Online Content Strategy for Rural Health Organizations

Rural Assistance Center

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Online Content Strategy for Rural Health Organizations: Understanding Your Audience, Your Message, and How They Connect

1) What is Content Strategy?
2) Audiences and Personas
3) Content You Have, Content You Should Have, and How to Get It
4) Getting it Out There

Where are Rural Internet Users Now?

70% of rural adults use internet (74% for all groups)

47% of rural adults have home broadband (60% for all groups)

45% of rural adults have accessed the internet wirelessly through a laptop or handheld device

Source: Internet, Broadband, and Cell Phone Statistics, Pew Internet & American Life Project, January 2010
Photo from http://www.mckane.com/blog/2008/10/16/rural-sourcing/
What are Rural Users Doing Online?

75-80% of Internet users search for health-related information


Differences in online activities don’t differ by rural/urban, but by type of Internet Access.


What is Content Strategy?

“Content strategy plans for the creation, publication, and governance of useful, usable content.”

Even more hats to wear....

Who is Your Audience?

- Who are you targeting?
- What are their goals related to your organization?
- What do they want or need to know?
- How do they access information?
What are Your Business Objectives?

- What are your goals in providing information to your audiences?
- What resources do you have or can you afford to develop?

Where Do Audiences and Objectives Intersect?

Audience Needs  Your Objectives

Content Sweet Spot
The Content Lifecycle

Bad Content is Not an Option

- **Create** great content that meets audience needs
- **Update** that content over time, to keep it current and relevant
- **Remove** stale information
Resource Allocation

- Regardless of which channel you’re using, content requires tending to ensure that current, accurate and relevant information is provided.
- How will you accomplish this?

Planning for the Content Lifecycle

- Who?
- What?
- How?
- When?

www.raonline.org
Identifying Your Web Audience Using Personas

What is a Persona?

Personas as Stand-Ins for Your Audiences
“Fictional characters created to represent the different user types within a targeted demographic, attitude and/or behavior set that might use a site, brand or product in a similar way”

-Wikipedia, 4/29/2010
Building Blocks of a Persona

- Demographics
- Top tasks or goals
- Motivations
- Design Implications
- Key attributes

Identifying Your Primary Audiences

User Group Priority Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance to the site meeting its objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Persona Template

Persona Name

Demographics

Job Responsibilities

Key Attribute

Key Attribute

Key Attribute

Top Tasks or Questions

Knowledge and Experience

Goals and Motivations

Implications for design

Persona Example - Page 1

Judy, County Social Services Director

Demographics

Judy is 56 and the Social Services Director for a rural county in Oklahoma where the county population is approximately 5,500. She was born and raised in a rural community in Oklahoma where she lived until leaving for college. She obtained her Bachelor of Social Work from Oklahoma State University. Judy returned to this rural area to work as the County Social Worker. Twenty-five years later, her director retired, and she took the position and has been there for eleven years. She met her husband in college who is now the Sheriff of their small community. They have two grown children and five grandchildren. Judy is involved in her church council, but has little time for other formal community organizations.

Job Responsibilities

Overall, Judy acts as a pillar of support and is responsible for the wellbeing of the county's residents. She reports to the county board and supervises 4 FTEs. She manages the county's social services budget provided through state federal county funds. Judy works to supplement it with grants that can support office functions and county programs. She manages programs in the areas of food stamps, child welfare and protective services, military, transportation partnerships, elderly, mental health, substance abuse, and disabilities. She tracks changes in eligibility requirements and new regulations affecting their many programs. Judy must ensure her staff is adequately trained. She creates reports for the federal, state, and local administrations.

Top Tasks or Questions

- Find state statistics for use in reporting and grant writing
- Seeks funding sources for office operations and program development and sustainability
- Sends referrals to other experts
- Shares examples of model programs from other states
- Gathers topical and funding information to share with clients and others in her community
Content You Have, Content You Should Have, and How to Get It

• What are the top tasks and goals of your key personas?
• How can your content help each of them achieve those goals?
Content You Have

A Content Inventory can help you identify and organize what you already have in place.

- Click through your website and record what you find in a spreadsheet.
- Categorize your content not only by topic, but by type (use a controlled vocabulary) and access path (the ways in which users might view each page).

http://eomag.com/04.04/content_inventory.htm

Making Sense of What You Have

Examine the results of your content inventory from the perspectives of your key personas to form an effective strategy.

- Does your current content satisfy their needs?
- Is it accessible? Organized in a way that makes sense to each of your key personas?
Filling In The Gaps

• What content would help your users with what they need to do?
• Do you have the knowledge and resources necessary to create and maintain new content?
• If not, do other sources maintain this same content? Augment your own information with links to reliable, external content where necessary.

Tools to Help Stay on Track

• The *Web Style Guide* (Lynch, Horton) is an excellent resource which “teaches the fundamentals of interface design, information architecture, and usability without unnecessary complexity or jargon.” Much is available online at webstyleguide.com
• Editorial calendars ensure that your website content is current and accessible – what works well at one time may not work well tomorrow.
Getting It Out There

Where are your audiences?

What do your key personas’ design implications and demographics tell you about how they use and access media?
Content In Context

Information is used and interpreted differently depending on the way it is disseminated.

How might each medium influence or shape your content?

- Your website
- Social media (Facebook, Twitter)
- Personal / corporate blogs
- Multimedia sites (YouTube, Flickr, Podcasting)

Social Media Strategies

Think about your objectives and your audience's needs as you post items to Facebook or Twitter.

- Is it important to reach a threshold size for your "fan" base or followers?
- Are you aiming to disseminate information to an existing user base or to promote your organization to others?
- "Tag" your posts, link to resources which engage in a way that the audience wishes to be engaged on a particular medium.
Effective Content Strategy Varies

**kludge:** (n) an inelegant solution to a problem, usually composed in an improvisational manner from disparate and traditionally unaffiliated component parts.

(via thereifixedit.com)

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Bringing It All Together

**Be Resourceful:** make the best of what you have.

**Be Thoughtful:** each user’s needs and knowledge base varies from each other’s and from yours.

**Be Flexible:** audiences change, media evolves.

**Be Diligent:** pay attention to the lifespan of your content – bad content is not an option.
Resources for Additional Information

http://www.usa.gov/webcontent/

*Content Strategy: The Philosophy of Data, Boxes and Arrows*, Rachel Lovinger
http://www.boxesandarrows.com/view/content-strategy-the

Articles on content strategy from *A List Apart*
http://www.alistapart.com/topics/content/content-strategy/

*Three Ways to Validate Your Content Strategy Using Personas*, Ron Akanowicz
http://civicactions.com/blog/2009/aug/13/three_ways_validate_your_content_strategy_using_personas

*Content Analysis: A Practical Approach*, Colleen Jones on UXMatters

*Content Analysis Heuristics*, Fred Liese on Boxes and Arrows
http://boxesandarrows.com/view/content-analysis

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Questions?

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Contact RAC

Phone       1-800-270-1898
Fax         1-800-270-1913
Email     info@raconline.org
Hours:     Monday-Friday
           8AM-5PM Central
Web site:  http://www.raconline.org