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ABOUT ST MARY'S UNIVERSITY TWICKENHAM

St Mary's University Twickenham, home to over 6,000 students, has a long-standing reputation for academic excellence. It has been ranked as "outstanding" by OFSTED for teacher training and boasts Olympic-standard training facilities. Athletes from the University competed at the London 2012 and Rio 2016 Olympics, winning six medals at the latter.

As with all higher education establishments, St Mary's University uses its website as a first port of call to attract and recruit high caliber students.

THE OPPORTUNITY

After receiving full University status in 2014, St Mary's University was allocated funding to develop a new campus-wide website to enhance student enrolment activities. Aware that its existing website was not performing optimally, the University embarked on a performance and testing project prior going out to tender for a website redesign and build.

Akendi, a leading UX agency & service design company, was enlisted to carry out performance and usability testing, as well as to simplify the existing navigation structure to improve the website's effectiveness as an enrolment tool, reduce the number of page drop-offs and facilitate self-service applications.

KEY PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

- mprove user experience for student enrolment
- Streamline website navigation while satisfying stakeholder requirements
- Simplify the page layer structure and click-through process
- Deliver a seamless UX experience
- Reduce dependency on the search button

CHALLENGES

User research conducted by Akendi demonstrated that the website was underperforming on many levels, with users resorting to the "search" facility to find the required information, resulting in a poor experience. St Mary's University needed to deploy a university-wide website that facilitated easy interaction to streamline online recruitment processes as well as provide an effective communications tool for other communications activities.

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THE APPROACH

The Akendi team worked closely the University's different departments from the outset to ensure they were all equally represented and understood the objectives of the website redesign. They achieved this by holding a series of workshops with key stakeholders to ascertain their individual requirements.

Akendi also carried out a detailed competitor analysis of the site (to demonstrate its performance) and extensive user research to understand their pain points and frustrations. The findings were used to develop a detailed UX plan and a strategy for phased implementation of a user-friendly website.

IMPACT

The new website is intuitive and easy to navigate, resulting in a positive experience for students, staff and third-parties. Browsers can find the required information without using the search facility, speeding up the online enrolment processes, thus improving website performance. The new website is also being used to improve services for alumni students and develop corporate partnerships through the provision of intuitive menus and self-service applications.

Akendi began working on the project in 2015. The new website was launched in March 2017.

"THE AKENDI TEAM WERE PROACTIVE AND ADAPTABLE IN THEIR APPROACH TO THE PROJECT FROM THE OUTSET. LEO CAME TO SITE SEVERAL TIMES TO MEET WITH OUR KEY STAKEHOLDERS, HOSTED WORKSHOPS FOR US AND DID A GREAT JOB MANAGING THE EXPECTATIONS OF DIFFERENT PARTIES AND CAME UP WITH A USER EXPERIENCE PLAN THAT SATISFIED ALL CONCERNED."

Client quotation