	✔
Conferences and CLE	✔	✔	✔
Practice Assistance	✔	✔	✔
Publications, Newsletters, and AILA8	✔		✔
Liaison Services	✔	✔	✔
Fastcase	✔	✔	✔
Chapter and Community Activities	✔		✔

BEFORE

AFTER

KEY EXPERTISE PROVIDED BY BALANCE INTERACTIVE:

Audience Analysis

Customized Web & Content Strategy

New Site Architecture

Usability testing

Design and styling

audiences. Further, they needed to ensure that visitors could find the information they sought quickly and easily. To achieve this, Balance focused on user needs, conducting a task analysis to better understand users' top priorities when visiting the AILA website. From this research, the Balance content and usability team created a site architecture that spoke to those priorities, focusing on content hierarchy and highlighting key calls to action and most recent information. This allows users to easily take in the information presented provides clear pathways to next steps, supporting both their goals and AILA's overall business goal of serving their multiple audiences.

A robust search also supports this architecture, allowing audiences to filter and sort with audience-focused keywords. There were many differing opinions among the AILA staff as to how the navigation items should be named and which keywords audiences might use to find common items on the site.

Because of this, Balance conducted usability testing to make audience-based recommendations on what sections should be named. This approach makes certain that the site is using terms that audiences would use themselves, not just what internal stakeholders think they might use.

"It was refreshing to know that during the whole process, Balance Interactive was listening."

Balance also designed a separate, secondary audience menu. This way, users can navigate directly to the area of the site that contains information specifically created for them. Use of a powerful taxonomy system ensures that content is dynamically filtered to the proper audience channels. Throughout this process, Balance worked closely with AILA's CMS vendor, GVPI, to make sure the recommended functionality and designs could be implemented on AILA's custom .NET content management system.

After we handed over the information architecture and designs, Balance continued to partner closely with AILA and GVPI as GVPI built the new site. Frequent tweaks and updates to the CSS files were needed, and we worked closely with GVPI to make sure they had exactly what they needed to built the site to the specifications.

The result is a clean, intuitive interface that is easily navigable by AILA's various audiences. Equally important, AILA's staff is now able to reasonably maintain the large volume of content on the site and make it more serviceable to their users.