Company and Team Overview

Pearson is an education company, located around the world, offering k-12 and higher education products and services mostly geared toward students, teachers, administrators, and tutors. I work within the higher education team located in and focused on the U.S. Our focus is to build new pages/sites and to implement updates. This includes products, campaigns, events, and other informational and promotional pages throughout the higher education section of Pearson's main U.S. website (www.pearson.com/us).

Team Structure

My team consists of about 30 people. All creative focused, but split into web, print, content, email, video, and Project Managers. Each of these teams also has a manager. There is also a top manager above the whole team. My immediate web team consists of my manager and 3 other people. Among the 4 web team members, there are only 2 of us, myself and one other person, that works on the main site (www.pearson.com/us) through a CMS called Adobe Experience Manager. My other 2 team members work on old legacy sites that have not yet been migrated over to AEM. They will be, eventually. My teams members are all in different states including New Jersey, Texas, Iowa, and Boston. Among the larger team, it is even more dispersed. My manager is also of Irish decent and one of my team members is of Indian decent.

The Project

Pearson Students is a section of the higher education site offering a variety of products geared toward students. The scope of this project is to change the voice to cater to a larger audience by changing "student" to "learner." Also, to redesign some of the products, on the main page, to highlight them more.

Introduction

Pearson's ideas behind changing the focus from students to an all-encompassing learner focus, is smart. This will help to capture a wider audience of learners, since not all are students. Even Pearson itself pushes for its own employees to constantly expand their knowledge and take advantage of learning opportunities. This being said, I am thrilled to be a part of this transition by converting the existing Pearson Student's section of our web site. With this project currently taking place, I am seeing reoccurring hiccups with Pearson's process around web based projects. Using Pearson Students as the prime example, this proposal will discuss exiting processes, limitations, and possible improvements.

Purpose

The purpose of the Pearson Student's project is to change the voice of the content to cater to a wider audience because not every learner is a student.

The purpose of the proposal is to dive into the process issues surrounding this project and many other web based projects.

Scope and Rationale

Project scope and rationale is to make updates to the Pearson Students section of the higher education site to change the focus from "student" to "learner."

Goals

Project goals include updating all student focused content to learner focused content as well as changing page URLs, site tree organization, and SEO information for all pages within this section of the site. Secondarily, updating the product designs on the home page to better highlight them.

Timeline

The project started on April 1st and final was due by May 9th. The project has currently gone over this timeline. It is now pushed back to May 24th for final and go-live date.

Products and Deliverables

Project deliverables included updates to these 5 web pages, the Learner's Home Page, Get Course Materials, Student Ambassadors, Students Blog, and Become a Blogger.

Current Overall Team Process

My current perspective of the overall team process, when a creating and requesting a project, goes something like the following:

- Stakeholder submits a request to the Creative Manager (maybe they have a kick-off meeting).
- Creative Manager creates a JIRA ticket with overall description of the project, then assigns it to the Project Manager team lead.
- PM team lead assigns to most available PM.

- PM designs what sub tickets need to be created and does so (for example, one ticket for content, graphic design, and web).
- Content ticket is assigned to Content Manager, then assigned to most available content team member.
- Graphic design ticket is assigned to their manager, then assigned to most available team member (could be imagery or pdfs).
- Content and graphic design kick-off meetings happen, if necessary (usually around new or big changes).
- Content doc is created and sent off for alpha and beta review.
- When final approval is in from the Stakeholder for content, the tickets are assigned for web to start work.
- Web pulls in approved content and graphic design pieces and send off for first internal creative review (my internal team only so graphic and content people can see it before CM or Stakeholder).
- Internal review edits are made and then is sent off for CM and Stakeholder alpha review.
- Complete alpha review changes and send off for final review/approval, unless bigger and needs a beta review and changes made.
- Final review and approval received (all team members tagged throughout the process, but Stakeholder has ultimate say over everything). Once approved by the Stakeholder, it is pushed live.
- CM closes out the tickets.

Limitations and Preliminary Findings

Project limitations included the following:

- Constraints of using Adobe Experience Manager and set templates. For example, I could not make TM and R actual superscripted symbols with no option in AEM.
- Special images for product highlights were requested. These followed new design requirements, a different style. Making them work with the page took some work.
- Why are some pages still titled "Students?" Shouldn't Student Ambassadors and Students Blog be changed to "Learner" as well?

Process limitations included the following:

- New Creative Manager assigned that is not very familiar with company processes.
- The special images requested for the products followed a different approval process than usual. The reasons why they followed a different process were confusing, therefore, approval wasn't done correctly.
- Graphic designers creating the new special images worked separately from the web designers. No input from each other.
- Content team constantly giving design suggestions. Content should stick to content.
- Brainstorming meetings, all the way up to the Stakeholders, are done in separate
 meetings. Why can't we all be involved in all meetings throughout the process to give
 input? Makes more sense to have graphic, web, and content expertise from the get-go.

- Too many rounds of revisions. Alpha then beta aren't always committed to. Goes into rounds of beta.
- We use feedback docs to capture all comments during reviews. Some don't use these
 and post comments elsewhere (for example, within project tickets), which makes
 tracking of outstanding or completed changes difficult.
- Final approval doesn't ever seem to be final. Content is approved before design, yet content changes still happen throughout the design process.
- What happens at the Stakeholder level or even beyond the Stakeholder? We don't ever hear about this information. Do these requests actually come from research? If so, what type of research? I know we have research teams, but not so sure one is part of our team. Shouldn't we be working with them thoroughly? We have UI teams that work with researchers closely, why doesn't our web team?
- Very little, if any, analytics being done behind the scenes. They have been "wanting" to fill this position for a while. How do we know what is really working?
- Little is known, at least at my level, about the Stakeholder and initial requirements. Why
 do they have so much control over the final say of the project and not the actual
 specialists working on it?

Team limitations included the following:

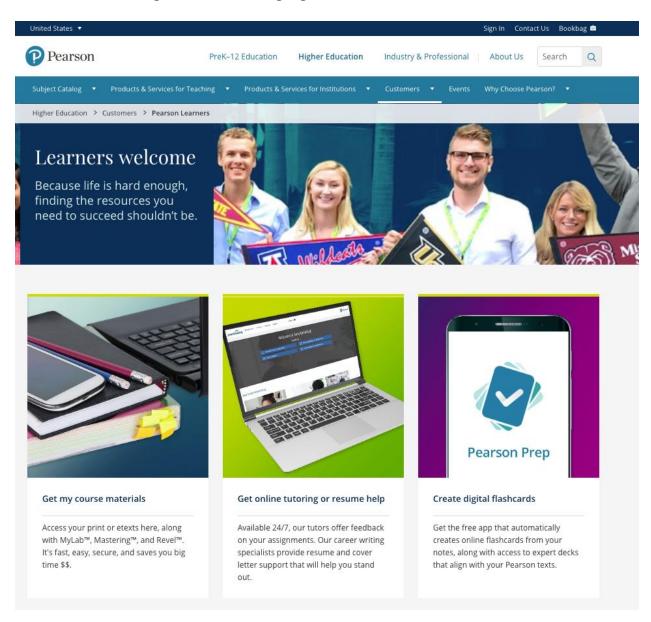
 Web, graphic design, and content teams all located within different states. Scheduling meetings with different time zones and communication, in general, can be difficult.

Conclusion

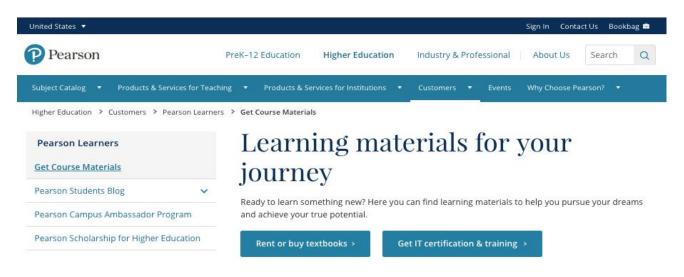
Overall, Pearson seems to have the right idea when it comes to changing the voice from student to learner, but their processes could use a lot of improvements. Having an ethnographic study done within Pearson, and it's process across the board, would be highly beneficial. I am coming from a perspective of web, within the higher education U.S. side, which is only a small piece of the puzzle. Pearson's k-12 and global teams are sure to have their own set of issues. One process enhancement that the global side has already taken on, is the implementation of an agile environment. The U.S. side has discussed this, but no efforts have been made to implement this. I believe that implementing a new process, like agile, could really help to open up the minds of others and the possibilities of great change. Improvements have been made little by little, but until we can allow for ethnography-type experts to come in with a more etic perspective, obtain trust between Pearson employees and experts, research and reevaluated company process, and get the right people on board to accept big change, I'm afraid our current process limitations will remain in place.

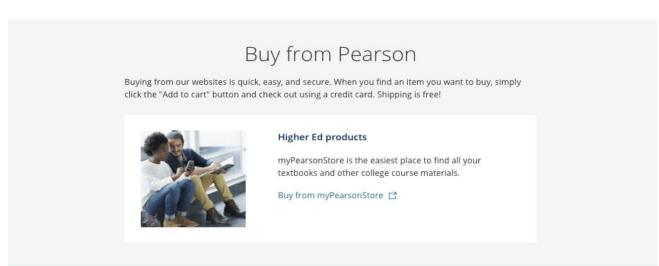
Project Imagery (these project changes are not yet live)

1. Learner Home Page with Product Highlights

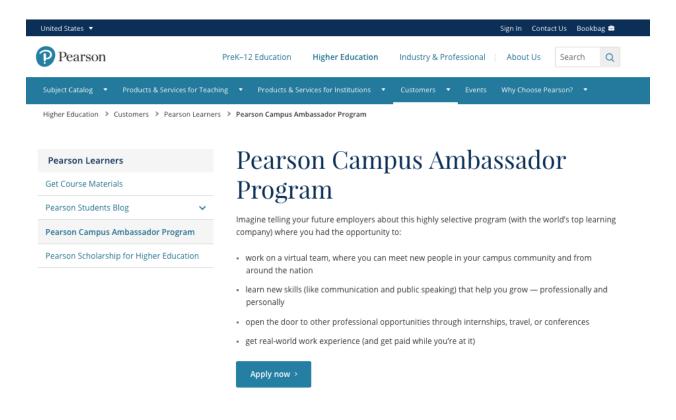


2. Get Course Materials

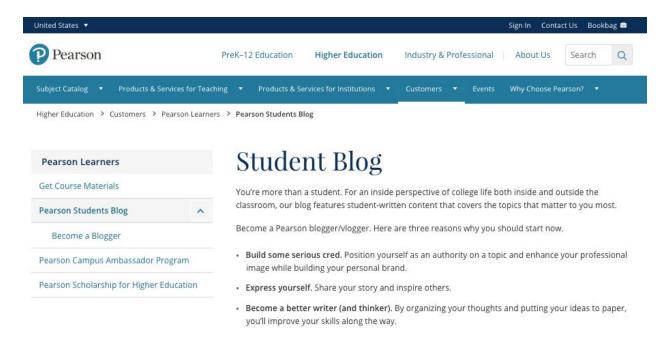




3. Pearson Ambassadors



4. Student Blog (Why not Learner Blog?)





Go ahead. Pitch it to us. We can't wait to hear what you're thinking.

Submit your idea ☐

Looking for some inspiration?

Here are some ideas for blog/vlog topics to consider.



The Art of Balance: Accepting Changes in Your Life's Blueprint



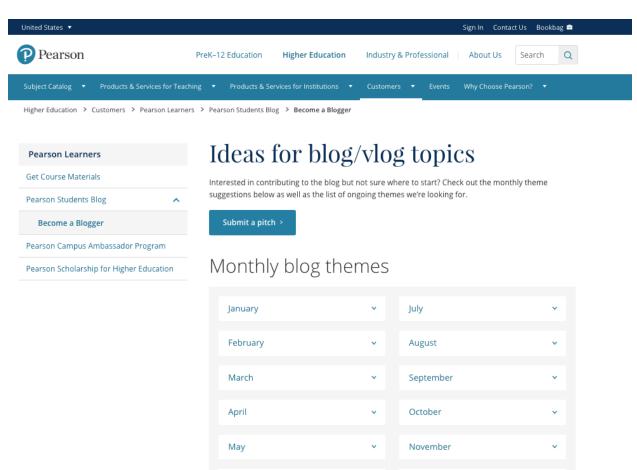
Getting Experience in Your Chosen Career Field



As a soon-to-be graduating senior I'm

Thank you to Pearson

5. Become a Blogger



June

December