Faster! Easier! Better!
GIMME!
Use content strategy to your advantage

Margot Bloomstein
@mbloomstein #W2E
September 29, 2010
The Case for Content Strategy—Motown Style

by NARGIS BLOOMSTEIN

Published in Content Strategy | www.creativecontent.today

AUGUST 18, 2000

Over the past year, the content strategy matter has been building. Jeffrey MacKinnon gave us the reason’s at SXSW, presentations at An Event Apart, and regional meetups continue to build the drum roll. But how do you start rummaging into the content strategy failure—speak to your prospective clients? Listen up and heed Aretha Franklin. No, really.

What you want, baby I get it

What’s your story? Are you a designer who needs “real copy” for your designs? Or are you an editor who needs to organize an experience, or a search engine marketer who needs to influence your client’s SEO? Whatever your role, a content strategist can help you be more successful. Whether you partner with a web writer who translates communication goals into tactics, or someone whose business card actually says “content strategist,” that converter who helps you tell and deliver the message just might have something.

But what if there’s no one you can work with on the inside? If you’ve got budget, consider partnering with an external content strategist, even if only for your own self-interest. Your work will look good and your client will be happy—and so will their target audience.

In content strategy, it isn’t the current budget, though, how do you convince your client to add money? If your client might already realize content strategy can help create measurable ROI, then if they don’t, help them understand. After all, relevant, informative content is what the audience wants; content strategy assists the content they have and creates a plan for what they need and how they’ll get it.

At a more thematic level, think working through the “big issues” of content strategy, like communication goals and messaging, can help you hit the mark in your respective deliverables. That means your client can save money by letting you first address strategy via less expensive forms of documentation (such as content strategy), rather than in expensive design iterations.

Need to spell it out for them? Just start with a little R-B-S-P-B-C-T.
In Web 2.0, everyone is part of the conversation.
Use content strategy to get what you want.
Use content strategy to get what you want.
Designers
Information architects
Interaction designers
Project managers
SEO/SEM specialists
Social media consultants

Use content strategy to get what you want.
Deliver on time
Deliver on time
Stay in budget
Give users what they need
Stay in budget
Deliver on time
Give users what they need

Stay in budget

Please our clients (and ourselves)

Deliver on time
Appropriate, Inc. © 2010

Give users what they need
Build a cohesive experience
Stay in budget
Minimize revisions
Please our clients (and ourselves)

Deliver on time
Rally everyone around a vision
This is where content strategy can help!
What is content strategy?
Planning for the creation, aggregation, delivery, and governance of useful, usable, and appropriate content in an experience.
Designers...

How do you visualize abstract concepts without concrete terms?
Designers...

How do you visualize abstract concepts without concrete terms?

Make us look hip!
Designers...

How do you visualize abstract concepts without concrete terms?

We’re traditional, but not conservative.

Make us look hip!
More

Designers...

How do you visualize abstract concepts without concrete terms?

We’re traditional, but not conservative.

Make us look hip!
More like Designers...

How do you visualize abstract concepts without concrete terms?

We’re traditional, but not conservative.

Make us look hip!
More like Apple Designers...

How do you visualize abstract concepts without concrete terms?

We’re traditional, but not conservative.

Make us look hip!
More like Apple?
More like Apple?
More like Apple?
More like Apple’s “message architecture”

Confident but approachable; an accessible market leader

Simple

Minimal detail with clean, streamlined, unfussy ID

Inviting, friendly, supportive but not fawning
Content strategy can help you communicate.
Content strategy can help you communicate—in less time, money, and stress.
Question:

How do you visualize abstract concepts without concrete terms?
Answer:

Use a message architecture: prioritized brand attributes that stem from a shared vocabulary.
Prioritize key messages
Design, write, label, and organize around those messages
Get it *all* right in fewer rounds of revision
Result?

Invest in content strategy now to preserve time and budget for design later.
Okay. How are we going to pay for this?
Fewer rounds of creative revision easily pay for content strategy-driven concepting... especially if your client uses words to communicate.
Words are cheaper than comps.
Content strategy helps you sell your clients on predictability.
Predictability helps *them*

- Plan for photo shoots
- Anticipate content types
- Gather testimonials
- Write to exact specs for keywords & character counts
Predictability helps you

• Design for specific content types and character counts
• Anticipate UGC structure
• Create more interesting templates
Design supports content types and lengths!
Layout offers context!
Templates accommodate—not fight—user-generated content!
Lucy Power Cardio Pant II

By Lucy #214275

Price: $78.00

Select Color
- Lucy Black / Fiji Blue

Select Size
- View sizing chart

QTY
- 1

Add to Cart

Add to Wish List
Email a Friend
Share on Facebook

Product Details

Our best gym pants now available in Lucy Powermax™

Get cutting edge performance with Lucy's Power Cardio Pant II. Now comes in the sleek and flawless fit of Lucy Powermax™, including moisture management, ultimate compression and four-way stretch. Plus, with a lower rise and a sleek, chic fit, this high-tech pant has the power of fashion on its side.

- Lucy Powermax™
- Ultimate compression
- Inseam: Reg: 32 1/2", Tall: 35 1/2", Short: 30 1/2"

Lucy Fit

Sleek
Form fitting through the hip and thigh for peak performance and muscle support; ideal for high-intensity activities.

Lucy Features

- Color-Inhibiting
- Core Compression

COMPLETE THE OUTFIT

[Image showing various outfit options]
Content and design that share a message architecture drive a more cohesive and consistent user experience.
Welcome to the Harvard Club

⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐ A Platinum Club of America

Whether it's a once-in-a-lifetime family occasion, the punctuation mark on a career milestone, the chance to listen to a brilliant scientist or scholar, or a game of squash, there's no place quite like the Harvard Club of Boston. Independent, nonprofit, and dedicated to our mission since 1906, we're the only Platinum alumni club in Massachusetts. When you're done browsing our site, come in and see why.
Clean

Minimalist

Laid back
IAs & PMs...

How do you plan for the future if you don’t know what you currently have—or what you need?
Vision
Strategy? Tactics?
What do we have?
Is it still good?
Do we even need it?
How will we get more?
Do folks even like it?
And how do you budget by page count if you don’t know how many pages you need to express the main points, capture a user’s profile, or complete interactions?
Content strategy!
Develop a quantitative and qualitative content audit
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content manager</th>
<th>Last updated</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Content type</th>
<th>Element type</th>
<th>Missing</th>
<th>Outdated</th>
<th>Incorrect</th>
<th>Double</th>
<th>Char count</th>
<th>Notes/Issues/Reasons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wendy</td>
<td>Aug-10</td>
<td>Business acumen</td>
<td>Article</td>
<td>Headline</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Body copy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100-500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Image</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Quote</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50-100</td>
<td>seems too long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Quote attribution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alan</td>
<td>Mar-09</td>
<td>PR</td>
<td>Announcements</td>
<td>Headline</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;50</td>
<td>need to archive old news</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Body copy</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100-500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Image</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Quote</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Announcements</td>
<td>Headline</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Body copy</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100-500</td>
<td>no related story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Image</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50-100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Announcements</td>
<td>Headline</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Body copy</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>500-1000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Image</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Announcements</td>
<td>Headline</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Image</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Announcements</td>
<td>Headline</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Body copy</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100-500</td>
<td>some answers incorrect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>FAQ</td>
<td>Body copy</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Image</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zeke</td>
<td>Apr-09</td>
<td>PR</td>
<td>Announcements</td>
<td>Headline</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Body copy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100-500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Image</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50-100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>Apr-06</td>
<td>How-to</td>
<td>Article</td>
<td>Headline</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Body copy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>500-1000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Image</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Conduct a head count
• Conduct a head count
• Check parity of length and consistency in structure
• Conduct a head count
• Check parity of length and consistency in structure
• Evaluate quality against the message architecture
Is content brand-appropriate, current, and relevant?
Result?

Content strategy drives more comprehensive sitemaps, wireframes, and gap analysis.
Because you deserve to know that too.

In advance.
Result?

Content strategy informs brand-appropriate calls to action & site-wide nomenclature.
Result part 2: opportunity

• ID new content types
• prep the client for them
• upsell case studies
• gather testimonials
Budget?

Sell your client on not wasting their money.

They invested in a new look because they needed to say something new, right?
But wait!
But wait!

They *already have* writers in the marketing department!
OH NOES!
OH NOES!
Content strategy is metaphorical bacon.
Writing is only one tactical part of content strategy. It doesn’t ask strategic questions. Internal resources lack an outside perspective.
Search engine marketers...

How do you write meta and ad copy when the copy for fulfillment pages keeps changing?
And where should the user experience begin?
Content strategy can help search engine marketing “hook” users more quickly to deliver higher conversions.
• Map ad copy to the message architecture
• Translate meta content for tone, not just keywords
Social media consultants...

How do you get your client to stop talking about themselves and genuinely engage?
Good conversation demands good content strategy.

(Hi, inbound marketing?)
message architecture
editorial style guidelines
+ editorial calendar

a consistent multichannel presence
Hello

I'm Little MOO - the bit of software that will be managing your order with moo.com. It will shortly be sent to Big MOO, our print machine who will print it for you in the next few days. I'll let you know when it's done and on its way to you.

Remember, I'm just a bit of software. So, if you have any questions regarding your order please first read our Frequently Asked Questions or contact customer services (who are real people!)

Thanks,
Little MOO, Print Robot
Result?

- Prepare for seasonal themes
- Instill a workflow in organizational culture
- Maintain fresh, search engine-friendly content
Content strategy drives demand—and results.
What do you get out of this?

- More air-tight solutions
- Save time, budget, and energy on iteration
- Cohesive, consistent UX
- Higher conversions
No peanut butter, just happiness.

(For you, users, & clients)
Thank you!

Margot Bloomstein
@mbloomstein
margot@appropriateinc.com
www.slideshare.net/mbloomstein
Twitter: #contentstrategy

All logos and pictures are property of their respective owners.