



United Alliance[™]
SERVICES CORPORATION

Meet UnitedAllianceServices.com

Since 2003, United Alliance Services Corporation (UASC) has offered occupational, health and safety consultation and training throughout the New England, Tri-state and Mid-Atlantic regions. Through their website, [UASC](#) provides a wide range of workplace safety classes and training, safety audits and resources to assist clients with health and safety regulatory compliance.

The Challenge

In 2016, in response to Google's changing requirements, UASC invested in a redesign of their website. They upgraded to the Drupal 8 content management system (CMS), with enhanced security provided by a secure socket layer (SSL) certificate, and they improved user experience with a modern template that was fast and displayed well on mobile devices.

Website Redesign Red Flags Emerged

Unfortunately, the web design company hired to do the redesign was not prepared or capable of migrating a site of this magnitude — the UASC website contains at least 800 pages. The first red flag was when the whole project took much longer than expected. A second troublesome sign was the fact UASC was never educated about the need to map the old URLs to the new site - a fundamental “must” for any redesign where page structures change. According to Meg, the Marketing Manager of UASC, “We went into the redesign blind, not understanding how a

Case Study: United Alliance Services Corporation

change in the look and feel of a website could affect the URLs.” In Sticky Media's experience, this is very common, and the effects can be devastating.

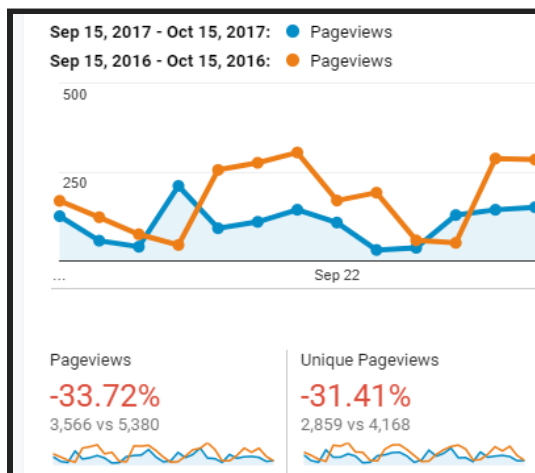
Precipitous Drop in Traffic

For example, the immediate effect after launching UASC's new site was a 50% drop in traffic. It was not immediately apparent to UASC, however, why this had happened. UASC noticed hundreds of broken links, but did not associate them with the redesign. “It took us until we talked to Sticky Media in the spring of 2018, to realize the issue. Jesse and his team pointed out it was due to failing to map URLs during the redesign,” says Meg.

“90% of our business is driven through our website. When [visitor traffic] went the reverse of what we wanted it was heartbreaking.”

- UASC Marketing Manager

Beyond the redirects, Sticky Media found other problems with the site that had likely contributed to the drop in traffic. There was duplicate content and competing addresses of their site, partially due to a poorly executed migration by another firm to a secure sockets layer (SSL) certificate.



Needless to say, UASC needed help, and fast. “Ninety percent of our business is driven through our website. If we're not ahead of the game there we're in big trouble. When it went the reverse of what we wanted it was heartbreaking,” says Meg.

UASC asked Sticky Media to fix the redirects, with the understanding UASC would regain much of the traffic that they had lost.

What We Did

After consulting with the client, we quickly identified the problem and knew what was needed to solve it. A common mistake is when companies not familiar with search engine optimization best practices complete a website redesign but do not forward the old content to the new, which results in broken links. Since this is a poor user experience, the search engines penalize the site by reducing the number of pages ranked highly. The end result is a precipitous drop in traffic coming from search engines.

"It is really important to work with a company like Sticky Media that understands everything involved in a website redesign and the effect it has on your SEO."

- UASC Marketing Manager

Of course, this is sadly a common problem many businesses face. Indeed, a large chunk of Sticky Media's business comes from clients who have just had a rebuild and found, to their dismay, that their traffic has dropped significantly.

Typically, website developers are more concerned with the coding needed to build the site and are not aware of or worried about the effect on search engine optimization (SEO).

This is why it's vital any redesign company

you work with has the full context of what happens after the website redesign has been completed.

Fixing Website Redirects

We reviewed and setup 301 redirects for hundreds of pages site-wide. A 301 redirect is an HTTP status code that indicates the URL is permanently moved. It's an easy way to make sure you don't visit a broken link. To

streamline the solution for UASC, we generated a list of the broken links, finding over 200 of them. We then went through the process of redirecting the broken links to the correct page within their Drupal CMS. We took the time to carefully map each URL to the right place, even categories of pages that had been eliminated. Finally, we tested all the redirected links in popular browsers to ensure the user experience was top notch.

Status	Type
Error	Submitted URL not found (404)

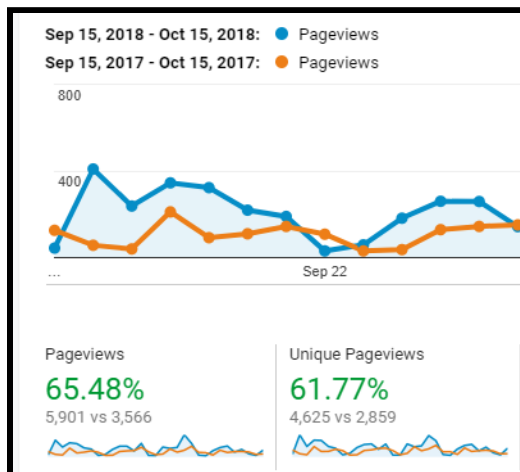


How We Overcame Challenges

While we were successful, the process wasn't without its challenges. For example, certain pages represented products that were no longer offered or were bios of staff members who were no longer with UASC. It required good judgment to make independent decisions, keeping the visitor's experience top of mind. In all cases, we pointed to the new page that made the most sense given the context.

In addition to redirecting hundreds of pages, we also tackled the problem of duplicate content and competing addresses. There were pieces of identical content indexed by Google for www and non-www pages. Duplicate content makes Google choose which page is the most relevant. Google will most often punish both pages with lower rankings.

Outcomes



"Jesse and his team successfully mapped the URLs. Since then, we've seen a good uptick in traffic. And of course user experience is better without the broken links," says Meg. The statistics in Google Analytics confirm Meg's statement; several important web metrics rose, such as the time spent on page, unique page views and total page views. And while user experience is not directly quantifiable, the Google Analytics' statistics also suggest a reduced level of frustration on the part of visitors.

Reflecting on the process, Meg continues, "If I had known [about the need for redirects] from the outset, there would have been a box to check during the design process regarding URL mapping. It is really important to work with a company like Sticky Media that understands all of those aspects and the effect it has on your SEO."

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