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Business: New Zealand Rugby Union

Subject: allblacks.com/jp

2009

A connected brand success story

Using online to connect New Zealand's most iconic brand to the language and minds of the 2nd largest economy in the world.

Convergence is probably the definitive buzz word of the internet revolution. Technologies have rapidly converged since the turn of the century and this trend is being mirrored in business disciplines. IT, marketing and communications are quickly moulding into a new 21st century integrated business skill set.

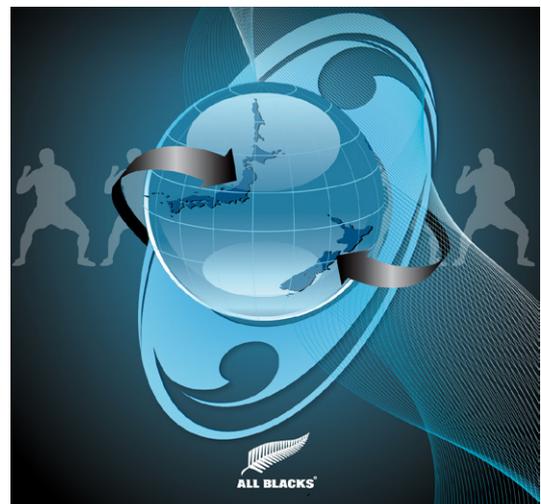
These convergences are creating new opportunities in the online world. One such opportunity, 'the connected brand', is being increasingly recognised as a powerful way to augment traditional methods.

Put simply, a connected brand connects your brand more deeply to the hearts and minds of a global audience. This is achieved by utilising your online presence to serve up relevant and timely content as well as offering users a means for deeper engagement through participation.

Connecting brands in this manner represents a significant opportunity for companies seeking to leverage technology for marketing and competitive advantage.

One such success story that is taking advantage of these new opportunities has been lead by the New Zealand Rugby Union and its partners.

The NZRU, caretakers of New Zealand's most iconic brand, the 'All Blacks', have for some time recognised the global potential of the brand. As a result they are now in the second year of Bledisloe Cup games scheduled in the lucrative Asian market.



The advantages of playing these fixtures are significant, with gate returns alone contributing positively. However, the real challenge is to create an ongoing engagement with the fans that goes beyond the appeal of an annual game, thus creating longevity of brand presence.

Japan, where last year's Nissui Tokyo Bledisloe Cup Test was held, is the 2nd biggest economy in the world. A growing All Blacks following by Japanese rugby fans would therefore present considerable commercial opportunities for the NZRU and its sponsors.

With this in mind, the NZRU and its partner Adidas have recently sought to better connect the brand to Japanese fans by launching a full Japanese language version of the All Blacks website.

allblacks.com/jp was released to coincide with the lead-up to the 2009 Nissui Bledisloe Cup Test in Tokyo. David Barton Ginger, Online Manager at the NZRU, describes the vision: 'We wanted to develop an enhanced platform so we could deliver our news and other All Blacks content in the language of the Japanese fans to foster support for the All Blacks brand. We needed it to be easy to use and integrated with our current English language website. We also wanted a system that could be easily rolled out to additional languages in the future.'

Early in 2009 the NZRU went to the marketplace seeking vendors who could meet these needs. Following a competitive bid process they appointed a cluster of Wellington based companies: ZeroOne, Aspire and the New Zealand Translation Centre (NZTC International).

Colin Knox of Aspire, Project Manager for the development, believed there were some key challenges the cluster needed to meet for the NZRU's vision to be realised.

'We recognised that one of the key aspects of the requirement was the need to develop a highly credible standard of content to ensure the Japanese rugby fan was catered for in a respectful way and the reputation of the All Blacks brand was protected. Producing a high standard of language translation would enable this. However, we needed to achieve this in such a way as to create the immediacy online fans would expect and deliver the whole package in a cost-effective manner'.

In the past, such a challenge has been both expensive and often lacking the speed to meet the dynamic expectations of online users. However, the emergence of new practices that allow ease of data exchange have increased the opportunity for end-to-end automation. But automation alone was understood to be insufficient. Automated translation systems have existed for some time but are notorious for their inaccuracy.

Hagen Issell, Marketing Director of the New Zealand Translation Centre, describes the importance of the human translator:

'Automation is well and good and it does contribute to efficiency and, therefore, cost savings. Indeed, our automated translation memory system is the first step in our translation process. Its role is to gradually reduce the cost of translation over time as it remembers and translates regularly used words and terms, thus reducing word count for translation, while also optimising consistency of content.

'We know, however, that human intervention remains the key component to quality and our four-stage process is the basis for a quality translation. Quality is particularly important in protecting the integrity and reputation of such an iconic brand as the All Blacks and in making sure it credibly connects with the discerning Japanese rugby fan.'

With the above in mind, the cluster planned to create a new end-to-end workflow that made the most of technology for speed and efficiency without comprising quality.

The new workflow had to be designed to leverage and enhance the NZRU's existing technology investment without the need for a stand-alone parallel system or a complete rebuild.

Jason Nicol, ZeroOne's Lead Technologist for the project, describes the challenge: 'The NZRU needed an integrated approach that enabled their content manager to simply 'tick a box' in their existing CMS when a translation was required. This approach would remove the need for duplicate content management and allow the NZRU to cherry pick the appropriate and best content for deployment to the /jp website or other future multi lingual websites.

'Our challenge was to take the original All Blacks engine created in 2004 and evolve it to meet this need and then integrate it smoothly with the new workflow.' Fortunately our development team had the foresight to create the original engine in a way that would allow languages to be added in the future.

We also needed to make sure the development could be scaled easily so the NZRU could add other languages without great cost and rework.'

With these imperatives in mind, the solution for the project then began to take shape. Over a period of three months the development, project management and translation team created and tested a new system and workflow to meet the challenge.

The outcome is an integrated workflow and system that begins at the content manager's desk with a simple tick box in the existing CMS. The content manager selects a piece of content for translation and decides if this content is to be replicated on both the Japanese and English language site. In the future this will potentially offer multiple language sites to send content to.

Once selected, the request is then processed by the system and sent seamlessly to New Zealand Translation Centre's translation memory system. The NZTC system then partially translates the content and flags the work for review and completion by a professional translator and editor.

After the content has been reviewed and updated, the translation team log on to a dedicated translation content management interface and conduct a final QA of the content prior to deployment. This QA interface allows translators to preview the content in the final form it will take once deployed.

The use of the QA interface was particularly important for NZTC as it facilitated remote working and review by in-country Japanese experts.

This new workflow can now deliver content from English to Japanese inside a day when required.

For example, the team's announcements for the All Blacks 2009 Tour and the playing 22 for the Nissui Tokyo Bledisloe Cup Test were both presented on the same day in both languages. In the future this could be achieved in multiple languages on the same day.

As a result, allblacks.com/jp is a leading New Zealand example of the convergence of disciplines.

With technology and people harmonised in this manner it is becoming increasingly feasible to deliver dynamic 'news style' content in multiple languages to diverse audiences around the globe.

This can now be done without the need for an extensive content management team or an expensive system and, most importantly, without excessive operating costs.

David Barton-Ginger, Online Manager at the NZRU, says: 'The outcome of the project is fundamental in an online sense. We can now connect the All Blacks brand globally into the languages and therefore hearts of audiences around the world without the enormous cost and resources usually associated with such an endeavour'

allblacks.com/jp is truly a connected brand success story.

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