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**Digital Refresh Workshop**

**The Uptake**

**June 25-26**

Participants: Jason Barnett, Mike McGinty, Chris Dykstra

Facilitators: Andrew Golis, Yahoo! News, Tracy Van Slyke and Erin Polgreen, The Media Consortium.

**Goals for Digital Refresh Workshop**

* Have had a lot of different projects, but want an overarching editorial strategy.
* Want to build a brand loyalty amongst their many different audiences.
* Make people emotionally excited about the Uptake to unlock volunteers and core audiences.
* Focus and Prioritize Projects
* Want to know how to monetize in a significant way. Focus in on a business plan.

**Day 1: Digital Analysis of The Uptake**

The basic facts: The Uptake’s traffic is distributed across multiple platforms, some of which do not provide tracking tools. The organization has a lot of content, but it’s going in many different directions. It’s really hard to know when/where it’s coming from. **Needs to be a core promise of content consistency in order to develop audiences across platforms.**

Uptake.org: a couple of hundred site visitors a day—approx. 15K/mo. Had spikes in winter 2008 via traffic from other places.

Livestream: unknown audience

Youtube: 120K views in May, which is respectable. Has nice solid base of videos/day

77% of audience is male and 50. The female audience left following Coleman/Franken trial.

**The Four Audiences: A General Analysis**

When thinking about editorial, distributing strategies they should be plugged into the framework for these four audiences.

*\*\*Defining the audiences\*\**

CORE: Political news junkies. They comment on the site, they read you everyday, they donate money, and know the writers in an intimate way (2-5 visits/day).

GENERAL: They are not obsessive, but they’re still coming. (3-5 visits per week). The Uptake is 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 Uptake is, they’ve already opted in to news and analysis but they’ve never made a decision that the Uptake is something they regularly engage with.

DISTRIBUTED: These are one-offs who have no idea what the Uptake is. They probably don’t read political news everyday and have found you totally randomly.

**Establishing The Uptake’s Four Core Audiences**

**Core:**

Deeply engaged loyalists. Visit 2-5 times/day.

*The Stats:*

100 Regular Donors

3,000 Enewsletter List

+5K Twitter followers on 2 main accounts.

400 FB fans

100-200 Site visitors/day.

*Editorial strategies to cultivate this audience*: Safe place for community to contribute and converse. Publishing regularity. Push editorial via email, SMS. User-Gen content. Events and Organizing.

*Revenue:* This is the audience that donates money and labor. Pay for subscriptions and Generate Direct Ad $.

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**General:**

Visit 2-5 a week.

*The Stats:*

3500 YouTube subscribers

*Editorial strategies to cultivate this audience*: Cover broader topics/beats. This audience is headlines-based, and needs to consume info via a hierarchical information structure.

*Revenue:* Advertising, some donations.

*How to convert to Core:* Provide editorial context. Encourage engagement via targeted asks-join an enewsletter, subscribe, comment, etc.

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**Network:**

This audience is familiar with the Uptake, visits about 2-5/month.

*The Stats:*

YouTube Views

5-10K from referrals.

*Editorial strategies to cultivate this audience*: The Networked Audience usually comes over from another link. Looking for easy access in terms of technology and editorial structure. They’ll come for exclusive content and can be fostered via content partnerships and relationships with other outlets.

*Revenue:* Content Syndication, Remnant Advertising, Content Licensing

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**Distributed:**

Come to your site randomly via Search/Soc Net.

*The Stats:*

1200 organic web visits

*Editorial strategies to cultivate this audience*: Platform relationships. Consistency of tagging and SEO.

*Revenue:* Remnant, some additional social sharing.

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**Reviewing and Evaluating Goals**

TMC Staff and The Uptake explored The Uptake’s current operations and future potential with the goal of defining the public face of the organization.

**What is the Uptake’s Core Editorial Promise?** *(Core promise articulated later)*

* Are we organizers?
* Are we audience-facing?
* Are we a media service?

Which one of these questions can help build the financial foundation of the mission and make the organization sustainable?

**Discussed the economic differences between being a syndication-based or audience-facing organizations:**

* *Syndication*: Media orgs don’t want to pay for content. Advertising splits are possible, so you need to approach folks with a way to make $$$.
* *Audience-based*: Ad money and donations are the smallest component of potential revenue.

Explored what the audience-facing elements of The UpTake’s new strategy should look like, as the organization is in the middle of a website redesign and has been “so focused on content production that they haven’t looked at audience development.”

Here were a few key points/strategies to developing and converting folks from the Four Audiences:

* Need to create better contextual entry points for new audience members.
* Needs consistent content, i.e. **Reporter-Curators that can explain content to new audiences.**
* In terms of what they’re doing now, huge question about the value of the radio program. Uptake staff realized that it did not significantly add to core audience or engagement, so planned to work through an exit strategy.
* Needs to be more searchable.
* Needs to articulate **what will a new viewer know they will get from your site if they go every day?** Answer: Radical level of transparency through thorough and accessible public records.
* New site must **make sense of multiple consumable products.** Don’t want to be a stenographer. Needs to make sense of what is happening with a little bit of clarity and fun; a journalistic product to front the archive with an intelligent discussion of the issues.

As a result, the new site goals were to convey the following **core promise** to audiences of all levels:

1. Get a clear summary of what happened and what mattered
2. Opportunity to see truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Regarding video and propaganda.
3. Opportunity for smart conversation about 1+2.

**Identifying topline opportunities: Digital Next Steps**

After the brainstorm process, participants narrowed down to three ideas/areas they would like to prioritize and explore during day 2

1. Who is our audience, how do we find out, who do we want our audience to be? Partners could be in there.
2. What are some editorial products and tools needed to develop general audience?
   1. How many editorial/contextual pieces do we need to do a week? And how much time do they each take?
3. What is the best strategy for advertising?

Other potential priorities:

* What tools can we give our readers to share, interact with each other + media outlet, and create our content?
  + Comments, not posts at this time.
* How can we give readers a chance to ask questions that are usually unasked to public officials? (This could be an ongoing feature). The Uptake could then ask those questions at news conferences.
* How do we package our editorial priorities and what are they?
* How do you market updates back out to your partners/what do potential partnerships look like?

**A-ha! Moments from Day 1**

* Jason: Reinforcing consistency, need for daily content. How can we add context to raw video feeds? Been focusing on networked audience, need to focus on developing general.
* Mike: Let’s define daily content and how it gets done—in the least painful way possible. Website has different purposes for your different audiences. How can you meet the needs of gen, distributed, networked audiences?
* Jason: What are the best practices to drive people from Youtube/Blip to website. What would the cost analysis be—platform, revenue, etc.
* Andrew: What kind of strategic products could you make to bring in new audiences? How could you go get that audience?

**Day 2: Iterating Priorities and Identifying Next Steps**

**Inventory of products the Uptake currently produces:**

Before moving into product development, facilitators and participants developed a full list of all production elements Uptake staff are putting out and the time invested in them.

* + live feeds of state capital for 3 months
  + live gov speeches 24 times a year
  + live debates 1/week, but will ramp up after primary. (legislature and mayors)
  + sometimes carry white house live
  + clips from white house events.
  + Dept of defense (McChrystal, BP) (all youtube search traffic)
  + special local and national hearings (ex: kagan)
  + volunteers: submit stories, around 3X a week. Protests, local stuff, etc.
  + help cover live events or stories.
  + Radio show.
  + Live chats, some are volunteer moderated.
  + Video Clipping/blogging, about 12/week.
  + Volunteer tweeters that bookmark what’s interesting in a livestream.
  + Local and national/events calendar that is mapped out. 20-30 min a day.
  + Repost schedules for committee hearings.
  + Digests of party propaganda—compiling political ads.

**Addressing three main priorities**

**#1-Who do we want our audience to be?**

* Activists, General progressive audiences that want to know what’s going on (i.e. Andrew’s Aunt)
* Local, State (PP, Strib, MinnPost, MPR), National Press (TPM, HuffPo, industry watchers/tech bloggers, capital news connection)
  + Influence, partner, inform. Also potential media service clients.
  + Bloggers as audience
    - Local blue bloggers
* Influentials (Politicians, Consultants, Activists, Regional Political Junkies, lobbyists, lawyers)
  + - Goal would be to replicate what happened with audience and community for the Franken trial. Need to be predictable and consistent to make that happen.

**#2-What are some editorial products and tools needed to develop general audience?**

* Curated and contextual “**What happened today”** Combo text/video from various local and national streams. Functions for general audiences.
* “**What will happen today**?” local and national events (text/video) and what The Uptake is covering/how community can participate (use this to leverage The Uptake w/influentials)
* **Curating** community insights, questions, conversations, excerpts as blog posts.
* **Live streams** of local/national events with **editorially monitored live** **blogs**

**#3-What is the best strategy for advertising?**

Audience is so small that there isn’t much revenue to get from it. Potential new remnant tools that make remnant networks compete with each other: Rubicon Project. Needs to be at a couple thousand pageviews/day in order to bump revenue up more.

**Digital Refresh Workshop Projects:**

-Media Kit Development: Erin will overview and support. 1-2 hours

-Ad implementation: Uptake will handle, Andrew will give feedback: 1-2 hours

-Managing editorial overhaul in terms of flow, timing, structure/scheduling? 3-10 hours

* Give feedback on their sitemap.
* Create a workflow and template for new editorial projects
  + Need to know how many people hours there are and when they are going to happen.
  + Structure for implementing new edit procedure
  + What does element look like and what’s the tone
  + What needs to go with it. Tagging etc.

**Feedback:**

Jason: Helpful, timely, helping us do things that are scalable and don’t make us insane.

Chris: Important to us, thanks. The really important thing to me is creating a very practical plan for implementation in the next year. Best feedback is feasibility check—is this possible in the time we’re allotting.

Golis: Might be a good idea to set some audience goals.