Pink highlights are concepts and facts

Ideas and suggestions

Conversation highlights are blue

Next steps are yellow

Digital Refresh Workshop May 14 - 15, 2010

The American Prospect

Participants:

Phoebe Connelly, Web editor, *The American Prospect*, Richard Boriskin, Business manager, *The American Prospect*, Mark Schmidt, Executive Editor (May 14th only), *The American Prospect*,

Facilitators:

Andrew Golis, Yahoo! News, Tracy Van Slyke, The Media Consortium, Jeanne Brooks, The Media Consortium.

The Purpose of this meeting is to have some deliverables and then MC will support those being implemented over the next 3 months.

State of the Media: in text, we’ve reached network density. And it’s not like there are many untapped audiences, there are some old people coming on and new people coming on but there are millions of different sites. So the questions is not how do you step into the void, but more how do you win over some of these audiences. And that needs to be very strategic in how that gets implemented.

The mobile application stuff is important for magazine folks because you have an art staff, etc. So there is about to be a new renaissance of visual media.

Richard: We’re both a website and a magazine. And we usually bring about two print articles online a week. A major concept is taking the magazine online and taking that to a digital world.

Andrew: You’re thinking about video, video is something to think about but is going to be difficult, but 90% of video is still consumed on TV. So, as soon as everyone has their computer on their TV, there will be a niche explosion of video creation.

The tools for all of this stuff are getting really inexpensive. That sort of thing could mean that maybe the American Prospect could do their own Hardball everyday. So, that sort of experience may be something for you all to be thinking about, and will be the next big explosion in media.

TVS: Thinking about your website is one strategy, and it’s about thinking of how you go to people, not how they come to you. So thinking about how you’re interacting with your audience and how that needs to be integrated into your strategy.

PC: What are they thinking about when going into website redesign. This document is more about the type of system. That document is more of an internal doc working with the technical needs of the org.

Start with the strategy and then we can determine the tools needed.

AG: Ask for feedback on filling out the survey

They haven’t taken a good survey of who the web readership, the media age is 58 years old for print. Questions around timing for doing such a survey will need to be examined

Then they can get an understanding of the differences between print and web readers. IS there a dual strategy or can they

Producing or working on the web:

2 editors fulltime editing on web

1 editor half time on the web

2 editors nominally editing on web

2 writers for web 60-80%

1 editor does half writing for web

maybe get about an hour of copy editor/day but that is something that they’re missing on that end.

Editorial assistant: does promotions, but most promotion falls to the editors

There is no art person devoted to the web.

The editor spends about 2 hours in the morning formatting the site, etc. and then about an hour at the end of the day working on web production tasks.

No ability to do timed posts.

Losing about 4-18 hours between Phoebe and Alex every day

Then there is a secondary category

Business: used to have an in-house advertising, but she left year and a half ago, and then the newest person relied on ad networks, ie: ad sense which did not work at all and they have all been gotten rid of. And now they have gotten rid of all of those and are only using Eons boom inc. and ad sense is what they are now using. In the midst of hiring an ad rep mostly for the web. They want someone who can sell

Current ad revenue per month: $2500/month.

There also is no tech person. There is an IT director who loads in the ads for them.

Alex and Phoebe do all of the back and forth about any CMS technical fixes.

What are you doing for online fundraising: have only done 1 campaign, there was an end of the year one in 2008, and then another last year, which was editorially directed. And then they had all of the writers write a post about giving to the magazine.

They want to determine an online fundraising strategy as well.

Big takeaway: The editing time was enlightening to them, and is that the best use of their time? And the idea that she is editing 2 web columns a day, and Alex is editing all of these posts, etc.

They really want to know more about who their audience is, and determine how best to communicate with them.

What is the normal well user experience: They come in thru Tapped homepage, and then they find them thru and aggregator. Site visits are 1.5 and then avg visit is good.

How credible are the 3rd parties who claim to send page views.

They want a sense of the loyal readership they’re building out and they are aggressively trying to actually reach a younger and more diverse readership. They also know that most news sites are more white male and they are less so and strive to be more less so and be known for that.

They want more wide ranging content. Their top 3 articles are white male authors, and they are very standard political affair.

But they need to take the next step, but 1/3 of money comes in from production, 1/3 comes in from special reports and they want to take that in as a web presence. How do they take that print item and monetize it on the web. And then the last 1/3 is general support from foundations and indiv supporters. But the ones who give are the ones who read the magazine.

Wants to create a digital edition that can be monetized.

Looking at it as a foundation benefit, where they can provide the digital magazine to foundations to be distributed by them, sort of like handing them print copies, but giving them access to this digital version.

3.2 million page views this year. And half was to blogs (1.6 million).

Homepage gets 300K

And tapped homepage gets 400K

2.5 million page views are not on a homepage. They need to be looking at those pages and thinking about how you push people to your homepage.

How does that compare? Every site is different, TPM, 25% was homepage traffic, but TPM’s homepage is very focused web product. But TAP’s homepage is a slower magazine page. But there is no normal, but the main thought is what are we doing with these people. What is layout of prospect.org, which may be a waste of time if your consumers are not viewing the site like that.

Your peak hours are 2-3pm.

Where do you want to most take advantage of your audience to capture people and get them to stay throughout your site.

Referrals are RCP, Atrios, HuffPo, Ysglesias, Ezra, AL Daily.

Both people picking them up and half they are pushing things out. The editor are pushing things out when they think they have a quality piece. And they talk in the assigning process.

Traffic drivers: Twitter is number 11 on your referrers. But 16 is Facebook.

Nothing from Digg. TPM’s absence was striking for him.

When you have a high value brand someone wants to show it off and you need to give them the tools to show it off.

Striking: the absence of analytics and the only minimal donation drives.

Operating in the networked environment and determining the audiences that you have and the networks to grow into.

Make the major blocks of content seamless. So every article will get a link started on TAPPED, so you can see all the articles.

6th highest referral is google reader. 60K views, with 1,750 subscribers.

There was convo about switching to feedburner to get better stats. Except it was too expensive.

There are sometimes things that end up on the web that should be a column, or because the idea could be more fully developed or is too much on the blog.

What is the experience for readers: they’re gonna give the reader at least one angle on the debate of the day.

Of all of the content one of the posts will be one of the leading takes on the debate for the day. If you want to understand where politics and policy fits together, this is where you go.

The promise at Yahoo is you will have a sense of what the general news is for the day. What is the promise of what the reader will get from TAPPED: which is that you will get the argument everyday, but that should be more developed.

And what is the rest of the editorial promise, ie: what is the kind of content the reader will get. How often and with what purpose? And what will the reader get from it? How might I share this out with others.

4 different audiences

CORE: Prospect junkies, they comment on the site, they read you everyday, they donate money, and know the writers in an intimate way (3-5 visits/day)

GENERAL: they are not obsessive prospect junkies, but they’re still coming to TAPPED (3-5 visits per week) you are a part of their media diet.

NETWORK: (3-5 per month) they maybe read one of your referrals and come over when there is a link. They have a sense of what the Prospect is, they’ve already opted in to news and analysis but they’ve never made a decision, like the Prospect is something I read.

DISTRIBUTED: these are 1-offs who have no idea what the Prospect is, they probably don’t read political news everyday but have found you totally randomly.

These are the 4 audiences when thinking about editorial, distributing strategies to plus into this framework.

How are you creating editorially for our audiences and then what are you thinking about as far as monetizing?:

**CORE:**

Editorial: introducing writers, guests or staff. Creating a sense of intimacy and identity. Having certain areas where the Prospect owns it. As editors they are finding opportunities to encourage their writers to go back to content. Own the story, own the issue.

Publishing practices: consistency with publishing, so readers know what is coming.

Comments (all comment data is corrupted)

Publishing frequency

Business: If they are core, they’re willing to donate. So, create so you reach the audience often and get them to donate. Also, having ads that are relevant to the readers, to get them to click through.

Paid content. There are things that only a core audience wants, and would pay to have access to.

Applications and mobile versions.

**General:**

Editorial:

The take of the day – thru either the blog or the columns, you get engaging, interesting articles. But could also be the Take of the Week.

Need hierarchal presentation

They are looking for the related content

Features

Phoebe pitched idea of creating a blog homepage layout that contextualizes the week’s news on TAPPED for the reader.

Business:

Newsletter goes out, but is limited in scope. Newsletter list is about 9K with 26% click thru rate. Such a high click thru rate shows you have an engaged audience but you could be pushing the take of the week everyday.

How do you connect your newsletter to intimacy and content?

Direct ads

**Network:**

Editorial:

Scoops

Exclusive takes

(definitive) traffic & ID.

Appearance & booking

Business:

Direct ads

Conversion to general

Remnant ads

**Distributed:**

Editorial:

SEO

(articles and topics) ie. Salon segregating things by topics to optimize SEO

Sharing – giving people the tools to push content

-content

-tools

-ask

Maybe you create content that is specifically designed to provide entry points on every page, that allows for you to introduce certain characters. Most political writing is written for peers.

Explainers

Allowing multiple entry points

Business:

Remant ad

Stats as they can be determine on audiences:

**CORE**

1700 RSS

2K twitter

2.5K on TAPPED

2.5K @ Prospect.org

800 facebook

5-8 kpvs

1.6 pv/visit

**GENERAL**

10K e-newsletter

2.5K on TAPPED

2.5K on prospect.org

5-8 kpvs

1.6 pv/visit

Better analytics?: you should ask people, there is a visitor loyalty metric in google, but it’s over time and not broken down

The best way to measure the general audience, is how many people are consuming a product that highlights what you want to push that day.

**Network:**

22-25K are referrals

1.35 pv/visit

**DISTRIBUTED**: (search)

10K

1.5 pv/visit

Widget

Cookie that comes from our CP, and then tag things that are in CMS in a way that got picked up by an RCP would then get picked up.

How are you making money?

$2K out of ad networks – direct 10% and 90% remnant ad

Do we want to convert them into print subscribers? TBD

Editorial products:

**Core/General:**

Is the timing a product? Yes

Tapped

Homepage

twitter

**General:**

Topical columns

Web only non-blog content (doesn’t necessarily speak enough to the core audience)

Issue expertise

Magazine content

**Network:**

Twitter

Brainstorming some questions off of results and conversations from the session:

Is there a product or bundle that will serve the core audience? It seems like you all have a lot of great units of content but you aren’t building audiences in homepages.

How do you convert the networked audience to the products we’re talking about building and make them into more core and general audience

How do you start expanding your audience. Thru soc net and referrers and more engagements

Feeding and building the core audience.

Then start exploring the audience question and then how do you attach revenue generation.

\*\*Take it as a given that there’s the perfect CMS and not the current restraints of the current CMS.

What’s the core promise? From that you’ll derive the answer to number 1.

Is there any particular goal when you think of the questions?

Part of the goal is to have an influence in the world through our set of ideas. It’s an important part of the founding principle of the magazine and why they get funded by foundations.

The value proposition – the value being offered readers is the judgment of a set of people whose views you find interesting. It can take the form of, “we have the argument of the day", but what they are selling people is the mind of Bob Kuttner, Michelle Goldberg, etc.

Need to improve on a package and an entry point.

Also, the site being a training for journalists? That only matters here in the sense that it’s a site of younger fresher voices

Stategy/Impact:

What do you want to be known for? What’s your brand? Influence

Super good journalism about politics and policy from a progressive point of view

This is a magazine that battles the right-wing message machine, almost like an advocacy model.

* Journalism that broadens the progressive conversation, which includes opinion journalism and advocacy journalism.
  + Contributing to a broader conversation in elite levels.
  + We are not trying to give people an overarching perspective of the conversation.

Value/Proposition – What are we offering?

* Good judgment
* Good analysis

You can get opinions anywhere, here you can get opinions you can trust.

Analysis you can trust

KNOWLDEGE BOMBS

It’s judgment based on depth

Is there a product/bundle for core/general?

TAPPED: should have Today’s featured posts.

Linking posts/articles (related content)

-well tagged

-common database

Redigesting other pieces of content in a way that will appeal to various audiences.

What about different blogs: They might move in that direction. The group blog model doesn’t work as well.

Merging Tapped homepage and Prospect homepage. Which would take away a layer of stuff that you’re dealing with.

But right now the blog posts and articles pages are your homepage, and those pages have very minimal promotion of your other content, and you’re spending a lot of time developing your homepage and not on your individual pages.

Converting people once they come in is the page layout. (See the model that Andrew drews on the blog models page around designing entry points on the homepage.

Ie: Huffington Post)

Expanding the network, who are you reaching out to now? And how are you actively going out to them?

Assume you had someone who could promote your audience:

Now: send stuff to RCP, editors

A short list exists, but build a blast list, possibly build segmented blast list.

Social networks:

Articles are automated and then there are some posts that have funny language around.

How to build the twitter audience: asking people to retweet

Asking audience their opinion on your latest analysis and compiling it on your site. Finding a way to engage people and then feature their tweets on the blog.

Facebook pages: Mother Jones is very engaged.

How are you feeding and building the core?

Better comment system.

Flush out what the comment system looks like. How should it be built out?

The developing of a larger core will help you in an online donation drive.

For tomorrow:

Users/Demos survey

What are we doing to make money and donations and advertising?

Staffing

Comments

Mobile/Digital/Applications

Day 2

Users/ Demos Survey

Donations & advertising

Staffing

Comments

What questions do we want to know and then how to execute?

How to gather the information?

What information we want to gather?

🡪 Looking for example surveys

Explain to people why you’re doing this, provide them with an explanation up front to encourage them to take the survey.

What industry are people in/profession/location?

Age

Gender

Race

Political affiliation

Income

How often to you visit the site?

How important is the Prospect to you?

How do they access the site?

Do you know we’re a non-profit?

What media do you consume?

How often do you share Prospect content with friends in social networks?

What issues do you care about, at what level?

Mobile question?

How much video do you watch and on what medium?

Try to capture data at the end: do you want to sign-up for our newsletter? Click to another page to sign up.

How many respondents should we aim for?

Around 1,000. 400 is the bottom line

How do you integrate promotions for it? Definitely hit all of your angles and mediums.

An outreach strategy should be developed.

Tools:

How:

Put Quantcast on the site. 🡪 figure out if it can work in the short term

What is useful in a weekly report:

What is vital for you to understand on a weekly basis on the business: Uniques, page views, track top tweets/shares, overall followers, top stories.

A “wins of the week” email, giving a round-up of what was successful or notable occurrences.

The information is useful for funders, editorials, and as a means of communicating and building your audience.

Staffing:

In January – hire another person to the web team. Thinking about what that person should be doing.

🡪 What’s your strategy and what do you want to offer your readers. Ie. Social media editor, who does some editing but also is the person who engages.

Would you rather have more content or would you rather concentrate on pushing out your content in a more meaningful way?

Someone who is checking out the site and knows about current tools and widgets, etc.

Someone who can do the basic maintenance but also thas he ability to be nimble and respond to things creatively.

[Chartbeat](http://www.chartbeat.com/)

Comments:

What general principles, from inside the system, etc?

You want something to create permanent identities on the site. Any system where you have to create a stable identity before you can comment and you have to login before you can comment

Threaded comments

What is your strategy of interacting over a period of time? And this will inform who you hire for the position of social media editor.

Adaptive Semantics, computer system that monitors comments and approves. Richard has her card, and Erin has spoken with them a lot.

Look at the rewards system that the huff po does.

Define clear standards for what is required dialogue. Also, a report abuse button for other commenters to help police.

Closing comments, keep live for a while but then close them at some point to keep spammers and trolls away.

Ask about IP blocking, so that people can’t keep coming back with multiple logins.

Donations & Advertising

Focus on donations

Viable consistent donation program and figure out the best way to go forward.

Advertising: there’s a couple of weeks of work to start tracking metrics better and then you can implement something like the Rubicon Project that will optimize ad networks for you which will enable you to move.

Get into Google Ad Manager and look at what the click thru rates are and have weekly reports, and when thinking about redesign think about where ads are placed on the site.

Direct ads vs ad networks.

Add an ad network optimizer (via Rubicon Project) and add that to Ad Manager and allow Ad Sense to compete.

What is your market for getting direct advertising selling?

Revenue = PVs x # of ads x $/ad

= 700K x 3 x .5

2.1 mil ad impressions x .50 = $1,050 / month.

The key is push adsense’s floor up so that the default can move up to something better.

When thinking about the site redesign, get a system that is flexible enough that allows for you to test out layout strategy.

Try to huild out the ad networks out as a base, start to test out click-thru rates, to know what places work better. You need to have a sense of that before you go to the market and start investing.

Donations🡪 Last year’s donation program, 2 week campaign ask.

I <3 TAP:

How often do you want to build this in?

1-3 campaigns for the year.

How are you integrating it into the DNA?

Enewsletter – blog, soc nets

Coordinate social network to e-newsletter list development.

How survey will help donations.

Letting people know the impact of your work. 🡪 soft ask.

You’re communicating in a very transparent way about who you are and why they should be supporting you.

Articulate the why give

-what it does for your reader/community

-what it does for politics and democracy

-what would happen without you?

And don’t forget humor (and guilt)

Moving forward:

American Prospect: Determine what the overarching goals are and narrow down the most important for site redesign.

MC: Pulling together a oner page, or set of five things that should be referred back to during the process of the redesign.

MC provides what the specific strategic goals are.

Determine the mix of editorial and publishing goals.

(done by the end of the month)

Reader survey, work with MC to craft this and have that going forward in the next 3-4 months.

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