

## FlowWaterjet: Website Redesign for a Global Audience

*Doug Thayer*

*May 6, 2016*

In the summer of 2010, we launched our website. It was bright, colorful and had great images. Our company, Flow International, manufactures waterjets that are used primarily for industrial cutting applications. Waterjet systems are fairly large (about the size of a car) and they are used to cut practically any material.

Since waterjet is what we are about, we went with a new domain name – FlowWaterjet.com. We are based in the United States, near Seattle; but we have offices globally. So, we localized our content for our 12 primary regions. So far, so good.

But, we discovered that having a website translated into 12 languages doesn't necessarily mean that it will be equally effective in all those markets.

Our site utilized Google Analytics and it revealed that the site was performing poorly in organic search for many of the non-English versions of the website. We also found that there was confusion in whom owned specific site content and our robust content management system was not intuitive to use for many of our global editors.

Further, our site was not mobile friendly. When Google updated their algorithm in April of 2015, we saw an immediate negative impact in our search results. Many global users found us via mobile and now we were more invisible to them.

Thus, once we had the opportunity to upgrade our website, we jumped at the chance. Our goal was to make a more globally accessible website with relevant content and clearer calls to action.

So, we had a pretty good idea of what areas needed improvement. But, where to start?

The primary goal of our website is to generate leads. Though, since waterjets are sophisticated machines, we also wanted to educate visitors on waterjet technology.

We conducted a series of Voice of Customer (VOC) interviews with non-customers, prospects, and current customers. Our goal was to discover what process people take when they search for a capital equipment purchase. From there, we distilled the feedback from the VOC interviews into a needs analysis. We wanted to see what content, navigation, and design elements were important to people.

Out of the needs analysis, we started to map out the framework of our new site, created an initial design for it, and utilized an online testing service to see how people responded. Primarily, we tested navigation, though some content areas were tested later.

We also solicited feedback from key stakeholders and leaders within our global team to make sure our vision was in sync with their respective content areas. In what may be a somewhat unorthodox arrangement, our in-house marketing team was handling the discovery/design of the website and we tasked an agency to handle the development of the website.

One item that we wanted to be cognizant of throughout the development process was the effectiveness of our new site's search engine optimization. Our old site was structured in a manner that had the different language versions as subdirectories. To illustrate, the Japanese version of our site was [www.FlowWaterjet.com/ja-JP](http://www.FlowWaterjet.com/ja-JP). The upside to this structure was that it was fairly easy to maintain, plus it may have aided in our site's overall domain authority. However, our site was not being rewarded in Japanese search results.

To make the different language versions of our site more visible to localized search, we secured country-code Top Level Domains (ccTLD's) for all languages on our new site. So, the Japanese version of our new site can be found at [www.FlowWaterjet.jp](http://www.FlowWaterjet.jp). The downside to this action is that the domain authority will be diluted among the different language versions of the website. Though in time the ccTLD's should result in more overall site traffic.

Having a ccTLD can help in localized search, but it is only a first step. Next, we translated page names. For example, the German version of our site is [www.FlowWaterjet.de](http://www.FlowWaterjet.de). Rather than have the name of our pump overview page in English, [www.FlowWaterjet.de/pump/overview.aspx](http://www.FlowWaterjet.de/pump/overview.aspx), the page names have been localized. So, the localized version of the German pump page is [www.FlowWaterjet.de/Pumpen/Uberblick.aspx](http://www.FlowWaterjet.de/Pumpen/Uberblick.aspx). Hreflang tags were also added to help search engines serve up results to users searching in that language.

Meta titles were created for all pages on the site, with [best practices in mind](#). Once the meta tiles were completed in English, they were translated by our translation partner and reviewed by our global offices for accuracy.

We did not effectively implement meta descriptions on our old site. They were done infrequently and it left a lot to chance regarding what info search results would display. Though not important to search rankings, we wanted more control on what page descriptions were served up in search results. In turn, we created, translated and added meta descriptions for all pages on the new website.

Another major SEO concern we had during the migration process was the impact of search not knowing where to find our new pages. After all, we were implementing ccTLD's and page names had been updated to their respective language versions. To prepare for this and to avoid 404 errors, we implemented 301 redirects to help search engines find new page locations.

Finally, we implemented a XML Site Map to assist search engines locate content on our new website.

We are a B2B company and with a few exceptions, our systems are fairly standard globally. In turn, a large portion of the content on the new website was internationalized. The main sections of the website were the same, regardless of the language version and most of the pages share similar structures.

Once the content for the English version of the website was completed, it was sent to our international teams for review. Updates were made for those regions that might have had slight deviations in product offers, but for the most part the content was universal.

From there, we moved forward with our translation efforts through a translation partner. Once content was translated, it was sent to back to our global teams for review and the revised content was uploaded to the new site. Any changes to the translations were noted and sent to our translation partner to add to the Translation Memory.

Our developer helped us select a new content management system ([Kentico](#)) that would allow for easier use among our global content team. Plus, it allowed us the flexibility to update design elements. Once content was added to the website, it was available for our global team to review via a staging location and updates were made, as needed.

One of the key benefits of the new content management system is that it will provide us with better workflow management. Local offices will be able to make changes to most areas within their respective language versions, but those changes will be reviewed by key content administrators for the website. This will help ensure that edits will be consistent with design guidelines.

Most of our global locations have search partners that they consult. We assisted them in the process of selecting paid search partners that they were comfortable working with together. We've found that these partners are experts within their respective regions.

We also support our regional teams in making sure that their campaigns are successful and utilizing effective paid search tactics. To assist our global paid search partners, we have setup a Google Tag Manager account for them to add their own tracking code to the languages they monitor.

All of our language versions of the website have Google Analytics tracking code and our regional offices have access to their language versions to monitor site performance. For example, our team in the Czech Republic recently did an email promotion that directed visitors to the Czech version of the new website. They were able to go into Google Analytics to monitor the success of this campaign.

Lastly, we have setup goals for all language versions of the website, so that we can track what calls to action are performing well and which ones may need to be revised.

Our new site launched only a month ago, so the data is still pending on how successful it will be. We have done many things to make it more visible within our global markets, but there will always be challenges and opportunities for improvement.

The journey we took to develop our new website lead us to many realizations. Historically we had more of push marketing approach, and that extended to how we promoted ourselves online globally. Though now with our new localized website we are seeking greater input from our regions and are striving to better serve the needs of our global customers. This means making sure that our website is properly optimized, that the content resonates with the local audience, and that we are responsive to changes in global search.