Heart disease and stroke take a Canadian life every seven minutes. For six decades, the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada (Heart & Stroke) has fought these diseases through health education, research funding, and advocacy. With the population aging and health problems rising, Heart & Stroke has set an ambitious 2020 goal to reduce the national death rate from heart disease and stroke by 25%.

**A new architecture for a new time**

To achieve this, Heart & Stroke’s goal is to provide a responsive platform for donors and volunteers, and simplify healthcare consumers’ access to vital information. This requires strategic focus, yet like many not-for-profits, Heart & Stroke had evolved over time as a federation of separate regional entities. In 2011, Heart & Stroke merged into a national organization with local operations cohering under a single brand identity. The next step was to tackle a fragmented digital presence of provincial and territory sites, the corporate site, some 40 campaign microsites, 20,000 web pages, and 48 siloed databases.

“If we had to make a change on one site, we had to make it 14 times across all the websites,” explains Greg Hayes, digital team lead for Heart & Stroke. “There was a lot of duplicate content, with a complicated navigation structure of multiple drop-downs that made it hard for users to find what they needed. The site was not responsive or mobile-optimized, and the legacy architecture inhibited search-engine optimization.”

With data spread across separate databases, Heart & Stroke could not aggregate and leverage a single view of constituents. The lack of clarity limited fundraising opportunities.

**Challenges**

- Reduce death rate from heart disease and stroke by 25% by 2020
- Launch new website unifying 14 legacy sites
- Streamline site maintenance, eliminate duplication of effort
- Serve diverse audiences with targeted, personalized content
- Optimize site for mobile access, SEO ranking

**Solution**

- Sitecore® Experience Platform™ (XP) (v8) (v9 planned)
- Multilanguage support
- XConnect Client Application Programming Interface (API)
- Sitecore® Experience Database™ (xDB) (planned)
- Integrations (planned)
- Blackbaud Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

**Results**

- Created digital ecosystem reflecting unified brand identity
- Optimized desktop and mobile online customer experience
- Gained organizational agility across national and provincial operations
- Increased donation revenue 19% to support medical research
- Increased organic search traffic 67%; mobile users 52%; newsletter signups 100%
A Sitecore roadmap to personalization

Users of the Heart & Stroke website generally come either to give help or to get help. Those who come to give help include donors and volunteers. Those who seek help include healthcare consumers looking for preventive information and diagnosed patients learning to manage their conditions. Government agencies also use the site to stay abreast of advocacy issues.

Heart & Stroke’s strategic vision was to place the constituent at the center of every digital engagement and to connect with that person through human-interest storytelling. The first step was to gather its diverse digital assets under a single content management system (CMS), with content clustered according to audience segments, or communities of meaning. Ultimately, Heart & Stroke aims to deliver personalized content based on each user’s interests, behaviors, and needs.

Through a request-for-proposal process, Heart & Stroke identified Sitecore as the standout platform for this digital roadmap. The organization deployed Sitecore XP, using multilanguage support to present its new site in French and English. The site localizes provincial content while simplifying navigation. Trimming from 20,000 confusing pages to 2,500 clearly organized ones enhances usability and search functionality. The mobile-first responsive design is optimized for online donations.

Optimized site increases donation revenue

Over the website’s first year, Heart & Stroke saw an 11% increase in online donations and a 19% rise in online donation revenue. Organic search traffic rose 67%, while bounce rates dropped. Mobile users rose 52% and now account for more than half of site visitors. Newsletter sign-ups have doubled and 22% more unique users visit the site. One web producer manages day-to-day content changes, supported by two or three editors managing specific streams such as articles. Faster turnaround on content changes increases business agility. In addition, Heart & Stroke can launch campaigns, such as its recent Women’s campaign, without developing separate microsites.

Next steps: integrating CRM

Now, Heart & Stroke is taking the next steps of its digital transformation journey; partnering with Sid Lee to upgrade to Sitecore XP v9 and with the XConnect API will link to its Blackbaud CRM system. Along with Sitecore xDB, the platform will allow more-advanced personalization, analytics, marketing automation, and engagement modeling. Integrating the data from 48 siloed databases will give a unified view of each customer, so Heart & Stroke can holistically see and personalize that user’s entire relationship with the organization. In addition, Heart & Stroke will strengthen its social marketing by integrating with the Stackla visual engine to leverage user-generated content.

“Bringing all those resources into the Sitecore ecosystem lets us connect the dots of why and how someone is engaging with our cause,” Hayes says. “It deepens our value to that person and to all of the 1.6 million Canadians living with heart disease and stroke today.”

Sitecore is the global leader in experience management software that combines content management, commerce, and customer insights. The Sitecore Experience Cloud™ empowers marketers to deliver personalized content in real time and at scale across every channel—before, during, and after a sale. More than 5,200 brands—including American Express, Carnival Cruise Lines, Dow Chemical, and L’Oréal—have trusted Sitecore to deliver the personalized interactions that delight audiences, build loyalty, and drive revenue.