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**MediaWires 3.0 Strategy Doc**

NOTES: This is a rough draft and really geared towards outlining the different paths the program can take—and our potential next steps for fulfilling it. If we decide to bring these ideas before members, they should be better connected to our organizational mission and vision, and each component should be clearly tied to a strategic principle.

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**Program History**

The MediaWires program’s original intent was to create an aggregate web portal that delivered our members’ content to new audiences online and increased its impact on public and political dialogue. We used a simple equation to describe it’s processes and intended impact: Sharing + Networking + Publicizing = Building the influence. The program was designed to increase the reach and impact of our members content by harnessing new, portable technologies and taking advantage of the emerging open web. The programs core operations included the following items:

* A hub site that pooled headlines from TMC members around key issues
* Widgets that featured TMC members’ content and were easily embedded on websites and social networking pages
* Open source blogs that created context and provided insights into current events by leveraging TMC member content.

This program’s founding strategy is “to leverage the resources of its members to impact political discourse and debate. We want to showcase the first-rate independent journalism produced by MC members, move it to new and targeted audiences, and build the influence of this critical, independent media.”

We partnered with Common Sense New Media Solutions for the first year of the program, using their NewsLadder platform as a basis for aggregation and widget creation around a series of issues. TMC sponsored several NewsLadders that pooled member content around healthcare, immigration, the economy and the environment on hub sites that were search engine friendly. While there were successes with the NewsLadder platform, it soon became apparent that the driving force behind the NewsLadder platform—a built-in community and an ongoing engagement strategy to increase its size—was not as robust as it had originally seemed. At the same time, many tools and platforms for content syndication and widget creation became available at a much lower cost. As traffic and clickthroughs from the NewsLadder platform declined, TMC staff decided to relaunch the project using free tools for content distribution and to replicate hubs for content underneath the Media Consortium brand. This strategy shift allowed us to align the program under one brand and present a more streamlined opt-in system for new partner organizations and Media Consortium members.

**Current State**

Currently, the MediaWires program consists of four weekly blogs, RSS headline feeds that are trackable via Delicious and customizable headline widgets that can be embedded on any CMS or social networking site. The most popular element of this program by far are the blogs, which are reposted by a wide variety of partner organizations and Media Consortium members, including TckTckTck, Feet in 2 Worlds, Vote Again 2010 and more.

While day-to-day implementation of this program is strong, and there is a clear benefit for TMC members with its existing operations, audience needs and technology are quickly changing. We are also struggling to accurately track the reach of the program via pageviews, uniques and clicks to content within the blogs. In order for this program to continue to have an impact and build upon The Media Consortium’s strategic principles, it must adapt to the changing landscape and the needs of our members.

**Building a New MediaWires Strategy**

The MediaWires exist to promote our members’ content and expand their reach in new communities by using new technology and partnerships as key leverage points. It has been successful as a buzz-builder and is an easy way for members to engage in simple content-sharing and aggregation while building a larger understanding of the work other TMC members produce.

Having an entry-level program that primes people for collaboration is smart, but it’s time to take things to the next level. I propose the following goals for the future development of the MediaWires project:

This program also has several benefits that should be considered as part of its future strategy. 1.) It increases quality of public conversations around political wedge issues via unique distribution model. 2.) It also is a great level one entry point for organizations that are new to collaborative media efforts, and there is a key strategic value in having programming that new members can easily take on. These two components are not necessarily a part of the original programming strategy, but have come to represent two concrete benefits as the program has grown.

An enhanced strategy can remain true to these components, but work creatively to redefine partnerships and develop new outreach strategies to engage other institutions in this process.

NEED TO IDENTIFY OUR FOUR DIFFERENT AUDIENCES AND INSERT SOME INFO RE: STATS AND PERFOMANCE.

Any emerging strategy for the MediaWires program must be geared towards audience expansion, cross-pollination of said audience and engaging communities.

REITERATE WHAT YOU SEE THE MAJOR GOALS OF MEDIAWIRES 3.0 STRATEGY ARE.

There are several options for expansion, but realistically, we can probably only pursue two. Whichever items we choose, the core goals of the program are still relevant. These potential growth areas fall under three categories: [organize these under what you suggest are attainable and priority next steps.]

1 ) Media Placement

2) Incorporating New Tools/Tech

3) Building out new issue verticals

**Media Placement:**

**HOW DO THESE ACCOMPLISH THE GOALS FOR MW 3.0?**

This is a programmatic long shot, but what if a future iteration of the MediaWires program meant media placement and increasing overall exposure of members’ content in other media? TMC staff could potentially work to place reporters and staff from member outlets in the mainstream press, so long as their content fit under our key working issues.

This effort would be a nice reincarnation of the Media Darlings initiative, and fits nicely with our strategic principles of “build and diversify media leadership.” A starting component of this program could be a weekly “issues” enewsletter delivered to producers and bookers within and outside of TMC. The enewsletter could contain links and brief blurbs about each article/author, and could function as an easy primer for reporters and bloggers across the media landscape. As this arm of the program expanded, we could potentially work to develop a “booking” position within TMC staff to strategically place reporters in the media to raise awareness and boost the quality of public conversation around political wedge issues.

**Incorporating New Tools/Tech:**

**HOW DO THESE ACCOMPLISH THE GOALS FOR MW 3.0?** Future iterations of this program should increase the sharing and social investment for new audiences via expanded socnet push. We could incorporate new platforms, such as Tumblr, into our social strategies and step up communications and recruitment on FB and twitter.

WHAT DO WE WANT PEOPLE TO DO WITH THIS CONTENT? THAT’S MY QUESTION. HOW DO WE WANT TO ENGAGE THEM?

DO WE HAVE THE CAPACITY FOR:

INCREASING CONVERSATION/ENGAGEMENT WITH COMMUNITIES? I.E. QUESTIONS/CONVERSATIONS, POLLING, SHARING.

HOW IS ALL OF THIS GOING TO INCREASE SPREADING AND PICK UP OF THE POSTS? HOW ARE WE EXPANDING THE NETWORK?? THIS ALSO COMES DOWN TO THE CONTENT WITHIN THE BLOGS OR EXTRA ON TOP OF THE BLOGS…

WHAT ARE THE RESOURCES NEEDED TO DO SOMETHING LIKE THIS?

FreeSpeech has expressed interest in developing breaking headlines to run on their site and are willing to bankroll them. This is an interesting prospect, and I would recommend that we allow them to take this project on using our member feeds. TMC can consult, but do not need to organize. Trackability and impact are uncertain at best, so we would need to be clear about our overall investment in this area.

There’s also opportunity for Audio/Visual Experimentation. TMC bloggers and interns could produce weekly a/v Q+As with TMC reporters, a lá NPR. For example, if Yes! Magazine breaks a story about community banking, we could put a short media piece together with that reporter—TMC Behind the Scenes, if you will. Content would still be available and open, but would be much more portable. I.E. Grit could use, or radio outlets could use and distribute. This development could make it much easier for members to opt in and increase the cross-pollination of audiences.

**New Issue Verticals:**

**HOW DO THESE ACCOMPLISH THE GOALS FOR MW 3.0?**

Another key opportunity in the future evolution of the MediaWires is rolling out an additional issue vertical to build buzz and audience. Potentials include: Labor? Race? Gender? International Beat? Defense and Military? Whatever we choose, I think the most popular (and most strategic) are political wedge issues that are getting a lot of press and could be a solid entry point for new audiences. We could also potentially use this new vertical to beta test multimedia components.

I WOULD ALSO THINK ABOUT WAYS TO ENHANCE THE CURRENT BLOGS OR PROVIDE EXTRAS—I.E. THE ENGAGEMENT NOTES ABOVE..

**Next Steps**

1. **What do members want?** Now that we’ve outlined programmatic potential, I think it would be smart to survey TMC members on what they like about the current program, and what interests them most about future possibilities.
2. **Report on current performance:** What’s working well? What isn’t? Have we had any landmark successes?
3. **Develop a new program description**. Incorporating member feedback, we can begin developing a program description and overview for the future of the MediaWires.