Raising visibility, awareness and reach for your online project

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Q & A

Type questions here.
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Twitter: @susanmernit  
Facebook: Facebook.com/susanmernit
Oakland Local has high visibility, slim resources:
2012 operating budget: $152,000, no fulltime paid staff.
We have:
60,000 unique monthly visitors
126,000 page views
Partnerships with public media (KQED), local newspaper (SFGate), others.
Social media is huge:
9,000 Twitter followers @oaklandlocal
8,399 Facebook (/oaklocal)
With limited resources, how can you give your project the greatest online reach and impact? ---That’s what we’re going to talk about.
Step 1, focus on goals: what outcomes are you going for?
Step 2: Set a baseline of data to get started

1. Determine:
   What are the core stats today? What goals would you like to achieve for your project through increasing reach and visibility? What will success look like—and how will you measure it?
Step 3, set your baseline with data. Look at:

- **Key Google Analytics data**, including number of pages viewed, unique visitors and time spent on site and top referring sites for your project
- **Key Facebook data**, including number of followers, number of people talking, and most viral posts for your project’s Facebook page

Make a list of data reflecting where you are today—and then list out where you’d like to see growth
Set 4, set measurable outcomes--your goals

Create a set of quantitative measurements for how you’d like to increase reach and visibility, such as:
- Increasing unique visitors to website
- Increasing referral traffic from third-party web sites
- Increasing newsletter sign-ups
- Increasing comments
- Increasing returning visitors

Use these goals—and your baseline data—to chart your strategy with 4 key tools.
Type questions here.
Use these 4 critical tools for building reach & visibility

1. Search engine optimization (SEO)
2. Syndication/distribution
3. Social media tags & virality
4. Google Analytics & Facebook Insights

Let's take a look at each
1. Search engine optimization (SEO) grows visibility and reach

SEO will make your content more discoverable in search—This is essential to increasing visitors & traffic.
Key SEO best practices you need

TECHNICAL
1. SEO friendly CMS: Word Press is highly SEO-optimized. Drupal and Joomla are other SEO friendly options. Note that tumblr, typepad, and blogger/blogspot are less optimized).

2. Google SEO tools: Install and use Google Webmaster tools (google.com/webmasters) and Google analytics (google.com/analytics).

3. Robots visibility: Build a sitemap for Google.com robots so they can index your site.

4. RSS feeds/XML outputs: Use free tool Feedburner or simple RSS to make sure you have feeds to export.
Use keywords in your headlines & content

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Integrate keywords into your text to be more discoverable—by robots

1. Know the “best” keywords to drive traffic to your site and use them


Check keyword searches in Google Analytics under Traffic Sources Overview to see what previous queries have been.

Keywords for The Lens, NOLA, 2013
Use your keywords in your headlines—repeatedly.

Examples: Berkeleyside.com
Good use of SEO results in high search rankings & more discoverability.

Repetition of location increases SEO.
2. Distribution & Syndication are critical tools for increasing visibility and reach

Content-sharing relationships increase reach, visibility and bring new visitors

**Partners distribute their content**

For Philly’s The Notebook (thenotebook.org), local partners drive traffic through content partnerships, syndication & distribution

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Bay area KQED public media partners with many different news sites, blogs and non-profits to gather quality local news. Each of these stories is from a different partner.
Who are good prospects to syndicate to?

Look for:
• Local media (newspapers, radio, web)
• Local government (city, county)
• Bloggers & hyperlocal sites (news sites, individual sites)
• Local and regional mobile apps & directories
• Portal sites with regional or niche content (Yahoo! News, Google News, Huffington Post, Patch)

Connecticut Mirror has a large number of partners, including the NY Times
Tools for getting partners!

Materials for reaching out:
• Description of your organization
• Information about your content
• Content samples
• Information on RSS/XML feed
• Information on photo licensing/right
• Daily or weekly news budget email

Economic Hardship Reporting Project has a model that focuses on content distribution
Once you’re syndicating/distributing

Content distribution (posting on a partner site)

- Post consistently
- Use photos
- Increase posting on sites with most click-through to you
- Send news budget to staff
- Push the specials
- Keep adding partners

Content syndication: Sharing through feeds

- Regularly check indexing is working
- Build new feeds for specific partner requirements
- Keep adding new partners

Check stats on Google Analytics/Traffic Sources
3. Social media: Critical tool to build visibility for your project via virality, sharing
The next frontier is viral sharing—getting people to click and pass on what they like. Here are some tips on how to do that...
Use social media platforms to increase users, drive interaction & engagement
And reach more diverse audiences

Think about VIRAL SHARING as a new goal

Are you using share buttons on your site? Do you encourage sharing interactions?
Where The Hell Do People Share?

Almost all your traffic will come from Facebook.

You have to go where they live.

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reddi

good luck, if you crack it you are a god.

twitte

If you do it right, it can make a dent.

tumbl

Slow cook it to perfection.
To build visibility, add visible share buttons to your site for key social networks

**Make it EASY to share**

Note buttons for Reddit, Stumbleupon, Google +, LinkedIn, -- where are your people?
Tools of the new sharing

CAPTIONS ON PHOTOS
Good content
Photos w/ captions posted to Facebook & Twitter
Copy with the captioned photos that engages deep curiosity—and doesn’t give much away

If Facebook is your top referrer, focus on that—and use crafted headlines & captioned photos

(Hat tip: Upworthy.com)
Oakland Local caption/headline test on Facebook

Methodology:
Took 5 stories and build captioned photos
Posted photos & new headlines on Facebook
Compared results to previous promotions

Results
Pie photo: Feb 24: 14 hours after posting: 1,187 people saw this post;
Feb 17 (no caption), 300
Occupy photo: Feb 24: 14 hours after posting: 1,037 people saw this post
Feb 21: 502 saw this post
And don’t forget the power of the hashtag

Remember the 2012 Olympics & the #NBCFail hashtag?

Thousands of people used the tag.

At the 2013 Oscars, #hathawaynipples went viral due to a Prada dress

Create hashtags for your events, coverage and issues
--and see if they catch on
4. Using metrics data

Do you know the value of a visit? Google Analytics & Facebook Insights help you see what’s Working—and what’s not
What is a visitor worth? What strategies deliver?

Making good use of metrics means putting data points together and making inferences:

Top referrals + time spend on site from each referral source = quality of user/attention

Demographic location data on GA + demographic location data from FB = reasonable scan of where your audience is located, gender, age

Top quality referrers for Oakland Local: sfgate.com blog & Google Search
Analyze the data to focus in on best efforts

Use Google Analytics traffic data to track and report on third-party referrals—Find the referring sources with the most interested users (look at time spent metrics).

Use Google Analytics in combination with Facebook data to track Facebook post virality and sharing, as well as Facebook site referrals.

Use Facebook data to understand most viral posts and fine-tune caption and headline writing.
What the plan looks like

Start:
- Understand where you are
- Decide where to grow
- Develop a strategy
- Execute

Finish
- Measure results
- Assess costs/value
- Fine-tune
- Repeat

Pick 1-2 areas to address at a time and make sure you are able to track results and assess value
Great resources for building skills

BASIC TOOLS
• Google Webmaster tools (google.com/webmasters)
• Google analytics (google.com/analytics).

SEO
• Google AdWords: Keyword Tool http://bit.ly/YnrhYz
• Check your link authority a http://www.opensiteexplorer.org/

SOCIAL MEDIA & VIRALITY
• Upworthy: 10 Ways To Win The Internets http://slidesha.re/15faQUs
• Upworthy: How To Make That One Thing Go Viral http://slidesha.re/15faVrd

ANALYTICS AND METRICS
• Jan 11 2013 learning lab 2013 show me the metrics http://slidesha.re/15fOdjC
Photo credits


Sean McEntee, change | Flickr - Photo Sharing! http://bit.ly/X7I2tA

Tom Magliery, 4 | Flickr - Photo Sharing! http://bit.ly/ZtUUdT

flickroll666, http://www.flickr.com/photos/39496275@N00/49627440/ (pattern)

Mal McCarthy,://www.flickr.com/photos/37570710@N02/6988872191/in/photostream

Winsidek, http://www.flickr.com/photos/8390411@N02/6891296261/


Fred Cavazza, http://www.fredcavazza.net/2012/02/22/social-media-landscape-2012/


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THANKS!

mernit@gmail.com
@susanmernit
http://oaklandlocal.com
Virtual Class: Raising Visibility | Starts on April 15, 2013
Go to bit.ly/raising-visibility for more information and to find out how to apply.