ADVICE FOR AN ENTERPRISING EXPATRIATE

A PROJECT PLAN TO ENHANCE AUDIENCE SIZE & ENGAGEMENT

PHASE I: ASSESSMENT

THE CLIENT

The Client owns a branded expatriate website dedicated to connecting new visitors to a major European metropolitan area with the best the city has to offer in terms of food, housing and culture. The site's founder and owner, TG, provides the recommendations based on his taste and experience. It is a cult-of-personality conceit that plays well to an older audience and provides the impetus to extend communities that have been forged offline into the digital world.

The company uses a portfolio approach towards its revenues, generating income streams through exclusive guided tours of the city, self-authored books, travel packages and digital ads. Terrance, as he is known to longer-term clients, also advertises hotels, apartments, online language lessons, books, etc. on a per case basis. Opportunities to expand into the corporate tourism market are of special interest.

CURRENT MARKETING

The expatriate website is supported by a three-times-a-week electronic newsletter sent to 8,100+ addresses. The newsletters – delivered via Constant Contact – average slightly higher open-rates (~20%) and click-through rates (~12%) which are better than industry standard . Similarly, the and bounce-rates (~8%) are better than the comparables. Each newsletter results in ~200 hits for the expatriate website, making newsletters a primary driver of traffic. CubeStat credits the expatriate website with daily page views of 346 and a website value of $1,384. (Alexa gives a higher valuation of $2,548.)

It is worth noting that the Google Analytics traffic numbers, which are indirectly measured, may fall significantly short of the directly-measured traffic numbers from WordPress. But Google Analytics sets the advertising rates[1], and so there is incentive to boost traffic that is measurable by its analytical tools.

More problematic is the amount of traffic registered by Constant Contact that does not result in any (Google) measurable traffic on the expatriate site. For example, Constant Contact reports that the email newsletters are typically opened by 1700+ addressees. Of those addressees, only 200 will click through to the website. The difference between these two numbers – some 1500+ content consumers – are not included in internet traffic estimates. These hits are invisible to Google Analytics and therefore to its ad revenue calculating tools, site ranking tools, etc. Yet these 1500+ are consuming site content on a daily basis.

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[1] The standard CPM (cost per 1000 impressions) advertising rate is ~$1.20.

In terms of specific marketing goals, the Client would like to "…double the (number of recipients on the) email list…" He is particularly concerned that the newsletters' reach had "…plateaued." He has engaged in some initial email list segmentation and clean-up, but he does not have specific research on how the number of email recipients translates into specific revenues for his products and services. Future marketing activities would benefit from an analysis of these correlations, to help guide where marketing resources are spent.

COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS

The expatriate website is one of many blogs focusing on the American expatriate experience in a major European metropolis. For the purposes of competitive analysis, a brief overview of the strengths and weaknesses of some of these blogs is provided (APPENDIX A). These insights are meant to provide suggestions for future content development only. For statistics on the traffic and effectiveness of the expatriate website, please see APPENDIX B.

Questions

- *What drives site revenue? What content benefits specific product or service revenue streams?*
- *What content attracts new clients? Helps retain established clients?*
- *Who is spending money on products and services? And why?*
- *What processes are in place for upselling products and services?*
- *How is the "client experience" being maintained? What about the client community?*
- *Is archived content properly cross-referenced and linked? Are systems in place to curate and maintain original content moving forward?*
- *Is valuable content being amplified? How is collateral being reused?*
- *What portion of revenue stems directly from SEO? Is there quantifiable evidence of the impact of SEO on specific revenue streams?*
- *How is SEO being used to enhance site popularity and content credibility?*

NEXT STEPS

The first part of this consulting engagement – the assessment phase – has highlighted a set of specific business issues and laid out a series of probing questions. What will follow next is a series of stakeholder conversations about the future development and direction of the branded expatriate business. The second phase of the engagement will address the implementation of these decisions via a mutually agreed upon Project Plan.

PHASE II: IMPLEMENTATION

In the previous engagement phase, the stakeholders of a branded expatriate business addressed a set of specific business issues in a facilitated discussion format. The resulting mutually agreed upon project goals will guide the future development and direction of the business. The next step is the implementation phase of the project, in which the project goals have been fleshed out as specific action items.

PROJECT GOALS

The project goal is to enhance audience size and engagement with the expatriate site by

- Amplifying current and archived content across digital channels, through reusable collateral
- Incorporating Search Engine Optimization (SEO) tools to enhance content value, link quality, site popularity and personal credibility
- Employing market analytics and traffic analytics towards increasing revenues for the portfolio of products and services

PROJECT PLAN: HOW TO AMPLIFY CONTENT VIA REUSABLE CONTENT

a. Maintain the Constant Contact email list, email newsletter schedule and procedures
b. Reconfigure the expatriate website to support blogging and mobile readership
c. Cross-post email newsletters, current and archived, as individual blog posts to maximize search and index
d. Start a Facebook Page to support the expatriate site, posting the first paragraph of each email newsletter article with a link to the full blog entry beneath
e. Index content to complement post tagging
f. Schedule content recycling, seasonal posts or special event posts in advance
g. Start a Twitter account for the expatriate site to post the 140 character version of each email newsletter article with a link to the corresponding blog post
h. Cross-post each tweet to the TG personal Facebook page (keeping privacy controls intact) with a link to the corresponding blog post

PROJECT PLAN: HOW TO INCREASE SEO TRAFFIC

Enhance Content Value

a. Keep the current "voice" and literary style
b. Cross-post email newsletter articles as blog entries, classified with tags
c. Archive old newsletter articles on the expatriate site
d. Switch the site's Wordpress theme to a mobile-friendly one that supports links for partners and media interviews
e. Clean up the site's navigation
f. Tag posts and use keyword
g. Segregate email lists into subgroups.

h. Employ the expatriate website's tagline throughout the content
i. Optimize the RSS feed
j. Improve the site map
k. Activate the Search function or use Google's tool (preferred)
l. Schedule content-recycling of seasonal posts in advance
m. Post to the site calendar
n. Consider posting a podcast on an excellent but obscure tour (without cannibalizing the IRL tours)
o. Consider podcasting the newsletters
p. Consider recording books as audiobooks
q. Consider posting a short first person tour video using an intimate, fourth-wall breaking style, à la Sister Wendy

Enhance Link Quality

a. Post links on the expatriate site for complementary sites, to encourage backlinks
b. Set up a constant set of links for "partners of" the expatriate site
c. Cultivate backlinks from educational institutions (as Google weights these higher)
d. Eliminate from the site elements of flash, frames and AJAX – none of which can be indexed for SEO
e. Use keywords with the images and the text
f. Post links/referrals to US travel agents, airlines, travel books, student agencies, etc.—they aren't competitors because the expatriate site picks up where they leave off
g. Clean up the site's broken links
h. Check the site's backlinks via Google tool
i. Allow Google-enhanced image search and tag site photos with the image tag
j. Switch any "Click Here" links to "Keywords" links
k. Maintain the link to the home page across the site (ex. Don't use index.html)
l. Eliminate inconsistent naming conventions

Enhance Site Popularity

a. Improve the discoverability of the newsletter/blog sign-up box
b. Use social media for marketing/SEO (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter…)
c. Use Twitter to post about immediate city happenings (Ex. "Lovely reading now at…")
d. Strengthen Facebook presence to improve searchability
e. Connect with "social influencers" to cross-market the site, digitally and IRL
f. Ask to be connected with corporations doing business in the city
g. Connect with governmental agencies: US embassy, Chamber of Commerce, etc.
h. Connect with readers of *New Yorker*, *NYT*, *Economist*, etc.
i. Connect with high-end cruise ships, charter clubs, etc.
j. Use social media to ask for newsletter subscriptions
k. Post social media links prominently, ideally on every site page

Enhance Personal Credibility

a. Post interviews with major media outlets as permanent (sticky) links
b. Post the interview videos and excerpts of memoir, books, etc.
c. Post links to the PhD thesis
d. Link to high credibility sites
e. Revise the "About Me" section to reflect the cult-of-personality rather than specific accomplishments, focusing on multi-media
f. Increase the "office hours" beyond the current café/restaurant; i.e., try new or floating locations
g. Give subscribers freebies, like a free tour of an unknown landmark or garden
h. Hyperlink. Hyperlink. Hyperlink.
i. Invite "guest bloggers" to post
j. Post testimonials
k. Donate empty ad space to charities/non-profits serving ex-pats or Americans in general
l. Set up a plan to keep the site's links clean, to maintain its SEO ranking (using tools discussed below)
m. Set up a plan to keep the site's server headers clean (using tools discussed below)
n. Set up a plan to routinely check the site's status with blacklist sites (using tools discussed below)
o. Set up a plan to monitor whether emails are directed to spam filters

PROJECT PLAN: HOW TO INCREASE AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT

Analyze Lists & Methods of Engagement
a. Research the conversion history of previous email newsletters and website traffic
b. Experiment with posting times/days to optimize newsletter open rates & click rates and/or minimize unsubscribes)
c. Segment the email and site traffic lists, developing hypotheses about how to communicate with each segment in personalized ways
d. Cultivate and treasure new subscribers (as they click through more readily)

Develop Valuable Content
a. Keep the site's audience in mind while writing content (They aren't all the same, and won't all respond to the same "ask")
b. Compete for audience attention and engagement by delivering valuable content
c. Send the right messages at the right time, Ex. drip marketing, keeping the audience's needs in mind while writing
d. Engage on social media, including using scheduler tools to post at popular times

Benchmark Progress
a. Measure site traffic results
b. Use a/b testing to test hypotheses about content delivery: timing, messaging, media contents, segmentation, response, etc.
c. Track what drives traffic. Google Analytics is a good starting tool. Refine results using custom redirects.

Develop Dynamic Behavior Profiles

a. Employ progressive profiling (behavior-based assessments) to identify and segment audience
b. Integrate findings into new content delivery
c. Build Dynamic Content into the website; i.e., customizing audience experience, if possible

Questions

- *Which of the previously outlined activities can be accomplished in-house?*
- *Which activities will require external expertise?*
- *What is the total lifetime cost (personnel, materials and upkeep) of each of these activities?*
- *Which of these activities are the least resource intensive in terms of their expected impact on the objects? That is, which will provide the "biggest bang for the buck"?*
- *Given these constraints, how would you prioritize these activities?*
- *What is the lead time for each of these activities, i.e. which will require additional work before they can be tackled?*
- *Given all these factors, in what order should these activities be accomplished?*

NEXT STEPS

TG and the business stakeholders have decisions to make regarding where, when and how to address this list of activities. We would recommend convening a facilitated roundtable to prioritize the list and develop an implementation schedule. The resulting mutually agreed upon project goals will guide the future development and direction of the business ecosystem. The implementation phase of the project will rest on which project goals have been fleshed out as specific action items.

APPENDIX A: COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS

AAA provides regular posts on events, culture and dining posted by 20-odd contributors. Daily posts keep the content fresh. The blog posts are text heavy. Using multiple authors translates into an inconsistent writing style. Its resources and category sections are handy for topic searching. Facebook and Twitter linkages broaden the content's appeal and accessibility.

BBB is a blog aggregator. Quality varies, and the top-ranked blog is now defunct. Bloggers tend to be young women who post irregularly, mostly targeting their own demographic. Individual bloggers have little potential to siphon off audience. But a handful of these bloggers have built compelling offerings worth emulating.

CCC is a free social media networking site that hosts additional offline events. A digital bulletin board includes posts for dating, job seeking, short-term housing, etc. The site reports user statistics on its homepage, with a reported age range of 30-60.

DDD posts irregularly. The contemporary news section, with its focus on collective bargaining rights, is an interesting niche that boosts site traffic by 10-15%. The listing of other expat blogs also raises traffic (~5%).

DDD uses the conceit of publishing in the native language for the benefit of an American expat audience, to position itself as a gateway for local talent to reach American audiences, at home and abroad. But the two authors post irregularly, mostly for their own demographic.

EEE is a hub for classified ads and free range bloggers (CubeStat = $72,703). The site is currently offering too little money for a SEO analyst, with predictable results in terms of ranking and credibility indicies.

FFF is a text-heavy, sparsely posted amateur blog built in the service of a bilingual web designer. The monthly posts cover the whole nation.

GGG is a crowd-sourced site, full of individually-hosted activities with no clear aesthetic or contextual voice.

The HHH blog delivers a text-heavy "How To…In this country" site with an integrated, photo-heavy, monthly newsletter worth emulating. It also has an associated Twitter account, hangouts and podcasts.

The III site is a student/recent graduate focused site with brisk traffic that hosts links for expatriates and resources for working, studying and traveling within the nation.

APPENDIX B: PROJECT BENCHMARKS

Website Traffic Estimates[2]

Alexa Rank: 2,338,889

349 visitors/day or 125,640 visitors/year

1,663 pageviews/day or 598,680 pageviews/year

Estimated worth: $2,548

Projected Ad Revenue: $4.73/day or $1,704/year

Blacklist Report: Clean

Browser Compatibility Test: issues, unreliable on mobile
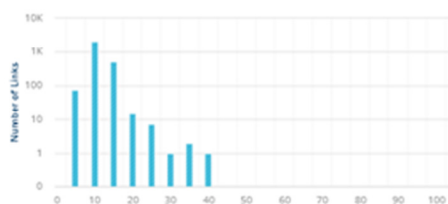
Broken Links: 80+

Server Headers: 200 OK

Link Traffic:

CTLDs Distribution (Redacted)
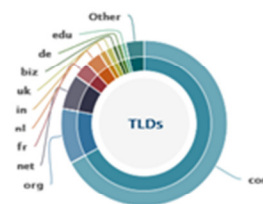
Anchors Cloud (Redacted)

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[2] Valid as of Nov 2014