

Assignment

For this assignment you will analyze the content for a website and create a new content strategy plan for the site.

This will be a group project. (Please review the "Group Work" section of the syllabus with your group prior to beginning work.)

Purpose

One of the most common types of work technical writers do in any industry is to design, write, and maintain content for the company's many media platforms. Often this includes redesigning or rethinking the strategies and content in order to maintain the most current information and contact with customers and/or users. This process involves assessing the current content and proposing changes to it.

For this project you will be creating a strategy guide for a client. A strategy guide is a document that assesses the organization of a client's current site and presents research-based solutions for improving the site's usability and traffic. Strategy guides can include content templates, landscape analyses, and user experience reports.

Some of the guiding question you will need to answer in order to create your strategy include:

- What kind of website, mobile site, and/or social media accounts are the organization maintaining?
- Who is their audience?
- Who are their writers?
- How are they managing the content work flow?
- Is their content sustainable? How are they handling governance?
- What kinds of content strategy improvements would help their organization reach their business goals?

The first thing your group must do is identify a client. This can be a campus organization or department, or an off-campus organization that one of your group members has access to. If you have trouble finding a client look at websites for campus and/or local Davis organizations that you and your group believe could use some work or are in need of a web presence. I recommend that you contact the owner/webmaster of the site before you begin working on the project.

Requirements

Identify Client

The first thing your group must do is identify a client. This can be a campus organization or department, or an off-campus organization that one of your group members has access to. If you have trouble finding a client look at websites for campus and/or local Davis organizations that you and your group believe could use some work or are in need of a web presence. I recommend that you contact the owner/webmaster of the site before you begin working on the project. The "owners" or the websites will be your audience.

Research

In order to complete your project, you will need to do quite a bit of research.

Client

After you have identified your client you will need to do some research on the company. What are the companies' goals and values (you can often find this in the mission statement if it is available)? How doe these goals and values relate to their web presence?

Competitive Analysis

You will need to identify your client's competitors and evaluate their websites. From this research you will learn what the "standard" website in their field looks like. For example: is there a certain structure or content on competitors sites? Is there a standard or unique language used on the websites? How does the website function? Is there a standard navigation scheme in the business sector? What colors do competitors use in their website? Is there anything consistent about the use of color across the sector (i.e., links on pages are always blue and underlined)?

You should create an assessment rubric to record your findings. You will use the document to inform the strategy you describe in your report. (This report is often included as an appendix.)

[Example Competitive Analysis Document](#) ➦ (from Casey book)

Client Audit

You will also need to do some research about your client's current website. Before you can make recommendations about how to improve something you need to know what's currently there. Is the information where you expect it to be based on the navigation? How many pages and clicks does someone have to go through to find information? What content is current and what is outdated? Which pages are visitors to the website looking at the most? (You may need to set up a Google Analytics page to find this out if the client is not tracking the data--hopefully they are, but often they're not.)

[Example Client Audit](#) ➦ (from Casey book)

Industry

In order to create and present an informed strategy, you will also need to do some research into the field in general. There is often jargon or accepted practices in the sector that you need to be aware of as a research and writer. A report will have less impact if it is clear the researchers and writers do not understand the sector for which they are writing.

Design

As we have read and discussed in class, one of the most important job of a technical writer is to design a report that enhances readability and usefulness. While there are often "standard" sections in many documents, there is no one-size-fits-all template for this type of report. Identifying your audience is also essential in document design. Does your client run a formal business or a more relaxed one? Will you be presenting your report to the "doers" (i.e., the people who will enact your strategy) or the "money" (i.e., the people at the C-level--CEO, COO, etc.) or both? How formal does your tone and language need to be to best convey the strategy to as many readers as possible.

We will be looking at several different ways technical/professional writers have designed and written these types of report. I caution you though that I am not looking for a "template" report.; I'm looking for a report that emphasizes the most important aspects of your strategy. How many headings/subheadings, images, charts, graphs, etc. to include is up to your team as the information specialists.

Writing and Presentation

After you have completed your research and analysis you will write your report. As described in the section above, the first thing to do is to set up a style guide for your team and begin to write the strategy report. The style guide is important since each team member must participate in writing the document so everyone on your team needs to know the standards that you have set. (i.e., font, heading and subheading styles, color, placement on page, etc.) It is imperative that your report read as having a single author. Setting these standards up first will help. Do not rely on the team editors to "fix" the document at the end.

You will also be creating a presentation to give your client about your report. Often people at the C-level (again, where the money is) sit in on a presentation and may read the executive summary. This may be the only 10-15 minutes you will have to "sell" them on your strategy. Therefore, you need to pick the most important information to include in your presentation. You will need to include at least an overview of the project, some of the findings from both the competitive and client analysis. After that, you will need to decide as a group what is the most important information and how to get to it all in 10-15 minutes. This is an exercise in conciseness. Remember that presentations are inherently visual, not textual. Be sure to look at the [Tips for Presentations and Slides](#) here in Canvas.

Deliverables

1. An individual one-page reflective memo (250 words):
 - Provide a summary of your group's process and production
 - Evaluate each group member: how did they contribute? did they meet all deadlines? did they participate fully in the group?
 - Identify the work you did for the report and presentation. (i.e., What part of the report did you write? What part of the presentation did you work on? etc.)
 - Describe which of the course goals you feel you encountered in completing this assignment (one paragraph).
 - Each group member should email this memo to me so that it is confidential.
2. Strategy Report (2500-5000 words) (100 pts)
 - Your report should include a discussion of your research and proposals for improving the client's content across media channels
 - Your report should also include a discussion of user research
 - All group members should participate in writing the report. That is, this report should not be written by just one or two members of your group. One person may be responsible for editing and proof reading, but each group member must write a part of the final paper.
 - Samples will be provided.
3. Strategy Presentation (50 pts)
 - Your group will design and give a presentation that is 10-15 mins in length
 - You may be presenting to visitors to our class (e.g., clients, web managers, etc), so keep that in mind when you are designing and presenting your work.
 - All group members must participate in the presentation. Not all group member have to have a speaking role, but each group member must contribute to the presentation.