15) CREATE WAYS FOR READERS TO TAILOR INFORMATION TO THEIR NEEDS

Summary

Information overload can be a pressing problem on the web as users search for information of interest to them. In addition, it makes it difficult to create online communities around issues of common interest.

Challenge:
Create a way for users to be able to tailor information on Ohio.com to meet their needs. Once users share their preferences, create a way to engage them in local communities of interest that can move the community forward.

1) The name of your company / organization?


2) Explain your “challenge.” Be as descriptive as possible, providing relevant background or other information to help student competitors clearly understand the problem to be solved.

The Akron Beacon Journal presents one challenge that serves two purposes:
- How can the Beacon Journal better engage its Ohio.com web site audience so users receive news and advertising information they seek on any platform?
- How can the Beacon Journal better engage its Ohio.com web site users so the community can address constructively the issues it faces and move forward?

These two seemingly different questions have something in common: They each require a thorough understanding of the Ohio.com audience. The goal is to create a new relationship with the Ohio.com audience that serves both individual users and the community. The Beacon Journal and Ohio.com can be the information channel that is necessary for both of those goals to succeed.

Audience engagement: As we consume information through an increasingly complex network of channels we can be overwhelmed – sometimes to the point of giving up – by what we do not want to see. Our challenge is to engage the audience by making it easier for users to find the information that they seek. To do that the
information provider and aggregator – in this case Ohio.com – needs to understand what each user wants. Using this data, we would present information in an engaging format on Ohio.com.

We are not asking to reinvent a search engine. We are seeking a way for each user to tell us what he or she wants and to match those preferences with the information Ohio.com provides. It also is necessary to understand how the user consumes the information – on a computer screen, a tablet or a smart phone – so that it can be presented in a useful format.

Community involvement: Once users share their interests and expectations, that information can be used to create communities around issues of common interest. Ohio.com can be the place where people discuss common interest issues and move the community forward. Identifying the issues is not as difficult as finding others with a common interest in the wider online world.

A news organization such as the Akron Beacon Journal is a huge asset in this exercise because it can gather, sort and analyze the information necessary to facilitate a discussion and move it toward a solution.

The question then becomes how can a news organization package its digital resources in a way that audiences will feel compelled to stay in the relationship they are building regarding a particular issue? The goal is to create an audience that truly is interested in constructive conversation, such that they want to come, see the news, interact with others in a constructive way, discuss actions, solutions, personal experiences and look forward to face-to-face meetings.

3) How would you know if a student entry has produced a good solution? That is, how would you measure the effectiveness of the solution (e.g. surveys, online audience metrics, etc.)?

The technical description and detail of how best to gather the most accurate data possible will be most important and must be verifiable. Once verified, options for web presentation of the information may be reviewed for personal appeal and maximum engagement.

Engagement will be measured and success judged by increased page views and unique visitors.
4) Are there additional criteria against which the proposed solution should be evaluated? (e.g. well-designed, attractive interface, usability, mobility, low-cost implementation, etc.)?

The solution must offer opportunities for entrepreneurial team building that changes the culture of a traditional news environment. The solution should encourage a process of creative collaboration so journalists and information technology are willing to move forward incrementally on ideas that have a likelihood of success but will require experimentation and learning experiences.

The solution also will be evaluated in a variety of screen sizes to enable mobile utilization. The presentation must account for how the information is consumed, from 17-inch monitor down to the more popular mobile devices. It is expected that the graphic user interface would be optimized to work in these different sizes using responsive design techniques to provide the lowest cost, lowest total maintenance solution.

The database supporting the information gathered about the user needs to be efficient and scalable.

5) What resources are available to help inform and guide the student competitors (e.g. data sources, reports, articles, audience metrics, etc.)?

- Ohio.com Google analytic tracking information.
- 2012 Scarborough research reports.
- Akron Beacon Journal/Ohio.com Audit Bureau of Circulation data
- Current Ohio.com website to provide types of information currently available
- Citizen engagement organizations to help identify issues on people’s minds and how to tap into those issues through organizations, events and provocative questions.
- Information on how other organizations have tapped into public discussion

Students could create and use these items:

- Local browsing history, social media interactions from their computers and computers of their peers and friends.
- Menu of choices that was created by the student to gather accurate information from the user.
- Computer trails left from social interactions and site usage history.
6) Please provide the name(s) and contact information of someone we may contact if we have questions about your “challenge.”

Dawn Bonfiglio  
Information technology director  
330-996-3285  
dbonfiglio@thebeaconjournal.com

Doug Oplinger  
Managing editor  
330-996-3750  
doplinger@thebeaconjournal.com
Challenge #15

A media company seeks a way to learn what kinds of information its news consumers want and make it easier for them to access that information, while simultaneously taking that user data to create “communities of common interest” among members of its audience. The goal is to find a way to “create an audience that truly is interested in constructive conversation.

Written materials¹:

1. Cover page with title, number of the challenge addressed, list of contributors and contact information.
2. One page executive summary w. title – required (12-point type, may be single-spaced)
3. White paper
   a. *Required:* Title, problem restatement and proposed solution (What is your innovation?), maximum three pages
   b. *Required:* Measurable aims: how will you know if your solution works, maximum one page.
   c. *Required:* Project description, maximum of 10 pages total
      i. *Required:* Evidence to support your approach. Note that the company can provide a wealth of existing audience metrics.
      ii. *Required:* Necessary resources to implement your solution, as well as identifying hurdles to implementation.
      iii. *Required:* Implementation plan. Note that the company’s “challenge” outlines specific requirements.
      iv. *Required:* Timeline
      v. *Optional:* Initial pilot plan that will provide quick feedback on whether it’s working so that short-term adjustments can be made before full implementation.
4. *Required:* Financial Information – no page limit
   i. *Required:* Proposed budget and budget justification. What will this program cost?
   ii. *Required:* How can this be monetized
5. Appendices – optional, no page limit. Note: judges are not required to read appendices.

See pg 2

¹ All written materials in the white paper must be in a normal 12-point type, double-spaced, unless otherwise noted. Charts, tables, illustrations and embedded spreadsheets may be single-spaced. Final deliverables of the cover sheet, executive summary and white paper must be three, and only three, separate Word documents or PDF files.
Presentation Materials2:

1. Set of PowerPoint slides without voiceover – maximum 20 slides as a PowerPoint file OR
2. Link to a viewable set of PowerPoint slides with voiceover – maximum 20 slides, 5 minutes OR
3. Link to viewable video presentation, maximum 5 minutes.

NOTES: Your submission must be based heavily on audience metrics. The company is willing to share a wealth of this information. Also, the company says its goal is to create communities of conversation among users “such that they want to come, see the news, interact with others in a constructive way, discuss actions, solutions, personal experiences and look forward to face-to-face meetings.”

2 If the presentation materials are posted on a private website, complete instructions for accessing the site must be given.