



Pearson plc

Save for Shares

About our client

Pearson is an international media company with market-leading businesses in education, business information and consumer publishing. A global company with offices throughout the world, Pearson Plc is made up of Pearson Education, the FT Group and the Penguin Group.

Pearson was founded by Samuel Pearson in 1844 as S. Pearson and Son, a small building firm in Yorkshire. Weetman Pearson developed Pearson into one of the world's largest building contractors. Weetman Pearson was committed to public works with a social conscience. He spoke publicly of Labour and the Ideal Wage, and extended his own liberal economics to a belief that employees should have a share in a firm's profits paying bonuses to staff for work done well or exceptional success. Today, Pearson still offers performance-related cash and share bonuses to its employees, and encourages share ownership among its employees worldwide.

Business requirements

Pearson believe that shareholders own the business and are running the company for them. They actively encourage all staff to be Pearson shareholders and wanted to make this process easier than it had been in previous years. It was concluded that a web-based scheme would provide the extra accessibility required and would be an easy medium for Pearson staff to use worldwide.

LloydsTSB Registrars provide the "backend" share calculations and share dealing facilities. The requested website was required to interact securely with the Lloyds applications including the database which is held at LloydsTSBR.

There were other factors that the build of the site had to take into consideration. The scheme had to be global; language and country specific documents and forms had to be available as well as language options for the web interface.

Project Type

Back-end integration

Usability testing

Multilingual

XML parsing

Keywords

Cost effective global roll out

Bespoke functionality

Accessibility

Usability

Technical capabilities

JavaScript

XML

SHTTP

SSL

It also had to take into account the legal requirements of each country regarding the buying of shares and tax savings.

The website had to provide security not only for the LloydsTSB information but also at a higher level. Only Pearson employees are allowed to register for the share save scheme via the Internet. They required a login facility that recognises their unique id.

Keymedia solution

Keymedia has created an introductory page to the Share Save scheme website which provides applicants with a drop down menu for their country and language selections. The users are then "cookied" by Keymedia to maintain their personal settings.

Users log into the site by providing an account number and their date of birth. This information is communicated to LSTBR back-end system in an XML format, transmitted by HTTP in SSL mode.

All further pages to complete registration are provided in the users chosen language which includes a welcome page, a list of schemes for which the user is eligible, the rules and a confirmation page.

A registered user is able to complete an application form that is JavaScript validated and is then posted, again in an XML format via SHTTP, to the LSTBR backend. A Yes or No response is returned, prompting a final "process complete "thank you" page. Keymedia adds the users choice of share save scheme to the cookie.

The site also provides calculators for employees to work out what they are saving in all currencies (taking into account exchange rates), languages and taking into account country specific characters.

Keymedia are currently working on refining and improving the website for the 2003 Sharesave scheme.

Business benefits

The Pearson Save for Shares scheme provides:

- Improved staff efficiency through ease of communication
- Ease of use due to adhering to usability and accessibility requirements
- Cost effect dissemination of information
- Improved service provision

Proshare Awards 2002

Pearson were winners in the Proshare Awards 2002 for "Best performance in fostering employee share ownership" in companies with over 10,000 employees.

The judges gave this award to Pearson in recognition of their "serious and long term commitment" to employee share ownership. They applauded the excellent use of technology. As well as share plan information being available on their intranet, there is a dedicated co-ordinator website plus other relevant information e-mailed to employees. A Sharesave scheme this year was fully online and employee queries are handled through an e-mail help line and a link to an IFA. As a result, over 85% of UK applications were received on-line and 75% worldwide.