Getting It Done on No Budget: A Low-Cost, Low-Effort Digital Strategy for Association Success

Bee Culture Magazine: How a niche publisher completely revolutionized their digital presence with minimal budget and minimal effort.
Introductions

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What We’re Presenting

Bee Culture Magazine

• In print since 1904
• Niche Publication for Beekeepers
• Focused on beekeeping trade
• Authority on the industry
Why We’re Presenting

Bee Culture Magazine

• Low Cost
• Low Bandwidth
• Small Team
• Need for additional authority within their industry
• Digital was greatly underutilized
• Content = Product, just like associations
The Situation
The Situation

Kim Flottum

• Editor-in-Chief
• Globally sought for industry knowledge
• Heart & Soul of the publication (and the industry in many ways)
The Situation

No Bandwidth
  • Two Full-Timers, Two Part Timers
  • Completely focused on the content
  • Many hats being worn across the team

No Budget

Subscriptions flat

Digitally “going through the motions”
The Situation

Website
- 10,000 visits/month avg
- 2.4 page views/visitor
- Not mobile friendly
- Platform difficult to update
- Outdated
- Not user friendly nor highly functional
- All around needing a lot of love
The Situation

Email

- Low capture rate
- Less than 50% of subscriber list
- Not mobile friendly
- Entire article dropped into email
  - Minimal click thru
  - Long, drawn out read
  - Minimal opps for interaction
- Insignificant contributor to digital efforts
The Situation

Social

Facebook:
• ~6500 likes
• Sporadic and inconsistent

Twitter:
• ~3000 followers
• Also sporadic and inconsistent
The Situation

In Summary...

Lots of great content and ability to truly engage beekeepers, but digital wasn’t doing the job.

• No time
• No money
• No plan
The Strategy
The Strategy

Where to Start...

• Establish what they are trying to do
• Define Bee Culture’s content strengths
• Build a plan around how we can leverage these strengths across all channels
• See where/how we can make a difference
Step One: Digital Presence Assessment

• Gain an objective perspective on overall digital presence as a publisher

• Measure performance across the primary channels based on digital best practices

• Identify what is working well, and not working as well as it should

• Recommend top opportunities & priorities to pursue

• Present where you stand relative to your competition
### The Strategy

#### Step One: Digital Presence Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Website</th>
<th>Social Media</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Apps / Digital Editions</th>
<th>Paid Search / Paid Media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Discoverability  
• Authority  
• Visitor Quality  
• Mobile Readiness  
• On-Page SEO  
• Competitor Comparison | • Overall content  
• Post frequency  
• No. of followers  
• Engagement  
• Facebook  
• Twitter  
• LinkedIn  
• Other channels as applicable | • List Size  
• List Growth  
• List Performance  
• Unsubscribes  
• Template Design  
• Content Effectiveness | • Traffic relative to base  
• Page views  
• Unique Sessions  
• Password / Non-Password content availability | • Google Adwords  
• Bing Adcenter  
• Facebook Advertising  
• Pinterest, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.  
• Competitive landscape |

Output: Baseline of where you currently stand
The Strategy

Step Two: Content Assessment

• First, understand a publisher's customer goals through stakeholder interviews
• Gather information about the reader or member preferences through new or existing research
• Review the website’s information architecture and current content experience
• Analyze the content experiences offered by our customer’s competition
• Present findings and recommendations, setting the groundwork for a digital path forward with the goal of optimizing the content experience
The Strategy

Step Two: Content Assessment

• In general, examines a website and delivers recommendations to improve the content experience.
  • “Good or bad, you always get a content experience...”

Outputs:

• Delivers an immediate understanding of a site’s **identity and purpose**
• Serves up catchy **content hooks** to entice readers to want more
• Facilitates **easy exploration** via multiple, effective navigation methods
• Offers web **exclusives** to reward visitors
• Converts first-time visitors to **engaged, recurring users**
In summary...

A Digital Presence Assessment helps set the digital strategy, but the Content Assessment helps execute it. Without a good content experience, any efforts to drive traffic to your content is much less effective.
The Execution
The Execution

- Facebook
- Twitter
- SEO
- Email
- Editorial Calendar
- Paid Search (social)
- Subscription Mgmt

Website/Blog
THEN
Website

• Wordpress CMS (simple, cheap, heavily supported)
• Pre-designed template ($100 and per Content Assessment outputs/priorities)
• Restructured Primary/Secondary Navigation
• Facebook pixel implemented
• Image and content heavy
• Blog focus
The Execution

Blog

• Using Google Alerts to find industry relevant articles out there
• Writing brief synopses on articles and posting to blog.
• Scheduled to post 4-6 times/week
• Keeps content in motion and relevant
• Provides content for channel promotion and traffic
The Execution

Social

• Posting content per blog posts
• Content calendar – organized approach to content and frequency
• Tracking pixel – allows for targeted Facebook advertising
• Twitter following same strategy as Facebook
The Execution

Email

• Mailchimp platform
• Simple and easy to manage
• Always includes excerpt plus option to read on (sending user to website)
• Wordpress Plugin – daily automated RSS integration
The Execution

App

• Built in Adobe AEM
• Caters to mobile audience
• Content heavy
• Content access for subscribers and non-subscribers
The Results
The Results

Since 1st Phase launch in April, 2015...

• Website:
  • Sessions up 862%
  • Page Views up 512%
  • Mobile sessions up 2,132% and constitutes 52.5% of all site traffic
  • #2 Rated blog in beekeeping industry

• Email:
  • List up 691%
  • Referring 18% of total web sessions (previously <1%)

• Social:
  • Facebook likes up 286%
  • Twitter followers up 256%

• Ad Revenues and New Subscribers up (can’t disclose)
The Results

Overall:
• Completely revamped digital portfolio
• Immense returns on minimal consistent effort
• Increased ad sales and subscriptions
• Set up for a long term digital solution

Next Steps:
• Webinar: The Jim & Kim Show (avg 886 registrations/session)
• Experimenting
Conclusions

• Focus on the blog and let every other channel support it
• Find relevant content from others, provide summaries and cite their content. You don’t have to pump out masses of original content to succeed
• Webinars – as a phase 2 effort, you’re giving readers access to experts in their field.
• Develop a content plan and schedule...this is critical
• Know your digital baseline and know where you stand
• Keep it simple
Questions?