

Surviving and Thriving During a Web Site Relaunch

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Why Are You Here Today?

What We Will Cover

- Case study for Ball State's Web relaunch
- What you should think about when approaching a redesign or relaunch
- Questions from the audience

Background

- Ball State is a 4-year public institution in Indiana.
- Student population = 20,000
- Relaunched bsu.edu in October 2007 – was an 18-month process involving every division on campus.
- **Relaunch**=redesign + so much more

Background: Why a Relaunch?

Our perfect storm:

- Ball State was launching a new branding initiative
- University had adopted a new strategic plan
- Our old CMS was outdated and we were about to lose support from the vendor (220+ units using the old CMS in a managed, decentralized administration of the Web site)

Background: Our Resources

- Web site development roles
 - Marketing & Communications – overall strategy and messages for the site
 - Web team (3 full-time people)
 - M&C staff (all staff have some Web responsibilities)
 - M&C: A division of Enrollment, Marketing & Communications
 - Information Technology – CMS support and programming, technical training
 - Two programmers (each w/ about ¼ time devoted to Web)
 - One technical trainer

Background: Project Scope

- Relaunch – not simply a redesign
 - Web strategy developed
 - New CMS selected and deployed
 - New information architecture (user centric)
 - New design
 - New content (and approach to content)
 - New Web site policies and procedures drafted/approved
- Project start: April 2006
- Phase 1 Site Launch: October 2007



Sept. 2007

- Too much clutter – 100+ links
- No focus
- Where is/what is the brand?

October 2007

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Background: Developing a Plan

- Pulling together a team
- Identifying major stakeholders
- Drafting of Web policies leading to cabinet approval
- 5 major phases (follow for a quick blueprint)

Phase 1

- Discovery
 - Campus and audience intake (meetings, usability testing, focus groups, surveys, etc . . .)
 - Site inventory
 - Competitor analysis
 - Examining Web sites of aspirant schools
 - Requirement gathering, researching, and choosing a Web content management system
 - Starting a Relaunch blog

Phase 2

- Planning
 - Developing a Web strategy/policies
 - Developing an information architecture
 - Building and testing wireframes
 - Developing a plan for a phased launch (likely will not be able to launch everything at one time)
 - Planning production schedules (be realistic)
 - Planning for touchpoints with key stakeholders at appropriate times

Phase 3

- Creating
 - Writing content
 - Testing and choosing a design
 - Gathering and taking photographs
 - Copyediting

Phase 4

- Building and launching
 - Building templates
 - Programming functionality into CMS
 - Inputting content and assets
 - Testing (usability, functionality, etc . . .)
 - Training
 - Site review
 - “Go live”

Phase 5

- Maintenance and follow-up can include
 - The beginning of next planned phases of development
 - Training web editors how to use the new system and/or templates
 - Refining your systems, templates, processes, etc . . .
 - On-going reviews
 - For our effort: We hired 1 project manager, 1 writers, some freelancers, and additional students to help “relaunch” 220+ other sites

Background: Our Results

- Undergraduate applications up 38 percent
- Increase in the size of the freshman class and admission standards
- Web site got high marks in survey of freshmen and their parents
- Web site continues to be widely praised among all campus audiences
- National awards

Getting **Your** Project Started

Now the stuff that is not in the Web site textbooks . . . **10 tips from someone who has probably seen it all!**

Getting a Good Start

1. Achieve clarity first.
2. Focus on audience needs.
3. Recruit the right allies.
4. Educate friend and foe.
5. Be realistic about your timeline and budget.

Getting a Good Start/2

6. Begin with content.
7. Communicate, communicate, communicate.
8. Test, test, test.
9. Work starts when the site launches.
10. Go back to point 1.

Resources

College of William & Mary, re.web blog: www.wm.edu/reweb

Joly, Karine: "10 Tips to a Successful Website Redesign": tinyurl.com/554u47

Stoner, Michael: "Redesign or Redevelopment? Be Clear What Your Site Needs Before You Start Work": tinyurl.com/6lk26w

Stoner, Michael: "Mistakes Institutions Make in Website Redesigns": tinyurl.com/6fop4d

Thank You

Questions?

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