Content Strategy Report

Women’s Center of Greater Lansing

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This content strategy report is designed to provide the Women’s Center of Greater Lansing with a clear understanding of the effectiveness of the content that is on the official website as well as strategies for improving and maintaining this content.

The report has been structured into three main sections, first is the Content Audit section which analyzes the effectiveness of the current website content, second is the Recommendation section which includes recommendations for creating, restructuring and organizing content, and finally is the Proposed Plan for Maintaining and Creating Content which provides a recommended schedule for how to update the website so that all content is accurate.

The Women’s Center of Greater Lansing is a private, non-profit organization that provides services to women in the greater Lansing area. Its mission as an organization is to help women realize their potential. This is done by offering support groups, counseling services, and various workshops and seminars; all of which empower women to take hold of their lives and improve their current situation.

The Women’s Center of Greater Lansing’s website has two main objectives:
- to get public support; mainly through money donations, but also with volunteers and interns
- provide women in need of help with information about their organization; in hopes that the information will be useful, or that they will seek further help from the center.
This goal of this content strategy report is to provide the Women’s Center of Greater Lansing with the resources needed to understand how the website can fulfill its objectives as effectively as possible.
A content audit of the current content on the Women's Center has been conducted. This means that all of the content on the website (links, pages, lists, widgets, pdfs) was recorded. This audit can be used to understand what content is currently on the website, and how the content is functioning in regards to the goals of the website.

The content audit was approached by dividing the website into twelve sections. Within each section the content was critically read and certain characteristics were analyzed—including layout, navigation, and, most importantly, whether or not the information displayed fit the organization and the website objectives.

In addition, the following characteristics of content were assessed and recorded:

- content type
- topic of the content
- who maintains the content
- date of creation
- date the content was last updated
- audience
- purpose of content
- if the content is redundant, trivial, or outdated
- any additional notes (mostly about the content and purpose not aligning, or serious problems with content that could not be discussed in any other section)
The audit spreadsheet is clearly labeled with each of these headings. The content is organized according to the page it is found on, and how deep content is within the site. For example, 1 would be the home page, 1.1 would be content on that homepage (1.1.1 would be a page that was linked to on the homepage). The complete audit has been recorded on a spreadsheet and is included in Appendix 1.

There are several things that are effective about the content that is already created on the website. The first is the “News Flash” content (see line 1.1 on the content audit in appendix I). This content appears to be updated often according to what is going on at or for the Women’s Center. The unique position of the content at the top of the homepage draws attention, which is the purpose of the content. The important thing about this content is that it should always have a clear audience in mind. We suggest this audience always be donors and volunteers.

The Google Calendar widget on the home page (see line 1.7 in content audit) is another example of content that is effective, according to the goals of the Women’s Center website to inform women of what the Women’s Center Of Greater Lansing can do for them. This content is addressed for women who want to utilize the center’s resources and services and gives an appropriate amount of information for someone to understand where, how, and when to participate in the classes and other services that the Women’s Center has to offer. This is an important and useful tool that one part of the website audience can utilize, however this tool might also help to inform the other part of the website audience (the donors and volunteers) of upcoming fundraisers and other related events.
The “Get Involved” page of the website (see line 10.5 in content audit) is one of the most important pages of the site, because it is the main page with content that will encourage involvement from the community, part of the goal of the website. Aspects of the section effectively motivate people to donate to the center or to volunteer for the center. The content goes straight into how to donate, with the first part of the page being a simple one click online money donation. This expels any potential confusion about how to donate online, because the steps have been made clear and obvious at first glance. The page also includes text, which explains why it is important that people donate to the center. This is an important aspect of the content because it is through this type of content which clearly guides users’ decision making that the center’s website will fulfill their mission to influence others into donating or otherwise getting involved with the center.

Within the “About Us” section is “What the Women’s Center Means to Me” (see line 2.4 in the content audit). This is a short testament from a previous client stating her gratitude for the Women’s Center and how it has changed her life. This is effective towards both objectives of the website. Personal statements like this have the power to influence the public to contribute to the Women’s Center, allowing them to see the good in the center and influence them to donate money or time; as well as influence individual seeking help. If a woman sees this testament it could make her believe that with help from the center she too can improve herself.

All the content of the website must support the two functions of the website, which are getting public support mainly through money donations and providing information to women in need of help. While the previous content is working well to achieve these goals of the Women’s Center there is some content that is not.
The content audit revealed that much content is outdated. For example, the “News Releases” (see lines 8.1 - 8.11) page does not have a news release that is dated after March 2009. The purpose of this page is to inform audience (particularly stakeholders and potential donors) of the progress of the Women’s Center and to show the worth of the Center. However, this outdated content sends the wrong message; the message that the Women’s Center is not active or involved within the community currently, which is certainly not the case. This wrong impression could dissuade potential donors and volunteers from contributing to the Women’s Center. In addition, the purpose of this page is difficult to differentiate from the purpose of the “Feature Articles” page (see lines 6.1 - 6.11 in the content audit) and the “Newsletter Page” (see line 7 in the content audit), because all appear to be about news. In order to solve both of these problems, first the news content should be updated more frequently and second combine the “Newsletter” and “News Release” pages together. This page could be updated whenever a newsletter was sent out, and also whenever larger news stories needed to be reported between newsletter updates. This restructuring of the pages would allow for the content to be updated more frequently and would help alleviate the confusion between the three pages that seem to be about news.

There are also three other instances where outdated content has become detrimental to the purpose of the website. These pages are Future Fundraising Events (see line 1.14.1 in the content audit), Ongoing Groups (see line 1.13.1 in the content audit), and the Winter Class Schedule (see line 1.4 in the content audit). The Ongoing Groups page and the Winter Class Schedule page is important for women who wish to utilize the center to know what services and resources are available through the Women’s Center, as well as when
and where these services are offered. Since the schedule changes depending on the time of year, it is important that this content is updated frequently so that the content is reliable. Similarly, the Future Fundraising Events page does not include specific dates on certain events, and also seems to include events that have already past. Including past events on all of these pages that are supposed to be advertising current or future events signals to the audience that this content is not accurate. It is essential to be constantly updating this content.

difficult navigation

A large portion of the Get Involved page (see line 10.5 in the content audit) is content dedicated to explaining and promoting two fundraising groups called the Founding Mothers and Founding Men. Many links direct people to content that explains the process of being a founding mother or man and encourages new donors to become a founding mother or man. However, navigating to and through these sections is difficult. There are many repeating links within the content that bring the user back to the same information, for example within the content titled One of A Hundred Founding Mothers (see line 1.11.1 in the content audit) there is a link to a list of other Founding Mothers called Our Team (see line 1.11.2 in the content audit). This link is only accessible through the One of A Hundred Founding Mothers page, yet in this Our Team content (see line 1.11.2.1 in the content audit) there is a link that says “Learn More” (see 1.11.2.2 in the content audit) which links directly back to the One of A Hundred Founding Mothers page. This repetition of information is redundant, and the whole process of finding out about these donor groups—as well as being influenced to be part of the group—become difficult and frustrating. In addition, the navigation when on the Founding Men page is not parallel to the navigation on the Founding Women page, so users who are familiar with one way of navigation
on one page may have difficulties finding the information they require on the other. This difficult navigation could result in potential donors not actually committing to become a founding mother or man. In order to remedy this, navigation should be condensed and repetitive links should be removed. Combining both the Founding Women and Founding Men pages into one page is an effective way to do this. This page would contain information pertinent to both groups of donors, and could then contain a link to pages that detailed the unique aspects of each group (including a list of current founding members).

The Services and Resources page is another important part of the website, because it influences how the public will use and access the center. There are a lot of great links to helpful resources that women as well as youth can check out. Items include education resources, health care information, job seeking information and counseling services. However, because there is so much information to navigate through, it is a little difficult for women to locate what they are exactly looking for. For example, if a first time user wanted to know information about child care, she would have to navigate through two or more pages just to be directed to another link. The information within the content provides audience with the appropriate amount of information to understand how to utilize the Center, but because of the sheer volume of the information and lack of navigation it is difficult to access everything an individual may need. Our group would recommend that the site be broken down further into more specific categories that make the content clear to reduce excess navigation. This way, there will be tabs with site specific information for quick and easy access.

The “Get involved” section of the website is the most important part of the site, as it is the main objective of the center’s website. All aspects of the section must serve as
effective ways to motivate people to donate to the center or get more directly involved in the center. A main part of this section is the money donations. The money donations can be done either online, by phone, or by mail. This is essential to the website, because getting money donations is the most important objective of the organization’s website. And with the center being in much need of money, this puts even more stress on the important of this content. It must be displayed and organized in a way that will enhance opportunities and people’s desire to donate. Unfortunately there has not been an online money donation in a long time—this is obviously a problem. This tells us that there is something wrong with how this information is being displayed. It might be confusing that the information on donating to the organization is found under the “Get involved” tab. Often, when we think of involving ourselves we think of a more active involvement such as volunteering. Though there are two links found on the homepage called “donate” they are very small and possibly overlooked. This could be solved by adding a separate tab labeled “Donate”.

The content audit shows a pattern of redundancy in several areas of the website. Redundancy can lead to confusing navigation for users, as well as can create problems for a content updater because rather than updating one piece of content, there are several pieces that must be updated throughout the whole site. This might also lead to outdated content, if some pieces of content are updated frequently and other places with similar content are forgotten about or ignored.

The first area of repetition is within the multiple pages dedicated to describing current classes and workshops.
This information is repeated in several areas:
- Fall 2010 and Winter 2011 Computer Classes and Schedule (see 1.4.1 in the content audit)
- Groups and Workshops (see 1.3 in the content audit)
- On-Going Groups (see 1.13.1 in the content audit)
- Google Calendar (see 1.7 in the content audit)
- Services Resources (see 3 in the content audit)

This repetition of information on groups, workshops, and classes becomes difficult to understand. There is no clear place to go for information about the classes. One of the goals of the Women’s Center website is to provide women with information about the resources and classes that the Center offers, the redundancy of this information actually works against this goal. Not only because much of the content is outdated, but also because it is difficult to locate. To make information more accessible, all content regarding any kind of class should be combined onto one page. The classes and workshops could be organized by type, and the page could also include the Google Calendar showing when and where the classes took place. This way of organizing the content would not only make finding information easier for users, but also easy for the content updater to ensure that all content is current and accurate.

The “Contact Us” page provides the appropriate information for getting in contact with the Women’s Center. The link to Cata’s number 1 bus is broken, which could be a problem for someone who needs to take the bus but does not know the routes. “Contact Us” is found all throughout the website, on top of the homepage, on the bottom of the homepage, as a link within the “About us” section, and as a link “contact” within many sections of the website.
The “About us” section is a very important part of this website. People with little or no knowledge about the Women’s Center will first click here to familiarize themselves with the organization. It is critical that this section accurately and effectively describes the Women’s Center, its mission, and any other information that can be used to influence the public to get involved, and influence women in need of help to further explore the center. Currently, “About us” (see line 2 in content audit) contains five main parts:

- a brief description of the organization’s mission, and what it is they do
- contact information, directions, and hours of the center
- a list of the people involved in running the women’s center
- frequently asked questions regarding the women’s center
- a client’s personal statement about what the women’s center means to her.

Though all the content within this section fulfills the website missions of gaining public support and providing the tools to women in need to get help, it does not do it in the most effective way. The “Contact Information” does not contribute to the mission, goals, and overall purpose of this organization; though it is helpful information, it does not fit in with the rest of the content found on “About us”, which does describe the organization and its existence. The way that this page is laid out does little to grab the users attention. The links listed on the bottom of the page provide nothing more than words, making this further information seem uninteresting. It is ineffective in captivating the audience to further explore this page.
recommendations

Based on our research into the content that already exists on the website, as well as the research into the use of branding there are several recommendations that we have proposed to make changes and additions to the website. These recommendations will act as a way to improve the function of the website, so that it will better fulfill the goals of the Women’s Center of Greater Lansing. The recommendations are as follows:

• Move the website to a WordPress platform.
• Combine the News Release page with the Newsletter page.
• Restructure navigation of “Donate” and “Get Involved” Pages.
• Revise “About Us” and “Contact Us” Page
• Combine all information about classes onto one page.
• Add a search function to the website.

In the following paragraphs we have explained these recommendations in further detail.

move the website to a WordPress platform

A majority of the areas on the website that are preventing the goals of the Women’s Center from being accomplished seem to occur because of the current workflow. All of the content must be updated by one individual in charge of the site, because she is the only individual who has the knowledge to use the website program. This individual is only a volunteer, which makes it difficult to require her to complete all the necessary updates and website maintenance the center needs on a regular basis. To solve this issue, the quickest fix would be to move the website to a WordPress template.
On a website that is created using WordPress, a page can be updated without the use or knowledge of HTML or CSS. To add content to a page, an individual uses an interface that is like creating a blog post or using a word processor program like Microsoft Word. This means that anyone who has access to the WordPress account will be able to edit or upload content easily. Once this change has been made to the website, updates to the websites could be made quicker, which would help to lessen the pattern of outdated content on the website, because updating would no longer require the expertise of only one individual. In addition, WordPress has something called Search Engine Optimization, which means WordPress inflates the amount of times the website appears as a search result by choosing “keywords” for the website pages based on the content within them.

combine the News Release Page with the Newsletter Page

The current content that is on both the News Release Page and Newsletter Page has not been updated frequently enough, and also are too similar and cause confusion about the purpose of each page. The purpose of both the News Release Page and the Newsletter Page are to advertising the exciting news and events that are going on in the Center. Because of this similarity in purpose, the two pages should be combined to create one. This would eliminate the confusion as well as give the News section more information, so it will be updated more frequently.

The information presented in the news section should be made to further fulfill the websites mission of recruiting donations and acting as a resource for women in need. Simply looking at these current sections of the website, a user (either a potential donor or a client) would not know why this content is important, or if the information pertains to them.
Providing a few brief bullet points of what was touched on within each update could help better explain the importance of each newsletter, and whether or not it pertains to a specific person. This would clean up the news section and emphasize important information covered by each piece of information, allowing users to more effectively find information that they want or need.

**Restructure navigation of “Get Involved” and “Donate Now” pages**

A big issue with this website is appropriately showing, through the websites content, the main mission of the organization. The organization mission is to empower and help women in need. The goal of the website in fulfilling that mission is by getting the public involved through donating their money and time. In giving a survey, which aimed at understanding how the public perceived the website’s purpose to be, we found that though it was clear that the website is acting as an online resource for women in need, it was not clear that fundraising was a key aspect of this website. In fact, one surveyee states (in regard to a question about what was disliked about the website): “The only thing I did not like on the “Get involved” page was it seemed it was money donation oriented. The organization states that they rely on volunteer workers, but it did not list positions it was needing volunteer workers for. A lot of people cannot donate money, but can donate time and talent.” In this statement we can see that not only did this person not recognize fundraising as one of the objectives of this website, but also that the way in which the “Get involved” section was laid out was displeasing. The survey also mentions the difference between those that can volunteer money and those that can volunteer time. This suggests that separating information regarding volunteering and donating may be beneficial.
We suggest that leaving “Donate” out of the “Getting involved” section would better clear up this confusion. Instead, “Donate” should be a separate tab. The “Founding mother’s” and “Founding man” groups could be placed under this new tab, because these groups are mainly major money fundraisers for the center (rather than active participation through volunteering or doing an internship).

As stated in the audit, the “Founding Mothers” and “Founding Man” sections of the website also contain confusing navigation, many repeating links bringing the user back to the same information, and inconsistent structure between two similar fund raising groups. If individuals are looking for specific information, this confusing navigation could make finding information difficult to find. In order to remedy this, navigation should be condensed and repetitive links should be removed. Combining both the Founding Women and Founding Men pages into one page is an effective way to do this. This page would contain information pertinent to both groups of donors, and could then contain a link to pages that detailed the unique aspects of each group (including a list of current founding members). Being that these two groups are more towards financial donations to the center it would be more effective to take them out of the “Get involved” tab and place them under the “Donate” tab, which we suggest creating in addition to “Get involved” and which is described in more detail in the following paragraph.

Cindie is the only paid employee of the center; all other 20+ people involved are volunteers. But even with little money being given to those working for the center, they are still in great need of funding. Though the section of the website titled “Get involved” focuses on obtaining donations and getting the public involved, it might be beneficial to include something about the center’s funding needs in the “About us” section—as it is a big part about the center.
recommendations

A more detailed explanation behind the concept of a non-profit and what that means for those involved could better explain the need for funding, and hopefully influence people to donate. Information such as how the organization gets money, and how difficult is it to get money may make the need for money more explicit and increase donations.

revise “About Us” and “Contact Us” page

The “About us” section is the perfect spot to grab the attention of a visitor. However, the content currently under “About us” is more supplementary information (such as contact information and people involved in running the center), important yes, but not attention grabbing and influential. The contact information should be taken off this part of the website and instead put on the homepage in an easily identifiable spot. Being on the homepage, this information is easily accessible and recognizable. Having a second link within the “About us” section is unnecessarily repetitive. The link labeled “what the women’s center mean to me” is a good start at tapping in to the emotions of those browsing the site, in hopes of moving them to donate; or influencing a women seeking help to further explore what the women’s center has to offer. However, being a static link and lacking any ascetically pleasing creativity, this link, and the page, is easily overlooked. If this page started with a quote from a client, or started with a client’s personal statement, rather than having that as a separate link at the bottom, it could intrigue and capture the users attention. Even more effective could be creating an audio file of a client talking about their experience at the center. This would be a powerful introduction to the Women’s center and provide an even more real feel for the life changes the center can provide.
To improve the appeal of the “People of the women’s center” you can incorporate more information of those involved such as pictures and biographies. This lets the user get a feel for those they may be interacting with, which makes it more likely for them to get involved if they know more about the people already involved.

“Contact us” is found all throughout the website, on top of the homepage, on the bottom of the homepage, as a link within the “About us” section, and as a link “contact” within “becoming a founding mother”, “becoming an intern or do you practicum at the women’s center”, and “Volunteer”. This is a lot of unnecessary repetition. As long as the center’s contact information is noticeable on the homepage, it is not necessary to include links all throughout the website. However, it is still important to mention that if someone has any questions, to make sure they know that they can contact the center. We would recommend that instead of multiple locations for the contact information, all of the contact locations could be consolidated into one tab at the top of the page. This way, it will be in one spot and no one will have to search through web pages in order to see how to contact the center. Also, it will reduce confusion and unnecessary confusion for the user and make contacting Cindie very easy.

combine all information about classes and schedules onto one page

As mentioned in the content audit, the classes and schedules for classes are present in several different areas which causes difficulty in understanding which schedule to follow and also makes the content difficult to update.
As a solution, combining all of the information about classes onto one page would be ideal. This information should only be present on one page, which could be accessed directly off of the home page. The page can be titled “Available Classes for Women”, so that it clearly displays the purpose of the page, and what information will be included on the page. Within this page should be a schedule for the current classes, as well as the information on how to sign up for the future classes.

adding a search function to the website

The final recommendation for the website is to add a search function to the website. The website is full of great information for both audience types (donors and clients) that the website hopes to reach. Currently though, there is no way to search for specific information that an individual is looking for. This lack of a search function may make finding specific information frustrating to find on the site, because of the vast amount of information on the site. In order to help users locate information that will be relevant for them, adding a search function will be beneficial.
Proposed Plan for Creating and Maintaining Content

This section serves to provide a suggested plan for updating and maintaining content to keep the website updated and accurate.

Development Plan

Because there is a lot of content and organization that needs to be updated on the website, a schedule for this organization has been provided.

- To move the website to a WordPress platform, and to restructure the navigation, an intern or volunteer with web design skills should be found to complete this as soon as possible.
- To update the written content regarding the About Us section, Cindie should write this before the website has been restructured.
government and maintenance of content

Once the website has been restructured, the work flow can change from the current structure (Cindie or other Volunteers create the content, Cindie edits, and a single Volunteer updates the webpage) to a structure where Cindie or another Volunteer creates content, Cindie edits, and the Volunteer or Cindie can upload the content to the website. Cindie will be responsible for the maintenance of the website.

This is a proposed schedule for how the website should be maintained in the future.

- Once a month Cindie should go through all of the content on the website to look for any broken links, images, or other problems with the website to be fixed.
- Once a month Cindie should go through all of the events and classes to delete any information about a class or event that has already started or has been completed.
- Once a month a news article (except for the months when a newsletter is released) should be created and uploaded to the website by either Cindie, a volunteer, or an intern depending on what event will be covered.
- Whenever a new event or class is coming up, the individual in charge of the event should create an explanation of the class or event to post on the schedule page.
- Whenever a fundraising or awareness event has taken place an individual who was present, whether Cindie or an intern, should create a report of the event and its outcomes to update to the events page.
The Women’s Center of Greater Lansing’s website has a lot of great and useful content. However, there are several issues that are prohibiting the website from fulfilling its goals as effectively as possible. These issues are difficult navigation, outdated content, and an inefficient workflow. This report has provided detailed descriptions of how to solve these issues, so that the website can function as well as possible.
Appendix I

the complete content audit spreadsheet