Name of Initiative

Enhanced Complementary Health Products (CHP) Classification Tool 🏅

Agency

Health Sciences Authority

Could you share briefly on what was the impetus that eventually led to the initiative, and how did you motivate yourself/your team to pursue it?

The classification of a Complementary Health Product (CHP) e.g. Chinese Proprietary Medicines, Traditional Medicines and Health Supplements, is important as it determines the applicable regulatory requirements for a product. A CHP Classification Tool was developed using FormSG in 2018 to help the industry to "self-help" in determining their own product classification, instead of submitting such enquiries to the Health Sciences Authority (HSA). This helped to reduce a company's time and resources in preparing supporting documents for the enquiry submissions. In addition, the time saved by HSA, allowed our officers to work on other complex classification cases requiring more in-depth review. However, there were some limitations such as limited scope of products classifiable and laborious ingredient searches. To overcome these limitations, a new enhanced webapp version was developed.

As CHP range is diverse and may fall into different product classifications, we had to come up with a single matrix that would address all types of CHP and at the same time, sit well when digitalised. For this new web-based self-help tool, we adopted user experience (UX) design which required multiple iterations and working with industry partners to improve the UX and enable the classification of a wider range of CHPs. We conducted training to dealers on how they can use the tool and receive an instant outcome. Every feedback counted and the very dynamics of this project basically kept us going.

What were the challenges that you/your team encountered, and how did you/your team overcome them?

Our key challenge was coming up with an algorithm that caters to the diverse CHP classification. It involves a complex matrix that caters to combination products with ingredients from various product categories. Laying down those principles in a format that was readable by a software was tricky. It was a collaborative process working closely with the industry partners and IT experts, drawing insights from their experience and expertise respectively, to understand and negotiate a realistic design, that was user centric as well as technically feasible. We were thus able to understand the needs of our users and leverage on digital tools/resources available and come up with the algorithm that suited the purpose of the tool.
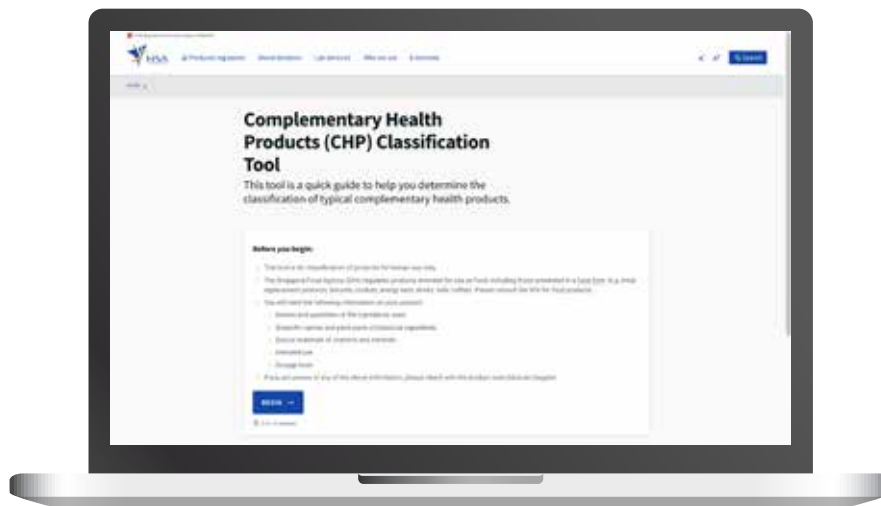
What was the most memorable moment while working on this project?

It is difficult to recount just one memorable moment while working on this project. Instead, it would be the whole process and journey, which we will savour. The team-spirit and bonding helped us understand each other well. We were receptive to new ideas and open to each other's suggestions. Open communications with our supervisors and their relentless support also impacted the trajectory of this project in a positive way.

However, to pin-down one moment that is worth remembering would perhaps be the day of the final user acceptance testing, when we saw the final outcome and the overall look of the webapp version of the tool. It was a milestone and there was no looking back.

https://www.hsa.gov.sg/CHP-classification-tool