

CATEGORY:
ONLINE PUBLISHING

DIVISION: NONPROFIT
CATEGORY: ONLINE PUBLISHING

CANADIAN CENTRE FOR ARCHITECTURE

PROBLEM OR CHALLENGE TO BE ADDRESSED

The Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA) is an international research centre and museum founded in 1979 on the conviction that architecture is a public concern. Based on its extensive Collection, exhibitions, programs, and research opportunities, the CCA is a leading voice in advancing knowledge, promoting public understanding, and widening thought and debate on architecture, its history, theory, practice, and role in society today.

While situated in Montreal, Canada, the CCA has an international collection, program, and audience. Lectures and events addressing issues in architecture, design, and the built environment are organized in relation to the CCA's exhibitions and Collection. To pursue its mission and encourage research, the CCA aims to act as a research laboratory with an archive that is both object- and event-based. A primary institutional challenge is thus to make this archive—the full range of the CCA's activities and resources—accessible to its local and international audiences.

SOLUTION/TOOLS USED/RESULTS

In order to fulfill the CCA mandate of making architecture a public concern and to serve as a resource for individuals engaged with contemporary urban and architectural issues, communication and publishing tools need to be developed to reach the largest possible target audience.

Developing a strong online footprint was established as a strategic priority in 2007 and remains a primary objective today. Key aspects of this initiative have included the development of award-winning exhibition microsites (www.sorryoutofgas.org, www.someideasonliving.org, www.cca-actions.org), a regular series of CCA Podcasts featuring recent lectures and archival material, and the use of social media and external content platforms such as Facebook and YouTube to publish content and encourage online community development.

Foremost in the initiative to expand the CCA's presence online has been the development of a new, content-rich institutional website (www.cca.qc.ca), launched to the public in July 2009. The website was identified as a central tool not only to build awareness of the diversity of CCA resources and activities, but to fully reflect its character and vision as a laboratory for research. To meet this mandate, the user experience of the site would need to be innovative and offer diverse ways to access

content. For example, was there a way in which the content and overall structure of the site could be explored without the use of traditional hierarchical navigation elements? Could users discover aspects of the CCA they didn't know and understand at a glance the range of CCA activities both current and past?

The website was seen not only as a tool to announce current activities, but also as a platform to publish new and archival content from all areas of the CCA. In this way, research and highlights from the Collection could be presented alongside past exhibitions and events with equal relevance for online reference and research. --The CCA is both a research centre and a museum, serving a specialized international public of students, academics, and professionals in architecture and related fields alongside the general museum-visiting public.

Three primary audience groups were identified as target and desired users for CCA online:

- 1) The General Cultural Audience includes tourists, arts enthusiasts, families, and general interest students. These are mainly served online in ways that inform of the CCA's activities, instigate and help plan a visit to museum.
- 2) The Professional Audience, the CCA's primary focus, includes architects, designers, artists, university students and faculty.
- 3) The Scholarly Audience consists of researchers, post-graduate students and curators, among others. While the physical visit and consultation of collection material is central to their work, these audiences need to be better served online through improved collection search tools and media-rich resources presenting program archives, curatorial content, and research documentation. External studies and CCA audience surveys have identified a significant portion of these groups as sophisticated Internet users familiar with multiple web functionalities (e-commerce, up/downloading, blogging, etc.).

To develop a website that serves as an innovative publishing platform giving users unprecedented access to the CCA's research and collections alongside its current and past exhibitions and educational activities. To develop an original website architecture that presents the CCA's diverse resources and activities as a unified image, giving users new tools to explore and discover content no longer restricted by the divisions and hierarchies of internal institutional departments and content sources.

The new CCA website has been conceived as a content-driven publishing platform where audio, video, text, and images from across the institution are made accessible through innovative site navigation tools.

The website employs a thematic or contextual approach to presenting content in its main navigation bar, a configuration more typically found in websites for news or social organisations. All published content is organized by thematic relationships in addition to the organizational category. An individual item of content -- a collection object, exhibition documentation, scholarly text, lecture podcast, etc. -- is always accompanied by related material giving users a broader context of CCA activities or holdings. Related content from different areas of the CCA is thus presented concurrently, offering a selection of material that promotes current and past content from all areas of the CCA in a non-hierarchical manner.

The site also allows any type of CCA content to be presented in any format with a capacity for varying emphasis, both in terms of visibility on the site and richness of available material. In this approach, the user's experience of the site changes over time and with each visit.

The website offers five ways to access content:

Contextualized content navigation: All items of content are accompanied by thematically related items, presented under headings that link back to the five main content categories of the website: Collection, Exhibitions, Education & Events, Study Centre, and CCA Recommends. These categories represent the resources and activities of the institution: In this way, the user is presented with additional content that is likely of interest while also understanding the nature and source of the content. Related content is also tagged with keywords by staff and visitors to the website.

Calendar: Encompassing all date-driven activities and events at the CCA, the calendar tool enables users to find and keep track of exhibitions, lectures, films, family activities, etc., without having to understand the institution's internal structure. The user may also refine the calendar to his or her needs by toggling on or off activities of interest. An RSS feed and options to subscribe through Google or iCal are planned additions.

Browse CCA: A navigational tool which allows users to access and sort all content on the website according to category, type, date, media, etc. All video content, for example, all material available for download, or all Study Centre seminars, may be viewed together. The Browse tool supports the mixing of content from across the institution, offering a comprehensive and easily accessible database of material.

Supersearch: A powerful search engine that, for the first time, accesses multiple databases at the CCA (Collections Online, Library Catalogue, Archives Finding Aids) as well as the exhibition and event archive and other content on the site.

Sidebar: Permanent links to essential reference information for visitors are visible and accessible alongside the navigation tools from each page of the website.

The first phase of the website project began in 2007 and involved user studies, competitive analysis, and developing the concept, functionalities and architecture of the site; the second phase began in 2008 and encompassed both technological production and implementation, and content creation.

The new institutional website was made available to staff and selected external contacts in May 2009 and launched to the public as a beta version in July. Improvements to the structure, functionalities and design of the site based on feedback and user testing are ongoing. New content is also added to the site on a continual basis.

Further phases, including the addition of a user customization component and e-commerce capacities, are planned for the coming months.--As a publishing tool, the website depends on the regular creation of content. A major challenge in the development phase was to build a critical mass of content to support the site concept of thematic navigation at launch. Now public, content must be continually added for the site to truly be a resource. This has increased workload and added responsibilities for staff across the institution; a challenge is the integration of web production into staff working processes. Editorial planning and inter-departmental communication has thus been crucial to take advantage of parallel work and potential content in order to facilitate production as much as possible.

In addition to staff-produced material, the CCA has commissioned external content from scholars, artists, architects and others, and has forged partnerships with universities and cultural organizations. The CCA will continue to expand such collaborations in order to share and host content and offer new and diverse material to its audience on an on-going basis.

— Browsing mechanisms such as presenting content in a contextualised manner rather than according to the CCA's internal structure, as well as advanced calendar, sorting and search capabilities were seen as ideal tools to develop a website able to reflect the CCA's character and vision, while responding to the identified needs of the CCA's target audience.

To take advantage of current and developing browsing tools, the project employed user-centered design methodologies including cycles of prototypes and testing, a widely accepted approach for creating usable applications or systems that aim to truly meet the needs of users.

— The CCA website was developed in collaboration with the Montreal-based media firm Bluesponge. The concept, art and curatorial direction of the site were conceived by a team including the CCA Director, the Director of Communications, the Website Editor, and the Senior Curator at the CCA, as well as the Creative Director, Interaction Designer and President at Bluesponge. The design and technology development of the website were led by Bluesponge in collaboration with the CCA's information technology department and collection access specialists. Content is managed, produced, and commissioned by the website team with contributions from across the institution as well as visiting researchers and other external contributors. The site is hosted and maintained by the CCA.

— The website went live to the public on 14 July 2009, announced via email to the CCA's contacts and through Facebook. A major promotional campaign is planned for Fall 2009. Despite the 'soft launch' approach, positive results are already readily apparent. During the month of August, web traffic increased by 25% compared with the same period in 2008. The average time a user spent on the site has increased by 50%. Most significantly, the proportion of international visitors has risen from 25% to 40% in relation to the previous August.

A number of architecture and design bloggers have written about the site and featured specific content on their blogs.

Content production internally and externally is increasing. The editorial team has developed publication series such as Scholar's Choice, a commission to former and current researchers in residence at the CCA Study Centre to write about an object in the Collection. New audio and video content from Partner University and cultural organizations is added on a regular basis. Both sources of external content are increasingly popular and spurring new partnership possibilities, while staffs are proposing unsolicited material for the category of CCA Recommends.

— The website is new to the public but the traffic analysis indicate that an increasing number of visitors from all over the world are taking advantage of the content and spending more time to explore the depth of available resources.

The fact that CCA content has been featured on blogs that are popular and well-respected by the CCA's primary target audience of architecture professionals is a positive indication that this newly available material is of relevance and interest to them, and can only encourage return visits.

The gradual integration of content production into staff working processes as well as an overall increase in content production is essential in order to publish content on regular basis and encourage return visits to the website.

The new CCA website offers users an exciting and diverse online experience, yet one that is easily navigable through the four main browsing tools. The website architecture allows for fluid and integrated access to all CCA activities and resources, and eliminates the traditional hierarchies and organizational divisions. The contextual approach replaces the traditional menu and offers users the potential to discover new and unexpected aspects of the CCA. This unified presentation allows the new CCA website to fully reflect the institution's character and vision. The site acts as a platform for publishing new content on a regular basis, increasing the availability of resources online and encouraging research. Visitors are encouraged to take advantage of the CCA as an online resource and to return time and again through the continual publishing of new content.

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DIVISION: CORPORATE
CATEGORY: ONLINE PUBLISHING

LION BRAND YARN

PROBLEM OR CHALLENGE TO BE ADDRESSED

Lion Brand Yarn is a beloved 130-year-old crafting company with a rich tradition of listening to its customers—the current CEO’s grandmother responded by hand to every customer letter in the early 1900s when her husband ran the company.

While the brand is a clear leader in its category, has seen clear sales growth (leading to it being name to Internet Retailers ‘Hot 100’ list), and receives millions of website visits each month, it knew that it was missing a key point of connection with customers by not engaging in social media.

Lion Brand Yarn’s challenge was to develop an organization-wide social media strategy that would allow them to ethically develop relationships with customers online through long-term community building and establish them as a respected, prominent participant within the knitting social media ecosystem. Importantly, this strategy must boost advocacy and brand loyalty, while ultimately driving sales.

While the knitting/crocheting demographic is not one most would immediately think of when asked to name a vibrant online community, it is in fact — booming! Former Clinton strategist Mark Penn even highlighted ‘young knitters’ as a key niche group in his 2008 book, *Microtrends*.

Lion Brand Yarn was aware that thousands of its customers were connecting with each other on dedicated knitting blogs, podcasts, and even the 300,000 strong Ravelry knitting social network. At the same time, their competitors were beginning to join these environments, effectively outpacing LBYs attempts to connect with their customers.

Essentially, Lion Brand Yarn had no ability to talk with their customers in social media and needed to make the internal changes required to be able to take advantage of the exploding online audience.

The issue for the brand was how to develop the right strategic approach to social media, founded in research, that allowed them to maintain some element of control, maximized their limited internal resources and used the right tools and technology to connect with their audience.

- Lion Brand Yarn customers
- Prospective customers
- Passionate online knitters and crocheters
- Knitting/Crocheting bloggers, podcasters and online influencers
- Build an online community of Lion Brand customers across a variety of social media venues to give the brand's employees a voice in the online conversation
- Develop relationships with customers via two-way communication in order to boost loyalty

SOLUTION/TOOLS USED/RESULTS

Lion Brand Yarn was not sure if its customer demographic would be likely to engage in social media but they were willing to experiment with the new technology in an attempt to engage and connect with its passionate consumer base. They first undertook deep listening to the online conversation about knitting and crocheting to understand the volume, sentiment, and share of voice around their brand in consumer-generated media. Lion Brand also conducted research to better understand their customer's social media behavior in order to identify opportunities for engagement and develop a coherent and measurable social media strategy.

The brand's approach to social media hinged on an open approach to conversation and employee-driven content and relationships. The brand focused on 'talking' to its customers and prospects and expanded its efforts in social media as continuous measurement showed success. Lion Brand Yarn has taken a long-term approach to community building and it is now, 18 months after the initial launch of the Yarncraft podcast, that the brand is seeing the most success and measurable return on investment.

Lion Brand first used Converseon's Conversation Mining technology to map the knitting/crocheting online community, identify influential online voices, and identify opportunities for engagement in social media. This listening uncovered a deep, interconnected and highly engaged community of passionate users spread across blogs, podcasts, and even dedicated knitting/crocheting social networks.

The Yarncraft podcast was launched in early 2008; this tactic was chosen for the first step in social media as it allowed (relatively) more control for the brand while they tested conversational marketing and also required less resources (especially time) than other possible tools. Hosted by a pair of LBY employees, the podcast was produced bi-weekly and focused on knitting and crocheting topics.

The podcast was posted to a dedicated blog, distributed via iTunes and also given away as a CD in store for less tech-savvy consumers. The podcast was designed to be a conversation with customers and knitting community figures moreso than 'internet radio' in the broadcast model.

In April 2008, the 'Lion Brand Notebook' blog was launched, providing content and links to other knitting sources. The blog was also powered by Lion Brand employees with content ranging from customer polls for product development through to 'knit alongs' that combine online/offline access allowing customers to knit the same project together. The 'knit alongs' alone have proven to be a measurable driver of ROI for the brand as each virtual event drives a direct link to increased sales of the yarn featured.

Both the blog and podcast were designed to be 'conversation catalysts' not publishing mediums. As a result, key measures of success included engagement metrics (comments, links etc) alongside raw traffic and reader/listener numbers.

Initially it was difficult for the brand to understand how it could participate in the large volume of online conversation in its category with limited internal resources. The success of the initial podcasting approach (using limited time from two staff members) led to an expansion of effort with time shared across the company.

It is also important to note that while this strategy is now, 18 months after launch, driving measurable ROI, this has not been the case since launch. While the blog and podcast initially attracted a large audience and strong engagement from users, the tools did not initially drive significant sales. As the effort has matured and the community has grown, the brand has expanded its ability to drive sales through social media communication. This highlights that ROI for social media efforts is possible and can be measured, but it takes time to establish community and relationships before being able to leverage this to attract additional leads and sales.

-Converseon is Lion Brand Yarn's social media agency and they led all strategy ideation, training, and outreach planning, and helped to create a measurement framework.

Converseon's proprietary Conversation Mining technology was used to listen to the online conversation to identify key online influencers and opportunities for the brand.

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All results map to the objectives below. See attached supporting material for detailed customer comments highlighting the impact of the social media program on them individually.

OBJECTIVE 1:

- Build an online community of Lion Brand customers across a variety of social media venues to give the brand's employees a voice in the online conversation

RESULTS:

- Lion Brand is now active via its blog, podcast, corporate Twitter account, Facebook page and Flickr while also having staff continuously engaged in Ravelry and knitting/crocheting blogs and podcasts
- The podcast regularly has 15-20,000 downloads per episode while the blog attracts tens of thousands of readers each month
- The podcast has a 4 -star rating on iTunes

OBJECTIVE 2:

- Develop relationships with customers via two-way communication in order to boost loyalty and advocacy

RESULTS:

- A Lion Brand survey of 30,000 of their customers found that those customers who have interacted with the brand through social media are 83% more likely to identify as 'very brand loyal' than non-social media users (see graph in supporting material) and are several times more likely to recommend the brand.

OBJECTIVE 3:

- Prove long-term ROI by generating increased sales

RESULTS:

- Traffic analysis shows that traffic from social media routinely converts at a much higher rate than most sources, outperforming email marketing and banner ads (see graph in supporting material)
- From June 16 to July 16, 2009, traffic coming from the brand blog to the brand e-commerce website converted at 41.21% higher than the brand's average traffic
- From June 16 to July 16, 2009, the average per visit value of the blog traffic was 39.44% higher than the site average

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DIVISION: MEDIA**CATEGORY: ONLINE PUBLISHING****ADWEEKMEDIA FOR REAL TIME CANNES****PROBLEM OR CHALLENGE TO BE ADDRESSED**

The challenge was to provide the best possible coverage of the annual Cannes advertising festival to a predominantly U.S. audience.

Coverage of the annual advertising festival in Cannes, France, is always a challenge when it comes to conveying the atmosphere prevailing as the world's advertising executives gather in the South of France. A large audience that is not at the festival is keen to get a sense of the sentiment among the industry's creative and business leaders, as well as detailed news on the awards that are given out over the course of the week.

SOLUTION/TOOLS USED/RESULTS

As one of the U.S. key trade publications covering the advertising industry, *Adweek* is determined to deliver the best possible coverage of the event to its U.S. audience. There are obvious limitations to the effectiveness and timeliness of straightforward, reported articles in doing this at a live event that takes place over the course of a week.

—Executives at advertising agencies of all sizes and in all roles from the business to the creative side; marketing executives at clients i.e., those who use advertising agencies; media buyers and planners and executives at media companies

—To be the default destination for news and views from Cannes for the advertising industry in the US. To attract sufficient traffic to give exposure to the site's sponsor

—Build a microsite that features several article per day reported from the festival in addition to:

Twitter feeds from the two reporters at the event, giving a sense of who was there and what they were saying and doing so live

Twitter feeds from selected, high profile advertising professionals at the festival

Twitter feeds on selected subjects as the Twitter community reacted to awards and other news

Video interviews with advertising executives and celebrities at the festival, filmed by the reporters and uploaded directly to the website:

A dedicated website, <http://www.realtimcannes.com/>, funded by a single sponsor (Microsoft) bringing together all the elements, with the Twitter elements constantly updating automatically and other content updated many times a day

Customizing the Twitter tools so they showed the right tweets in the right boxes, embedding video players and storing video content

A free, programmable widget from Monitter.com allowed us to display Twitter feeds in boxes on the page, selected by whatever criteria we chose.

YouTube was used as the repository for video content, and their embedded player was used to display video content on the page.

The festival ran for one week from June 22. In June, the site added about 15% to our monthly traffic totals

Realtimcannes.com traffic:

June 2009

Page Impressions = 34,372

Unique Browsers = 14,465

July 2009

Page Impressions = 4,145

Unique Browsers = 2,251

Given that our print circulation is about 22,000, and that our website (adweek.com) sees around 100,000 unique users per month, the site achieved our target of being a major source of news and view from the festival for our audience.

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DIVISION: TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION**CATEGORY: ONLINE PUBLISHING****YIPE.ORG****PROBLEM OR CHALLENGE TO BE ADDRESSED**

East African countries are home to masses of unemployed youth coupled with a high level of enterprise death among youth-owned enterprises. This is mainly as a result of lack of entrepreneurial skills as well as unawareness of available business support services.

As new businesses create jobs that in turn reduce poverty, youth entrepreneurship development is thus a critical factor for economic growth.

Youth entrepreneurs therefore require a free and on-demand service that provides business skill and financial literacy training; information and links to sources of business startup and expansion finance; advice on how to confidently operate in the business world; how to boost productivity and increase business earnings; networking opportunities with like-minded young entrepreneurs; and information on market trends.

Problem: Lack of free and on demand information for both aspiring and young entrepreneurs.

These entrepreneurs need affordable:

- business skills and financial literacy training,
- information on sources of finance,
- advice on how to harness the power of the Internet for enterprise,
- motivation to confidently operate in the business world,
- networking opportunities with likeminded young entrepreneurs, and
- information on market trends.

Though there are 42.9 million youth aged between 15 and 35 years in East Africa, the low level of Internet penetration means that only 2 million of these youth have regular Internet access. However, the rate of Internet penetration in Africa is

continuing to increase, especially with infrastructure projects that will boost connectivity as well as lower costs.

SOLUTION/TOOLS USED/RESULTS

BENEFITS

- Providing more free and on-demand business startup and management information in easily understandable language which is also translated into Kiswahili.
- Creating news feeds that provide customizable current information on the latest business trends.
- An interactive business opportunities page where young entrepreneurs can share opportunities, experiences and form mutually beneficial networking relationships in real time.
- The portal acts as an entry point for youth entrepreneurs to access information on business finance, registration, legal forms, business plan competitions and award opportunities.

FEATURES

- Specifically targeted at the youth
- Free to users
- Highly accessible, in easily understandable language.
- Provides not just news but also acts as a one-stop information source for starting and managing a business (idea to impact).
- Offers an opportunity to interact with other entrepreneurs and people interested in entrepreneurship amongst the youth

Yipe.org is an online portal providing business skills training, information on how to access finance and business opportunities to East African youth entrepreneurs, in a region where over 70% of micro, small, and medium enterprises do not survive their first year of operation.

The portal Yipe.org Entrepreneurship Portal is the first of its kind in East Africa specifically targeting youth entrepreneurs with free information and resources aimed at ensuring business sustainability.

Unlike other business sites for East Africa, Yipe.org's Entrepreneurship Portal also hosts a network platform for young entrepreneurs who aim to create and manage growth oriented social enterprises.

Deployment of provision of free online information for youth entrepreneurs via the Internet.

With low Internet penetration rates marketing of Yipe.org portal to increase brand awareness, has meant that offline techniques have had to be used. This includes networking and placing ads on offline media.

Through the Youth Interactive Portal for Enterprise website as well as its blogs.

<http://www.marsgroupkenya.org/yipe/>--The portal gets an average of 1,200 unique visitors to the site (70% of these are from Kenya) with a return visit rate of about 25%.

If one analyses the keywords searched, these fall between searching for information on how to start a business as well as where to finance it.

These statistics may seem small in numbers, but if you contextualize it that Kenya has an Internet penetration rate of only 7% (the highest in East Africa), and that without fiber-optic cable that will make the Internet more affordable—the current progress is promising.

Month-on-month growth, for the last five months that we have been measuring site performance, indicate that the portal's growth has been on average 155%.

Web statistics will be used to demonstrate the efficacy and achievements of the Yipe.org portal. These will detail the number of unique visitors using the site, the number of individual pages they browse, whether they are repeat (i.e., have visited before) users of the portal. The statistics will also measure the most popular webpages, activity on the site (which pages they enter and exit), as well as the location (which will show how far reaching the website is in reaching its target market). A further addition will be polls posted onsite so users can rate the relevance and ease of use.

Youth entrepreneurs in the region now have access to a simpler way that is affordable to get information on everything they require to start and grow a business.

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DIVISION: ACADEMIC
CATEGORY: ONLINE PUBLISHING

YALE UNIVERSITY

PROBLEM OR CHALLENGE TO BE ADDRESSED

The Business Operations community at Yale is a large, diverse group of professionals whose work is critical to the mission of the University. They is a key audience at the University, but communicating with this community can be complicated, as the information they need is constantly changing, and the decentralized nature of the University's departmental structures adds another layer of complexity.

Our challenge was to create a new process for communicating with this community—one that would allow for information to flow easily between content owners and recipients, while providing a means to gather feedback and archive information in a way that was easily accessible by all.

— The previous communication vehicle for the business community, *Business Management at Yale (BMY)*, was a monthly electronic newsletter. However, the publication had the extremely limited reach of 155 recipients, with no comprehensive sense of target audience. Additionally, the organization of the newsletter itself was piecemeal, with the publication serving as more of a bulletin board than a coordinated effort to inform readers and present a strategic message.

SOLUTION/TOOLS USED/RESULTS

Business Managers at Yale receive an overwhelming amount of email. Many messages are directed specifically at this audience, but a majority of the time, they are carbon-copied on communications to staff members at large. These messages must compete with everything else in the Inbox. The “push” nature of email makes it difficult for Business Managers to quickly gloss information or even prioritize it. YaleBLU's hybrid push/pull method of communication will simplify information processing for Business Managers.

Previously, there was no true “runway” of communication that looks ahead 60-90 days. Official communication channels typically report on things that have already happened, and avoid uncomfortable issues and plans which may not yet be “set in stone.” YaleBLU relies on proactive engagement with Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) from around the University to ensure that news is actually news.

— Our primary target audience is the group of 164 Yale Business Managers and the greater Finance and Business Operations community:

Business Managers 1) identify, mobilize, and optimize financial and other resources to help advance the Unit's and University's mission, and 2) ensure that the Unit's faculty, students and staff receive high quality administrative support in a manner compliant with University policies and procedures.

Yale's division of Finance & Business Operations (FBO) supports the teaching, learning and research mission of the University by providing a wide range of services. The division is responsible for all financial support services, including budget; investments; information technology; dining and student financial services; procurement, research, business transformation and internal auditing.

FBO's mission is to “deliver administrative services that are helpful, simple, and accurate, and that use the University's resources thoughtfully.”

— We wanted YaleBLU to serve as a central place where all those who support the business of Yale can go to find relevant, timely, and strategic information in a clear and easy-to-scan environment.

Goals:

Fix problems with existing system (monthly email newsletter).

Improve efficiency of communications initiatives.

Standardize tools for communication.

Enable process standardization.

Improve public relations.

Gain credibility to allow for a decrease in communication through other channels.

Provide a place to clearly articulate and align our guiding principles with all transformation initiatives.

Allow for two-way communication.

— A committee of communications professionals from the various segments of Finance and Business Operations and Human Resources

and Administration developed a strategy to replace the current monthly email newsletter with an always-on news website, coupled with a monthly email newsletter.

It was determined that the original solution of hosting a site on the University's blogging platform was not robust enough. The decision was then made to build the site using the open source content management system Drupal.

The committee created an information architecture for the site, along with a content strategy to outline the type of content that would be offered on the website, and the style in which it would be written and presented.

— Using the open-source content management system, Drupal, we developed a news website for Yale's business office community. In addition, we've created a new monthly email that highlights important news published on the site in the last 30 days. This newsletter is sent out to our core audience of Business Managers and Business Office staff, as well as a subscription group comprised of staff members and anyone else at the University who is interested in receiving it. This push/pull method of communication has broadened the landscape of communication choices for both content owners and readers.

Team members presented on YaleBLU at various business operations meetings on campus include the Business Operations Leadership Team and the Business Operations Advisory Committee meetings. We also participated in a poster presentation session at the Business Operations Semi-Annual Meeting, providing a preview of the site and creating word-of-mouth for the site. In addition, the Vice President for Finance and Administration emailed announcements about the YaleBLU website to our target audience groups.

This combination of face-to-face and electronic communication ensured that our audience members were engaged from the very beginning and given the opportunity to provide feedback as we rolled out the site to the various units.

— Because this was our first time working with Drupal, there was a learning curve that we and our developers both needed to overcome to successfully implement our ideas on the site. In addition, because the University is currently engaged in an extensive business transformation project, we needed to be flexible to changes within the organization, as well as deliver a product that would be able to communicate these changes effectively. Our deadline was also governed partially by this project's need to communicate with stakeholders in the Business Operations community.

— We hired a team of independent web developers to build the site in Drupal. YaleBLU runs on the Drupal 6 platform, with a variety of modules and some custom code to run things like the event calendar, categorized news streams, and the capability to display emergency messages pulled directly from the University’s messaging application. In addition to text and images, we also included multimedia capability, allowing for streaming video and audio.

The site’s built-in workflow allows contributors to submit articles directly into the content management system, streamlining the process of submission/editing/approval.

We’ve enabled comments for every piece of content in YaleBLU. We also included the ability to post quick “straw poll” questions on the home page to get feedback on various topics from readers. We’ve also included an anonymous feedback form (with the option to provide contact info) to elicit opinions about the site.

We are running Google Analytics on the site, which allows us to see which content is the most popular, and gain better knowledge about how our readers are using the site.

— Once the original design committee turned over control and operation of the site to Finance and Business Operations Communications & Planning, a managing editor was appointed. In addition, Business Operations created a new liaison role to help coordinate and plan communication exchange between Business Operations and process owners around the University. The YaleBLU editor works closely with the Business Operations Liaison to coordinate article submissions and creating the “runway” of communication that business managers have asked for.

— Since launching in July 2009, more than 1,600 people have logged in to YaleBLU. (Anyone with a valid Yale NetID can access the site.) We’ve had 6,000 visits to the site, with approximately 20,000 page-views. Readers have begun to use the comments function (enabled for every piece of content in YaleBLU) to ask questions or extend conversation about a topic. We have also received positive feedback from readers, content owners, and central process owners about the site. YaleBLU has become the home page of a number of readers who check it frequently for updates.

— We’ve been able to encourage content owners to publish their information in YaleBLU rather than email “good-to-know” items to business managers, thus cutting down on the glut of information cluttering inboxes.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION AND TEAM MEMBERS

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COMMUNITY ROUNDTABLE

PROBLEM OR CHALLENGE TO BE ADDRESSED

The emerging role of social media and online community manager had no professional association, training group, or recurring place to connect with peers.-- Social media and community managers are incredibly busy, often under a great deal of stress, and often isolated because of their small numbers. They need a way to connect with each other, voice their challenges, get peer support, and learn about critical topics being discussed in the market — but in a light-weight way that allows them to dip in and out of participation as their schedules allows.

- Social media and community practitioners at corporations, non-profits, and government offices.
- To provide peer networking, training, and professional concierge services for practitioners and to further the definition of community management in the marketplace.
- To launch a virtual networked business that provides our customers with curated content, networking, discussions, shared best practices, and access to qualified experts. Additionally, to provide the market with useful frameworks and content that furthers the discipline of community management in a way that aligns with how it is practiced.
- We built an online community site for our core customer base and consider that the kernel of our networked business. Affiliated with that kernel are industry experts that join us for hour-long best practice conversation. Beyond that is our blog and Twitter audience—made up of people interested in the role of community management that we attract via fresh content like our podcast series with and with the aggregation of content relevant to social media and community managers.
- We built the business with very little investment other than our time and finding creative and low cost marketing, operations, and programming tools and content is challenging.

Additionally, because the primary business model is not high growth but incremental growth, we need have to find structural ways to extend our marketing

investment (time) by empowering our customers and our affiliated experts to speak for us.

SOLUTION/TOOLS USED/RESULTS

We used the following tools to create our information environment:

- Wordpress for our public website with audio, video, and image widgets
- Ning site for our community with widgets to pull in audio, video, image, RSS, and Twitter activity
- Live Office conference calling and recording
- A transcription and writing service to write best practice reports
- A Twitter account that sends out aggregated information relevant to social media and community managers
- Facebook and LinkedIn groups
- A casual, public lunch series started in Boston but also starting soon in NYC and looking to 'open source' to other locations over time
- Constant Contact for email permissioning and new prospect signups
- Freshbooks for accounting and invoicing
- Salesforce for CRM

Google Docs for collaboration: Jim Storer: Principal & Co-Founder. Jim does biz dev, community management, program management, audio interviews and editing, photography, and accounting.

Rachel Happe: Principal & Co-Founder. Rachel does biz dev, community management, presentations, text content, pipeline management, and website management

Members: 34 (including SAP, EMC, Ciena, Special Olympics, Allstate, Nationwide, Trip Advisors, SolarWinds, and others)

Twitter followers: 1,444

Prospects: 588

Speaking Opportunities: 10 completed; 6 scheduled

Stats are for period between launch on May 1st and September 10. Because we are new, business awareness is our first need. Our speaking engagements, Twitter followers, and prospects all indicate the level of awareness we've been able to achieve. We also measure the number of click-throughs on Tweeted content, the number of comments on our blog posts, and the number of times our blog posts are Tweeted out as a way to understand the level of engagement of our audience.

As a new business it is important to get to revenue and growth as quickly as possible. Our member count indicates the level to which we've been able to achieve revenue within a short (four-month) time frame.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION AND TEAM MEMBERS

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