Challenge

A major healthcare retailer recently rebuilt its ecommerce and pharmacy fulfillment site on a new architecture using adaptive design, a principle that maximizes the web experience based on device screen size. The client was unprepared for the significant impacts on planning, scoping, staffing, development and quality assurance (QA) processes, and infrastructure. Other complexities included managing various vendors and features through the development pipeline—from creative to product to engineering to DevOps—while meeting customer expectations in a multi-device, multi-browser world (with 450 million website visits in 2014). The client engaged Point B to execute this complex program. The long-term goal: to reduce operating expenses and enrich the customer experience at all digital touch points.

Moving to reliability

We began by addressing our client's immediate needs: quickly developing an executable plan; designing and stabilizing a new development lifecycle for an adaptively designed site; and integrating new vendors into the team.

We helped structure the team around developing components of an adaptive site in parallel. Front-end and back-end development teams were tasked to build components and widgets using a micro-services model around the core agile methodology already in place. We also developed a phased execution strategy based on customer and cost-mitigation priorities. This allowed features of certain breakpoints (i.e., device resolution) to be released earlier in a controlled traffic increase, which reduced the risks as part of this greenfield development.

Point B went on to provide program leadership during implementation and rollout—fostering collaboration among sub-teams, keeping executive management apprised of issues and removing development and QA obstacles as they arose. Point B's holistic view of the program and the interdependencies among many moving parts enabled these obstacles to be addressed quickly.

Managing through an adaptive software development life cycle was another challenge. While an organization may be accustomed to building linear sites in an agile model, a multi-breakpoint approach puts stress on many areas of the development lifecycle. Knowing these stress points and optimizing the development flow requires a grasp of the entire development factory.

Point B's digital leadership experience helped the adaptive team to not only scope the initial adaptive release but also plan follow-on features and functions. We also helped establish a programmatic approach to assessing the site's performance and a roadmap for progressive improvement.

Delivering on adaptive design

The new website advanced from proof-of-concept to fully adaptive within 12 months—delivering two months earlier than the original target for a new platform and code base. It significantly outperforms the previous site while maintaining consistent functionality across all breakpoints. This work has also enabled our client to accelerate innovation and improve speed-to-market of new and enhanced functionality.