

**A NEW DIGITAL STRATEGY AT CANADA WIDE MEDIA:  
CASE STUDY OF THE RELAUNCH OF *BCBUSINESS ONLINE***

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

This project report describes the motivation and the processes that Canada Wide Media, the biggest magazine publisher in Western Canada, followed to build a digital business that complemented its print publishing business. This report is a case study of the relaunch of *BCBusiness Online*, the first test of Canada Wide Media's new digital strategy. It describes the obstacles and requirements that a magazine publisher needs to take into consideration before and after entering the online world. Specifically, this study explores the importance of integrating a Digital Media Division into the existing workflows within the company to deal with copyright issues, resource management, content production, traffic measurement, and advertising models and rates. Finally it describes and assesses the temporary and long-term solutions that were implemented, and how the lessons learned contributed to changing in the company's overall strategy for improving the delivery of future websites.

**Keywords:** Digital strategy; Online publishing; Digital Media, Magazine publishing; Online marketing; Multimedia tools; Website development

**Subject Terms:** Online magazines; Online publishing; Web 2.0

## **DEDICATION**

To my mom and sisters for being a constant source of inspiration, and to Mario for his infinite patience, love, and invaluable support.

Para mi mamá y hermanas por ser una fuente de constante inspiración y, sobretodo, a Mario por su infinita paciencia, amor e invaluable apoyo.

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# CONTENTS

<b>Approval .....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Dedication .....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Contents.....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>List of Figures .....</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Canada Wide Media.....	1
Organization of This Report.....	4
<b>Chapter 1: Canada Wide Media Welcomes Online Publishing .....</b>	<b>6</b>
Introduction.....	6
Background.....	6
Canada Wide Media's Goals .....	8
Content Strategy .....	11
Content Management System Strategy.....	13
Advertising Strategy .....	15
Marketing Strategy.....	16
Digital Media Division.....	18
<b>Chapter 2: The Relaunch of <i>BCBusiness Online</i>.....</b>	<b>23</b>
General Objectives.....	24
<i>BCBusiness Online</i> New Design Strategy .....	26
<i>BCBusiness Online</i> Content Strategy .....	32
Magazine Content.....	32
Free vs. Paid Content.....	34
Content Organization.....	36
Web-only Content.....	37
User-Generated Content.....	39
<i>BCBusiness Online</i> Marketing Strategy .....	42
Primary Target Market.....	42
Online Communities.....	43
Online Traffic.....	46
SEO (Search Engine Optimization) Strategy .....	46

Web Analytics.....	48
Email Marketing.....	51
Social Media.....	53
Offline Promotions.....	55
<i>BCBusiness Online Advertising Strategy</i> .....	57
Online Rates.....	60
Advertising Management.....	63
Advertising Revenue Models.....	64
New Challenges.....	65
<b>Chapter 3: Lessons Learned</b> .....	<b>67</b>
Online Publishing is Not Print Publishing.....	68
Design Lessons.....	69
Content Production Lessons.....	71
Marketing Lessons.....	73
Advertising Lessons.....	75
More than a Magazine Publisher.....	77
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>81</b>
Present and Future of the Digital Media at Canada Wide.....	85
<b>Reference List</b> .....	<b>86</b>



## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. <i>BCBusiness Online</i> homepage July 2007. Reproduced with permission of Canada Wide Media Ltd.....	28
Figure 2. <i>BCBusiness</i> eNewsletter “Need to Know.” Reproduced with permission of Canada Wide Media Ltd.....	52
Figure 3. Announcement of the relaunch of <i>BCBusiness Online</i> published in <i>BCBusiness</i> magazine July 2007. Reproduced with permission of Canada Wide Media Ltd. ....	55
Figure 4. Full-page ad in <i>BCBusiness</i> magazine July 2007. Reproduced with permission of Canada Wide Media Ltd.....	56
Figure 5. <i>BCBusiness Online</i> introductory rates after July 2007. Reproduced with permission of Canada Wide Media Ltd.....	61
Figure 6. <i>BCBusinessmagazine.com</i> online rates before July 2007. Reproduced with permission of Canada Wide Media Ltd. ....	62

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Internet and the World Wide Web have become essential parts of modern businesses. Websites have helped all kinds of industries to expand their brands to new audiences and places. For the publishing industry this reality is no different magazines and newspapers have found in websites an excellent way to sell, promote, increase exposure and advertising revenue, and supplement their brands. Newspapers and magazines have created flexible business models that combine print and digital publishing in order to maintain a competitive industry. However, the World Wide Web has also proven to be a challenging medium for attracting advertisers and audiences' attention: once a magazine is online, it is not only competing with other digital periodicals, but with all websites all over the world. Traditional publishers have to therefore constantly revise and implement new strategies in order to create strong and sustainable digital business models and overcome their competitors.

## **CANADA WIDE MEDIA**

In this report, I describe and analyze how Canada Wide Media planned and implemented its new digital media strategy. In order to attract readers and advertisers, Canada Wide Media determined that in addition to providing magazine content online, the company needed to create and deliver appealing online

exclusive content like blogs, slideshows, videos and podcasts; – that is to say, content that takes full advantage of the interactive potential of the digital medium. Canada Wide Media prepared itself to embrace to a new trade: digital publishing.

The goal of this report is twofold. In the first place, it will describe and analyze the relaunch of *BCBusiness Online* in order to provide a full account of the process for future projects within the company. Then, it will serve as an analysis that may be useful for other magazine publishers looking to move their businesses into the digital publishing arena. From May to August 2007, I worked as an intern at Canada Wide Media, which gave me the opportunity to participate in the first test model of the company's digital strategy: the relaunch of *BCBusiness Online*. New concerns and obstacles arose: copyright issues, resource constraints, new technical requirements, entirely different editorial processes and content delivery, traffic measurement and brand-new advertising models and rates. This report examines all of those obstacles and describes the temporary and long-term solutions that were implemented, it also assesses how the lessons learned in the relaunch of *BCBusiness* contributed to make changes in Canada Wide Media's overall strategy, improving the delivery of other sites that followed.

In 2006, Canada Wide Media, the biggest magazine publisher in Western Canada, determined its readiness to move past the building of one-off websites, and to build a digital business that would complement its print publishing business. Executives were well aware that creating digital products would be very different than creating printed publications, and that a successful business could not be built

by simply replicating their print magazines in a digital medium. With this understanding, they hired a team of external consultants<sup>1</sup> – a private web strategy firm – to advise on the development of a long-term business strategy that would take advantage of the company’s greatest assets – its content (boasting 50-plus magazine titles) and its human resources – while creating a new business for the future. In working with these consultants, Canada Wide Media defined a model for the creation and maintenance of four sites: *BCBusiness*, *TVWeek*, *GardenWise* and a corporate site. *BCBusiness Online* would be the first to utterly follow this template; in other words, it would be, with its lessons and successes, the litmus test for shaping new strategies for future sites. Canada Wide created a site strategy and development plan that would have contract developers build the initial sites while the company began building an in-house design, development, editorial, sales and marketing team to maintain and evolve the sites once built.

Canada Wide took the decision to relaunch a site for *BCBusiness* as the first trial of its digital strategy because many *BCBusiness* advertisers were already looking for opportunities to reach online audiences by packaging their print campaigns with online initiatives. *BCBusiness* is one of the most important publications at Canada Wide Media. For over thirty years the magazine has been dedicated to the analysis of the economy and business environment in the province of British Columbia; back in 1997, *BCBusiness* launched a website that was conceived more as a marketing tool than a new approach to publishing. By 2006,

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<sup>1</sup> Consultant will not be named due to confidentiality concerns.

the website did not look current and it did not represent a significant source of revenue for the magazine. The old *BCBusiness* site simply did not count with the technical resources to offer real solutions for clients, nor did it offer the company a viable business model for further growth. The solution, then, was to create a new website that served advertisers and audiences equally by communicating a powerful online representation of the brand, and by reflecting the modern times, in which interaction and dynamic media are the norm.

## **ORGANIZATION OF THIS REPORT**

In order to offer an extensive description and useful analysis of the incursion of Canada Wide Media into the online publishing world, this report is organized in three chapters: The first describes the strategy for building Canada Wide Media's digital media business. This chapter covers the goals and concerns that Canada Wide Media had at the beginning of the project. The main focus of this chapter is to make clear the challenges and opportunities that a traditional print publisher needs to take into consideration before entering into the online arena. This chapter also explains the formation of the Digital Media Division at Canada Wide Media as the main actor in the implementation of a digital strategy. The second chapter details the planning and implementation of the digital strategy applied for the first time to the relaunch of *BCBusiness Online*. This chapter focuses on the specific processes followed in areas like design, development, content and advertising strategies. The third chapter lists and analyzes the lessons learned after the relaunch of *BCBusiness Online* that then contributed to the understanding of the digital

world and to the development of future digital products at Canada Wide Media.

Finally, the conclusion summarizes how online publishing requires different processes and resources than print publishing, but at the same time needs to work in concordance with the print business in order to successfully build a sustainable business model.

# **CHAPTER 1: CANADA WIDE MEDIA WELCOMES ONLINE PUBLISHING**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The World Wide Web evolves at a fast pace, both in terms of tools and applications, and in how audiences engage with the medium. This presents new ways of thinking for traditional print publishers. Many publishers still consider digital media challenging and even intimidating, but others have taken advantage of the opportunities that the web offers as a complement or even enhancement to their print brands. This chapter outlines the opportunities, challenges and necessary changes that Canada Wide Media faced during the planning of its digital strategy, including the reorganization of human and technical resources and the revision of the ways that the company would use to measure success. The first part of this chapter will focus on the background, *i.e.* the factors that encouraged Canada Wide Media to renovate its digital strategies. The second section will list the goals that the company established as measurements of success of the digital strategy. The third section will be focused in the formation of the Digital Media Division as the key initiative for the development of the new digital business.

## **BACKGROUND**

Magazine publishers like Canada Wide Media know that they compete not only with other magazines, but also with all forms of entertainment media. The arrival

and prompt adoption of the Internet and the World Wide Web represented an entirely new form of media that brought with it more and stronger competition. The challenge that magazines now face is to maintain and grow advertising revenue and increase subscriptions, while also looking for new ways to use the Internet as a source of audience and revenue. After more than ten years of the World Wide Web, magazines still remain a strong medium; the fear of losing readership due to the Internet has diminished, and the concerns about losing advertising revenue are still present. Magazines have embraced new technology and magazine websites have become a necessary complement to their brands, because, as David Abrahamson (1999: 44) once predicted, “the future of magazines rests in the Internet and niche markets.” In the 21st century, magazines are in the middle of a major upheaval in communication, one distinguished by great technological advances that have bridged gaps in time and space between message and audience. Many fears and early challenges have evolved into opportunities as numerous publishers have found on the web an ideal medium for delivering more content to larger audiences – a medium where boundaries in geography, time and even language have almost disappeared.

Canada Wide Media has been publishing magazines for more than thirty years. The company, founded by Peter Legge, is the largest independent magazine publisher in Western Canada; it produces more than fifty titles: twelve magazines and twenty-nine custom publications for clients. Although the publisher, editors, designers and staff all know their trade well, the in-house knowledge regarding



digital media in general, and online magazines in particular, was limited. In order to enter to the online world with a strong business model, the company chose to bring consulting services that would give Canada Wide the guidance and recommendations needed for developing a new approach to online publishing.

In 2007, Canada Wide set out to launch a corporate site, three magazine websites and three e-newsletters. In conjunction with the consulting company, Canada Wide Media developed several strategies based on its existing resources, needs and future plans, focusing always on the main purpose of the web strategy at Canada Wide: to use digital media as a new tool for delivering content, expanding brands, and increasing audiences, thereby creating a new source of revenue for the company.

## **CANADA WIDE MEDIA'S GOALS**

Integrating digital content into its business model was not entirely new for Canada Wide Media. The company had made its first efforts in the late nineties with the creation of a website for *BCBusiness* magazine<sup>2</sup>. But at that time, the website was not truly considered part of the company's revenue model. The web remained a new medium that had not demonstrated its profitability, and the site's function was limited to marketing the print magazine, and as such, it was not considered a product in its own right. Websites at the time tended to be static and text-heavy, with just enough technical flexibility to promote a brand – that is, to offer basic

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<sup>2</sup> The address was [www.bcbusinessmagazine.com](http://www.bcbusinessmagazine.com) now redirects to the new website [www.bcbusinessonline.ca](http://www.bcbusinessonline.ca)

information about the magazine, the type of content and how to subscribe to it (by phone or regular mail). For many years before and after the dot-com bubble, Internet publishing was a high-risk enterprise. Thus, the company put on hold the integration of a digital media strategy in its business model.

By 2006, the Internet was more robust and the World Wide Web had grown at great speed: more and more computers had access to the web and more online tools and applications had been developed. Users were becoming more comfortable, and thus, more demanding. Little by little, book, magazine and newspaper publishers realized that they needed more than ever to create an online presence that offered more than basic information to visitors<sup>3</sup>. New websites needed to engage diverse audiences with “experiences” that included interactive content, regularly updated blogs, archive information, sharing tools and multimedia content like video.

According to the “Magazine 300 Annual Ranking Report 2006” (*Advertising Age* 2007), consumer magazines in US reported generating median 3% revenue from the Internet; the high end being at 33.3% (*Entrepreneur*) and the low end at 0.1% (*Smithsonian* and *Flying*). With these data in mind, the short-term goal for Canada Wide was to open innovative channels for generating more advertising revenue. The old *BCBusiness* website did not have the necessary elements to build a strong online presence; moreover, the website did not contribute to the overall profits of the magazine.

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<sup>3</sup> Van Duyne *et al* 2004 called this early type of website “brochureware”.

In the long-term, the web strategy first targeted the growth of audiences by making brands available in digital form by creating unique online properties (in websites, eNewsletters and multi-sites or “channels”). The main tactics to accomplish this goal included creating communities around the online brands; and offering quality content to attract and keep readers and, therefore, advertisers to the online properties. The online publications would showcase articles and images from the magazines, but would also offer web-exclusive content like audio podcasts, slideshows, and videos. And, in order to encourage participation and instant communication with the audience, all websites would include interactive tools (for example, user-generated comments) and social media applications (for instance, email to a friend or sharing in social networks like Facebook).

The second goal of the company’s web strategy was to increase the volume of its digital offerings – in effect, to create a “network” of products that could be used for cross-promotion. The company already had a variety of publishing and non-publishing services: custom magazines, brochures, booklets, newsletters, books and specialized graphic design services, sales and keynote speakers. After putting the digital media strategy in place, the company would be able to offer production and management of creative digital services, such as web programming, interactive design, and digital production of internal online magazine or to external clients. Furthermore, when the digital division got fully up and running, it would prioritize not only the creation of unique, popular content and tools including videos, podcasts, blogs, slideshows, interactive applications

(surveys, quizzes and games), but also search and sharing capabilities to be used and implemented on the company's sites. Having magazine content online would be, according to the strategy, a "given," and audiences would visit the website for a distinctly digital experience that would add value to their experience with the brand.

## **CONTENT STRATEGY**

Original content is one of the most valuable assets at Canada Wide; with more than fifty magazines, the company owns an extensive archive of original content. The creation of online magazine sites would provide a great opportunity to repurpose that content, making much of it available in different formats and therefore profitable again. This would be easiest to do with timeless content such as gardening information.

Most magazines produced by Canada Wide are consumer and trade titles that serve very specific niche markets<sup>4</sup>. In an interview<sup>5</sup>, Samantha Legge, the Vice President of Marketing and Digital Media at Canada Wide, emphasized that the magazine sites would continue to feature the same kind of content as the magazines themselves, in order to keep the target markets well defined and make easier the integration of products under the same brand. For example, *GardenWise Online* and *BCBusiness Online* would continue, respectively, featuring articles and

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<sup>4</sup> Canada Wide also owns consumer and trade titles like *BCBusiness*, *TVWeek*, *Granville*, *Pacific Golf*, etc. Moreover, Canada Wide produces a large number of custom publications like *Truck Logger: The Voice of the B.C. Forest Industry*, and *Promise: The Voice of St. Paul's Hospital Foundation*. For a complete list go to [www.canadawide.com](http://www.canadawide.com),

<sup>5</sup> Personal Interview April 11, 2008

multimedia material dedicated exclusively to gardening and businesses in British Columbia.

Certain old material presents challenges. It is often useful only as research material, and not for current matters on business or entertainment. Moreover, converting old files to new formats could be a long and arduous task that might not be completed in time for launch dates. Finally, renegotiating rights with writers, photographers and illustrators could become very complicated and, in some cases, unfeasible. Because of this, and because timeliness of content is often appealing, most consumer magazines online do not limit their content to repurposed articles from their print versions but choose to create new content that offers an added value to the brand: it was understood, additionally, that web users expect an interactive yet informative experience from the websites they visit. In this way, producing a regular offering of blogs, audio, and video would be a priority for the new digital media staff at Canada Wide.

New material, especially web-only and interactive material, provides the opportunity to engage people with the site and encourages them to offer opinions and suggestions on the kind of content they like. This situation leads a sense of community among readers, and makes the website a place where other readers with similar tastes and interests meet virtually. Producing new content also presents challenges in terms of resources required: on the one hand, the company would require at least one person per site who would be responsible for producing new content on regular basis; on the other, the company would have to acquire

electronic equipment and special software that is required in the production of digital content, such as podcasts or video.

## **CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM STRATEGY**

During the late nineties, websites were built in the basic HTML language. Since then, year after year, websites and the languages used to build them have become more complex in order to include diverse content like video and to boost the interactive capabilities of users. As websites became more complex, it became necessary to create systems that allowed content creators to submit content without requiring technical knowledge of HTML or any other programming languages. Today there are many tools and software packages, commonly called content management systems (CMS), that were created to store, manage, organize and publish digital content like text, audio, video and forum.

Canada Wide Media required a digital management system that allowed editors and writers to update, customize and upload content easily and quickly, which would help on the creation of content on a regular basis. Also, the company required a CMS that would be able to host many websites from only one database in order to make possible the content sharing among different Canada Wide Media sites.

The company laid out criteria for choosing a CMS would have to include the following:

*Easy to use* – The installation, customization and maintenance of the CMS should be easy to access by an in-house developer. It was also important that non-web experts could input and publish content using a user-friendly interface. Canada Wide also required a variety of different user access levels for writers, editors, coordinators and readers.

*Flexible* – Canada Wide needed a system that could be customized, yet that could offer a stable foundation for all the sites hosted on it. The system chosen needed to be also capable of hosting many sites and allowing separate administration of individual sites, so that editorial staff working on one site will not affect the content on other sites. The ability to share content or publish content in different sites (e.g., articles from *Granville* magazine could be published in *Granville* website and on the *GardenWise* website too) was another important factor in the decision to choose a CMS.

*Affordable* – A content management system is powerful and complex software that can be expensive to acquire and maintain. Canada Wide Media favoured the acquisition of free open-source software that could be modified by in-house staff as often as needed according to the company's necessities.

Based on these mentioned requirements, the consulting company recommended the use of Drupal<sup>6</sup> as the ideal content management system for Canada Wide new digital endeavour. Drupal is “open-source software distributed under the GPL (GNU General Public License) and is maintained and developed by

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<sup>6</sup> <http://drupal.org/>

a community of thousands of users and developers”<sup>7</sup>, which means that the software is free to use and modify. There are also free add-on modules that extend or enhance the core functionalities. Although Drupal technical support is not free, the growing and active online community and literature available makes it one of the most affordable content management systems (CMS) on the market. Moreover, Vancouver is a hotbed for Drupal developers, which would make easier to find a programmer with enough expertise.

## **ADVERTISING STRATEGY**

Canada Wide Media saw online publishing as an opportunity to increase its advertising revenue, to establish a digital business model, and to create sponsorship opportunities across its print and online brands. Advertising is the main source of revenue for custom and trade magazines. As well, a 2008 Online Publishing Survey from *Masthead* revealed that “nearly three out of four magazine publishers in Canada are using banner ads as a primary source of online revenue”<sup>8</sup>. Many of Canada Wide’s advertisers were interested in reaching a larger audience through online campaigns; Canada Wide had a clear opportunity to re-package its print and multimedia advertising in order to address advertisers demands.

The Magazine Publisher Association<sup>9</sup> reports that other factors entice advertisers to engage in online campaigns. Among the most important are lower

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<sup>7</sup> From <http://drupal.com/about>

<sup>8</sup> *Masthead*, January/February 2008

<sup>9</sup> MPA Accountability II Report, 2008.



costs than print, speed of implementation and ability to updates, interactivity with audiences, and measurability. The association also reports that the combination of print and online magazine is the most efficient driver for purchase intent and final purchases. According to Consterdine (2007: 3) “about eight out of every ten sites had gained advertisers online who did not advertise in the printed magazine”.

For Canada Wide, online advertising also presented some challenges, including: educating in-house sales force as well as advertisers about online advertising specifications and its differences from print; building enough traffic to increase the audience’s response to advertising; providing production services to advertisers that required them; managing online inventory; establishing standardized rates; and providing complete and clear reports on campaign results. These challenges and how Canada Wide Media dealt with them is detailed in the following chapters.

## **MARKETING STRATEGY**

The main goal of the online marketing strategy at Canada Wide Media was to create, promote and deliver the right digital products to the right target markets, thus increasing online traffic and translating it to advertising revenue. Online marketing works under the same principles as traditional marketing but uses digital tools and media for creating, pricing, promoting, and placing products through the World Wide Web.

Using online marketing tools and strategies, Canada Wide Media had the opportunity to reach a wider audience, create online brands for its products, increase traffic and increase advertising revenue. The most common tools in this pursuit are search optimization, email marketing, contests, giveaways, and blogging, which also present challenges because the management and implementation of online tools require time, knowledge and resources.

One of the most important tools used in online publishing are search engines. By making its sites search-friendly, Canada Wide Media would be able to promote its digital publications to people who are actively searching the web for related topics or products. By implementing specific techniques, namely, SEO rules, search engines will rank these sites at the top of related search results.

Other online marketing tools, such as Google Analytics, would allow Canada Wide Media to track popular content, advertising and promotion in real time.

Email marketing is one of the first steps in online marketing and promoting. Magazine subscriber lists provide the opportunity to create online distribution lists to promote the new sites, to raise awareness of the products that Canada Wide Media will offer even before they are launched. The consulting company recommended Constant Contact,<sup>10</sup> email marketing software, which is hosted online and its easy to use for non-expert people. Constant Contact is also able to

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<sup>10</sup> Constant Contact is an email-marketing tool designed to create and manage email campaigns. It is affordable as the price depends on the email list size.

handle large subscriber lists, and allows the use of HTML code to create original newsletter designs, an important feature that allows the maintenance of brand identity across all Canada Wide Media's online products. The company would also use other marketing solutions like cross-promotion across its online and print publications and partnership agreements with other websites or magazines.

## **DIGITAL MEDIA DIVISION**

After determining what was needed and what resources were required, the next step was to decide who would do it. When Canada Wide Media and the consulting firm reviewed the in-house human available resources, it became clear that extra help would be required.

Despite the editorial and production expertise within Canada Wide, the new online endeavour required different skills to fulfil specific online demands. The first step was to find people with the right expertise in online production, design, and management. Canada Wide Media executives decided that the best way to address this need was to form an in-house Digital Media Division. After consulting with the outsourcing firm, the recommended positions for the new division were

- a full-time director,
- a full-time production manager,
- a full-time web designer and multimedia producer (focus on content),
- two full time web editors,
- a full-time sales and marketing coordinator.

New people with the right skills and expertise would form the staff dedicated to the web products in the online publishing business. The positions would be hired as the need arose: during the development and implementation stage and after launch.

In the meantime, Canada Wide decided that existing magazine editors would remain in charge of setting editorial guidelines and would be responsible for the accuracy of the editorial content online; art directors would still take care of the visual appeal of the sites; sales representatives would offer the online component packaged with the print campaigns to their clients; and marketing staff would include promotional and sponsorship agreement efforts to their general marketing plans.

Canada Wide Media started creating its in-house Digital Media Division in January 2007. Of the four positions, only two were part of the original plan – Digital Director and Web Developer – and the other two – Web Editorial Coordinator and Digital Intern– were created to solve specific issues during the implementation of *BCBusiness Online*. In what follows there is a description of the people who formed the Digital Media Division by July 2007.

*Digital Media Director, Shannon Emmerson:* Ms. Emmerson was hired in January 2007. She was given the responsibility of managing the magazines' transition to the web and the development of new products. Her position was implemented as planned; it was a key position that would have the responsibility of managing economical, technical and human resources within the division. She was

also the liaison between Canada Wide Media and the consulting company that developed and design the initial sites, during the planning and implementation of the four sites contracted.

*Web Editorial Coordinator, Yau Bing Chong:* Ms Chong was hired in February 2007. This was one of the positions that were not considered in the original plan; however, after further considerations, the company decided that a person that worked as an editorial coordinator as well as project manager was crucial. The responsibilities of this position included managing the translocation of the print archives to the Web: establishing processes, organization of resources and overseeing the testing and final delivery of the site. This person would also liaise between the digital media division and the magazine's editorial, production and art departments.

*Web Production Coordinator, Paola Quintanar:* This position made up most of my internship experience at Canada Wide Media from May to July 2007, and it led to a full-time position starting August 2007, when I was officially hired. This position was not part of the original plan. In the magazine world, the production coordinator manages the production and placement of advertising in a publication. It was assumed that the same people in charge of *BCBusiness* magazine advertising production would realize the online production coordination. However, during the development phase it became clear that online advertising could not be managed in the same way as print advertising. Moreover, the sales team of *BCBusiness* did a great job on selling most of the advertising real estate on the site by the relaunch,

exceeding the volume of advertising that the magazine production coordinator was capable of managing. Therefore, the basis of this new position derived from an emerged and unexpected need. This position would be responsible for managing the advertising production and serving all the online publications, and also liaising between sales and costumers and the digital media division. The other main task was reporting website traffic to sales and editorial staff.

*Web Developer, Darren Jarvis:* Hired in June 2007. As the development of the new site was outsourced, it was not necessary to hire an in-house developer until the final phase of the creation of the first site. During the final phase, the web developer's main responsibility was liaison between the outsourcing developer and Canada Wide Media. Once the contract with the outsourcing developers was fulfilled, the developer's main responsibility was to take over the management of the finalized websites, making sure that the sites worked properly, and to plan and implement custom or new functions and tools as required. Future responsibilities included the coding, programming and development of new projects developed in-house; future "refreshes" of existing sites, and role of liaison between Canada Wide Media and outsourced digital services.

After the delivery of *BCBusiness Online* in July 2007, it became more evident that positions previously planned like web designer, web editor, project manager and marketing manager were necessary and very important for ensuring the ongoing improvement and success of the site. It also became clear that the magazines' staff was not enough to fulfil the needs of a new digital magazine:

creating a new website was only the first step of an ongoing project. However, the main stakeholders decided to wait until the websites generated more traffic and advertising revenue to expand the digital media team.

The main challenges that the Digital Media Division faced were setting up internal workflows, establishing working relationships and processes outside the division and setting up collaboration channels between print and online resources.

In February 2007, the consulting company that Canada Wide Media hired to define its digital strategy finalized a document that set the primary goals of the publisher's digital strategy, the opportunities and challenges that the creation of a new business model would bring. After final revisions of the document, Canada Wide Media decided to go ahead with the implementation of the plan and the consulting company started working toward the foundation of Canada Wide Media's new business model: *BCBusiness Online* relaunch.

## **CHAPTER 2: THE RELAUNCH OF *BCBUSINESS ONLINE***

When Tracy Tjaden took control of *BCBusiness* magazine in 2005, the *BCBusiness* website looked outdated and did not represent an important source of revenue. The magazine had changed over time, but the website had remained the same since it was built back in 1997. The editorial department had little to do with the website, which was administered by the marketing department within Canada Wide Media. The purpose of the website was to promote the magazine to advertisers and potential subscribers: it gave general information about the publication, its readership and its circulation. Over the site's ten-years existence, its overall look, purpose and functions did not change. The reader experience was poor as the website only transcribed the first 400 words of the magazine features: it did not include online exclusive content, nor did it offer services such as online subscription or renewals. Moreover, the management and hosting were outsourced, which did not make for a strong link between print and online products within Canada Wide Media.

After establishing the general goals of the site, the consulting company worked on the general layout, the design and finally the development. In June 2007, the beta stage of the site was completed and functional which allowed the digital media division at Canada Wide to populate and test the site before it was finally approved and delivered. Once the website was up and running, the main



priority was to set up a workflow for the maintenance of the site. Finally, it was important to assess the current state of the site, and determined what elements of the original plan had not yet been incorporated.

This chapter offers a description and brief analysis of the relaunch of *BCBusiness Online*, which represents Canada Wide Media's first attempt to implement a digital strategy on its way to becoming a publisher that offers digital products in addition to print publications. This chapter lists the general objectives that *BCBusiness Online* aimed to fulfil followed by a description of the opportunities, challenges and solutions that *BCBusiness Online* faced during the design and development stage as well as the rationale behind the initial marketing and advertising decisions. Chapter 3 describes what objectives were accomplished by the time of relaunch, what new challenges arose and how they affected future plans for the site.

## **GENERAL OBJECTIVES**

According to Shannon Emmerson<sup>11</sup>, Director of Digital Media at Canada Wide, the goals of *BCBusiness Online* were as follows:

- 1) To increase online traffic by
  - drawing in new users unfamiliar with *BCBusiness* magazine;
  - drawing in past or occasional readers who think *BCBusiness* is not for them (they may perceive the brand as too old or too corporate)

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<sup>11</sup> In interview with the author, 12 May, 2007.

2) To complement the *BCBusiness* brand with a strong online component by

- giving existing magazine readers fresh value: showing them that the website is different from the magazine;
- creating an exclusive online business community focused on the needs of British Columbia entrepreneurs, owners and managers where they can interact with each other and with the magazine staff;
- promoting *BCBusiness* magazine: letting people know how to subscribe and how to advertise in it.

3) To create a new revenue model for *BCBusiness* by

- giving existing and potential advertisers an online channel to reach people running or doing business in British Columbia;
- creating advertising packages and sponsorship opportunities across print and online magazines;
- offering accurate reports on online traffic and advertising campaign performance.

In order to accomplish these goals, the online strategy focused on concrete areas of planning and, later on, implementation: design, content, advertising and marketing.

In the section that follows, I will explain each of those areas in detail. It is important to point out that the design and development of the site took a very short time of three months. The date of the relaunch was set for July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2007 to coincide with the most important award ceremony sponsored by *BCBusiness*: "The Top 100

Companies in British Columbia.” It represented a valuable opportunity to announce the relaunch during a big event filled with current and potential advertisers.

### ***BCBUSINESS ONLINE NEW DESIGN STRATEGY***

Web design shares the basic elements of general design: layout, navigation, colour and typography. In the multimedia world, design also involves interactivity and usability principles. The main objective is to create websites that are appealing, easy to navigate and efficient. Web design is not only about graphics or aesthetics: web design takes into account what tasks the visitors will perform, how they will perform them and the context of the actions they take. Therefore, one of the main objectives when building a website is to get to know the audience that the website wants to attract. The main questions that arose were: Why would people visit the *BCBusiness* website? What would they want to do once they got there? What were the requirements for a design that served consumers first rather than publishers? The challenge of the new *BCBusiness* website was to construct a powerful website that provided excellent and trustworthy content, was easily navigated and loaded quickly.

The new design of the magazine was led by the desire of the editor-in-chief, Tracy Tjaden, to reflect the overall aesthetic of the print magazine by mirroring its graphic elements and colours. But it was also important to include functions that helped the audience consume the content faster and more easily; for example, the content on the new website followed the same organizing structure as the

magazine, using the same sections. The site would also have to be appealing to the user and communicate the sense of trust that *BCBusiness* has earned among its readers.

In the following pages I will describe in detail the final design of *BCBusiness Online*, the homepage of which is reproduced in Figure 1. I will cover its main elements (reference numbers in brackets) and the rationale behind them.

The new homepage offered various ways to navigate and find content throughout the site. The left column was dedicated to navigation and communication with the visitor. Some of the most innovative additions to this site were the inclusion of an **RSS** (Really Simple Syndication) feed (1) that allowed readers to subscribe to timely updates on the site; a **tag cloud** (5) that listed the main keywords used to describe articles within the site; **readers' comments** (6), which were the main source of user-generated content on the site and a link to an the online **subscription** to the eNewsletter to receive updates via email.

The main feature on the left column was the secondary **navigation bar** (3), which included links to the latest stories published, the story archive, the most emailed stories, promotion of the **print magazine** (4) with a link to information on how to subscribe, and the cover from the latest issue linked to the table of contents.

1. RSS feed

2. eNewsletter sign up

3. Left Navigation Bar that shows content organized by recency date archived and popularity.

4. Print magazine promotion elements.

5. Tag cloud

6. Readers' comments

7. Search tool

8. Top navigation bar with links to the five main sections on the site.

9. Flash slideshow that features five of the main articles from current print issue.

10. Three more spots to feature more content from other sections of the site.

11. Poll showing live results.

Response	Percentage	Number of Votes
...is beginning. We ain't seen nothin' yet.	22%	13 votes
bound to slow down...maybe...a little...eventually.	18%	11 votes
just a predictable turn in B.C.'s boom-and-bust cycles.	32%	19 votes
going to take us as far as the Olympics. Then we're in trouble.	17%	10 votes
totally unsustainable. It's setting us up for disaster.	12%	7 votes
<b>Total votes:</b>		<b>60</b>

Figure 1. *BCBusiness Online* homepage July 2007. Reproduced with permission of Canada Wide Media Ltd.

In summary, this column aimed to offer an easy way for visitors to find the information they were looking for, to get a sense of what was new and popular and what other readers were saying, and finally to get content delivered directly to them as soon as it was published. The rationale behind the navigation bar was that if readers could easily find what they are looking for, they would stay longer and come back more often, which translates into more traffic and more opportunities for advertising revenue.

The masthead contained the logo and the **search box** (7). The former, following a web standard, always returned people to the homepage; the latter, invited readers to go deeper into the site if they did not see what they were looking for on the home page.

The central column displayed the most recent and important articles on the site. The main **navigation bar** (8) was formed by clear and simple links to the main sections of the site: Top Stories, People, Business Sense, BC Blogs and Advertise. The focal point of the site was a **flash-based slideshow** (9) that featured five articles, each represented with a thumbnail. This slideshow was designed to resemble a full magazine spread that displayed only one article at a time: a large and tall image at the left, the title of the article in large type over the main image and a teaser on the right. The slideshow did not change automatically; the reader needed to click on one of the five thumbnails placed at the bottom of the box to change the story displayed on the main spread.

Later on, the assessment of the website concluded that the flash slideshow was an interesting idea, but not very intuitive. The thumbnails were very small, and on some small screens they were located below the initial screen, so it was not clear that they were navigation tools. The slideshow presented some other challenges: considering that *BCBusiness* magazine is a monthly publication that has no more than eight feature stories per month, there was not enough content to make the slideshow look fresh on a daily or even weekly basis; moreover, not all images in the magazine could be resized to fit in that spot. In addition, many of the titles were longer than five words, which made the title break down over in several lines, creating an unbalanced look. Since the Flash element was the focal point of the homepage and therefore, the site, a big design lesson was learned here: the team realized that an internal designer would always be required to make adjustments based on user feedback (and complaints).

Besides the slideshow, there were three more areas on the site featuring articles from other sections. It was quickly discovered that these spots did not provide the user with enough opportunity to “go deeper” into the site. In future iterations of *BCBusiness Online* and other sites, a clear emphasis will be placed on promoting as much content above the fold as possible. Note, however, that the decision during the launch to feature limited content was made simply because there were not enough editorial resources to input content. In retrospect, according to Shannon Emmerson, a dedicated editor and more junior editorial staff could

have helped to resolve this “content shortage” and thereby changed some of the design decisions for the launch.

Overall, the site’s design was successful in prominently showcasing the current contents of the magazine, and in creating a similar look and feel to the print publication. However, besides the left navigation bar, there was no way to get or promote old content. In addition, the aesthetic results were not as appealing as the stakeholders envisioned and could only be improved in following iterations. First of all, with respect to aesthetics, at the top of the site, the balance between the banner ad and the logo was off: the ad was centred whereas the logo was justified to the left. This created an empty space right below the ad; this took away attention from the site’s name. Also, the menu bar type was too large and it looked out of balance when the section’s name had more one word. In addition, the main elements of the flash slideshow were too big, pushing all the rest of the content below the fold.

All in all, the design had limited flexibility. The new design was not successful in anticipating the need for different sizes of advertising banners or promotional spots, and for the inclusion and promotion of multimedia content. It was clear that the design of the site would not be final, that there was always room for improvement and that websites can and should be continually changed to keep up with trends, user needs, and advertising and marketing initiatives.



## ***BCBUSINESS ONLINE CONTENT STRATEGY***

As a publisher, Canada Wide Media had the experience and resources to create high-quality content. One of the main assets of *BCBusiness Online* was the content already available in the print magazine. But how would it get that content online? How much of the content should be available online? What other sources of content were available? And how would the content be organized? In order to respond to these questions, Canada Wide Media and the consulting company planned a content strategy for the new *BCBusiness* website and established the following objectives: produce high quality content; allow free access to full articles from current and old archives; and make content easy to find, consume and share. Many of these objectives were met by the time of launch and others were in process or waiting to be implemented. In the section that follows, this report will describe the main sources of content for the new site, its organization, the main challenges it faced and its accomplishments by the time of the relaunch.

### **Magazine Content**

The first source of content for the new *BCBusiness* website was its printed counterpart. *BCBusiness* magazine features timely articles, in-depth analysis of current economic issues (4,000-word features), and profiles of prominent business people in British Columbia. The new site brought an opportunity to reuse past content and to develop a valuable archive. Canada Wide Media planned to have at least three years of magazine content uploaded to the site in time for the relaunch. However, copyright issues and time constraints prevented that from happening.

*Electronic rights* – Electronic rights were one of the most important issues that *BCBusiness* encountered during the implementation phase. Canada Wide Media only held rights to the following content:

- Articles written by in-house staff;
- Original articles where electronic rights were previously negotiated for the old website;
- Images and photographs from some of the regular photographers and illustrators;
- Pictures and illustrations from in-house archives;

*BCBusiness* did not hold rights to electronically reproduce past content created by freelance writers and photographers that had not been considered for inclusion on the old site.

To overcome this difficulty, Tracy Tjaden, the editor, and Catherine Mullaly, the art director of the magazine, made arrangements with most of the people who had contributed to the magazine over the previous three years. They got approval from some of their regular photographers and writers, but by the time of the *BCBusiness Online* relaunch in July 2007, content from past issues was still being negotiated. In the end, *BCBusiness Online* relaunched only with full content from the July 2007 issue of the magazine and some content from past issues dating back one year; this content included short in-house articles that had previously appeared on the old *BCBusiness* website. From that moment, all contracts signed with editorial and art collaborators included a clause that granted electronic rights to Canada Wide Media.

Once the digital media team members had a list of content approved, they realized they needed to work closely with the production department of Canada Wide Media in order to get access to the archives of *BCBusiness*. This includes raw images, advertising, original texts, formatted QuarkXPress files and final PDF proofs. The digital media division, specifically Yau Bing Chong, the web editorial coordinator, and the author, as an intern, worked to transfer as much content as possible during the week prior to the launch date. The lack of time, human resources, expertise and clear pre-established workflows were the main factors that limited content for the relaunch. It was evident that the current staffing was not enough to produce and manage content on regular basis. It was determined that an online editor for the site should have, and would in the future, assumed these tasks.

### **Free vs. Paid Content**

The previous *BCBusiness* website only posted only about 400 words of a selection of magazine's features every month. The objective was to give a quick overview of the content to attract readers to the print magazine, inviting people to subscribe (by phone or regular mail) or to buy the magazine at the newsstand. The fear of losing magazine readers to the website meant that the content strategy did not change during the first ten years of the *BCBusiness* site: why give away content online if people were already buying the magazine? Would publishing content for free mean that people would stop buying the magazine? These remain questions that magazine and newspaper publishers seek to answer.

During the first decade of the World Wide Web, advertising revenue was difficult to come by; therefore, readers were asked to cover some of the costs of reading news and articles online. For example, the strategies of the then-called “Big Three” US business magazines in 1995 made the reader pay for content: *Business Week* and *Forbes* granted access to their archives to subscribers who paid a monthly subscription fee, while *Fortune* charged \$1.50 for every article viewed or downloaded (Marcus 1995). Even exclusively online magazines like *Slate* tried a membership system. In *Slate* founding editor Michael Kinsley’s words:

Of the many things I got wrong at the beginning, the most notoriously wrong was my insistence that readers should have to pay for the privilege. I thought that was a test of seriousness, as well as an economic necessity. We launched as a free site, but down the road there was a period of about a year when we demanded \$19.95 for an annual subscription. It wasn't a dismal failure: At the end of the year, we had more than 20,000 paid subscribers—a third of what the *New Republic* (my former employer) had after 75 years. But meanwhile our "front porch" (the free part) was attracting 20 times that number of different individuals who visited the site once or more a month. (Now that figure is more like 5 million.) (2006)

As the Internet and the World Wide Web developed and became more popular, newspapers and magazines were forced to change strategies: to obtain and retain readers become a hard task due to a vast proliferation of websites. The competition was not only among online periodical publications, but also among every other website that offered similar information. If users cannot get what they are looking for in a quick and easy way, they simply leave for another destination that offers them the content they are seeking. *The New York Times*, for example, dropped its paid online subscription program in September 2007, after two years of charging

\$49.95 per year for access to the archives and top columnists. According to Dylan Stableford:

Many more readers started coming to the site from search engines and links on other sites instead of coming directly to NYTimes.com. These indirect readers, unable to get access to articles behind the pay wall and less likely to pay subscription fees than the more loyal direct users, were seen as opportunities for more page views and increased advertising revenue. (2007: 1)

With all these changes and new realities in mind, *BCBusiness* editors and the digital media director decided that all content (print and web-exclusive) should be posted in its entirety for free in order to retain readers, build traffic, promote the brand and therefore attract advertising revenue. Also, the content would be posted on the day that the magazine went to newsstands, giving some advantage to subscribers who receive the magazine at home before the newsstand issues are displayed.

### **Content Organization**

The new *BCBusiness* website would be organized into five main sections that would include content from the magazine as well as web exclusive content. The sections would be organized as follows:

*Home page* – The home page would highlight articles from the rest of the sections as well as the “Quote of the week” and a “Hot topic” poll.

*Top stories* – This section would feature two current articles and four more from previous magazines. This section would include opinion columns like *Round Table*.

*People* – Each month *BCBusiness* profiles people working on different industries across British Columbia. This section would bring together the following departments from the magazine: Crossroads, Sweet Gig, High Profile, Expat, Who What Wear and After Hours.

*Business Sense* – This section would bring together the columns from the magazine that include advice, ideas and tips: Big Ideas, Need to Know, How To Tips, Game Plan, Back Talk and Window Seat.

*Special Features* – The special features are pieces of advertorial content that the magazine includes at the back of the book every month. These features would be available online in PDF format to maintain the layout, text and images exclusive to the feature advertiser, and avoid any competition with the online campaigns.

### **Web-only Content**

During the first few months after *BCBusiness Online's* relaunch, its would be almost entirely drawn from the print magazine; however, in order to add value to the online brand, it would be necessary to create extra content. The online strategy contemplated the inclusion of blogs, podcasts, video and slideshows that could make readers stay longer and return to the site often.

*BCBlogs* – This section would feature exclusive web content. During the first year, the plan included at least one blog that would be produced on a weekly basis by an external blogger or columnist, and another one that would be created by one staff member (editor, editorial assistant or staff writer). The topics of the blogs should be related to business. Tracy Tjaden hired the first *BCBusiness Online* blogger: Tony Wanless, a regular writer for the magazine, who was very interested in participating at least weekly in the online version of the brand. In addition, until the website got an editor, the digital media staff would monitor the blogosphere and feature, on a weekly basis, at least four blogs written in or about British Columbia.

*Videos and slideshows* – Sponsored events like the Top 100 and Entrepreneur of the Year could be video-recorded and reproduced online to complement coverage of the events. Slideshows could be produced using extra images not used in the print magazine.

*Podcasts* – At least two podcast series would be produced based on magazine content namely Round Table and Inquiring Minds. The first is a group discussion recorded and later transcribed in the print magazine every other month. The second is a series of telephone interviews where various businesspeople answer the same question. In addition, an Editor's podcast series, where the editor would have conversations with writers, entrepreneurs and photographers about some of the monthly features, would be created as an online exclusive.

## User-Generated Content

The new generation of websites defined by interactivity, information and collaboration has been named *Web 2.0*. According to Tim O'Reilly (2005), "One of the key lessons of the Web 2.0 era is this: Users add value"; this concept becomes clear when we refer to services and online applications like YouTube (video sharing), Flickr (photo sharing), Google (search) and Delicious or Digg (bookmarking), which were built to provide users an easy way to communicate and share information across the web. The content of those sites is entirely created and managed by users. But how could this concept be implemented on a magazine site? And how exactly would a magazine site allow interaction among users, writers and editors? Also, how might magazines use these applications and the user-generated content to their benefit?

If users are to add value, they need to become part of the site as contributors; thus, if *BCBusiness* was to become part of the new generation of websites it would have to allow users to showcase themselves, to adapt and to customize the site to their needs, and to collaborate in creating new content. By the launch date of July 2007, the *BCBusiness Online* would include the following sections and functions to ensure that users could add value to the site:

*Your Need to Know* – Similar to the existing section in the magazine, this online segment was planned to feature tips and business lessons submitted by readers via email. The tips would be edited by in-house staff and uploaded as individual articles. Readers could add more information via comments. The



promotion of this section started shortly after the relaunch. However, it had little response.

*BC Events* – One of the ways to prompt people to come back to a website on a regular basis is to provide some kind of service, like a listing of local events. Updated by both staff and users, this section would provide readers the opportunity to submit copy and one photo to describe upcoming or past business events, which would appear in chronological order on the homepage. The final design of the site did not include the planned calendar due to time restraints.

*Your Big Ideas* – Also similar to the monthly column in the magazine, the online version was to include a blog-type forum where readers could submit and comment on ideas about business and how to improve it. This section was not developed by the launch date. Instead, there was a contest that called on people to submit their big ideas for the chance to win \$10,000 dollars on advertising space. The contest was promoted on the site and on the *BCBusiness* Facebook group, but it was cancelled due to lack of participation.

*Hot Topic* – In the form of a poll or a blog, a weekly question – possibly related to the current issue of the magazine or a specific feature story– this item would encourage participation by asking readers to weigh in on a current issue. This feature was entirely functional by the time of the relaunch: it gave readers a great opportunity to interact with the site and share their opinions with others.

*Your WhoWhatWear* – For this section, readers could submit photos of themselves or co-workers either showing off or asking other readers for advice. The proposed formats included both slideshows and individual articles. This feature was considered at the beginning of the planning stage, but it was never implemented because of time constraints and lack of staff to establish and manage a suitable process, as well as because the idea was felt to be inappropriate for a serious business magazine.

Finally, across the site, reader comments would be ubiquitous on articles, blogs, podcasts and slideshows, allowing any visitor to participate either anonymously or under her chosen name. The new *BCBusiness's* site was fully prepared to receive comments by the time the site was “live.” Commenting was open to everyone; there was no approval filter for the first week of the site. After that week, anonymous comments were still accepted, but they had to pass through the filter of the web editorial coordinator, Yau Bing Chong, who managed the approval queue. Commenters could avoid the approval process by registering, which was encouraged and promoted throughout the site.

In order to increase traffic and revenue, *BCBusiness Online* needed content that was valuable to its readers. During the implementation of the content plan for *BCBusiness Online*, the main stakeholders learned that it would not be enough to mimic the print magazine online, and that producing original web-only content would be the first step for increasing traffic. The digital media division, the production department and the *BCBusiness* magazine editorial team joined efforts

to provide valuable and timely content by the time of the site's relaunch, proving that the digital media division could not work in isolation and needed to be fully integrated into the regular print workflow and processes.

### ***BCBUSINESS ONLINE MARKETING STRATEGY***

Online marketing follows the same rules as offline marketing: it helps to promote, sell and distribute a product, as well as to develop and maintain an ongoing relationship with customers. In particular, online marketing takes advantages of websites and email, which have the benefit of encouraging real-time interactivity, social media, search optimization and viral marketing. In this section, I will detail the marketing strategy that *BCBusiness* planned to promote the site in order to reach the right audience, increase traffic and meet its advertising revenue goals.

#### **Primary Target Market**

*BCBusiness* magazine has been serving a niche audience for the past thirty years. A magazine readership study conducted for *BCBusiness* magazine (Ipsos 2005) confirmed that over its first thirty years, *BCBusiness* magazine established a loyal readership that looked at an average of seven issues of the twelve published per year, and spent more than forty minutes with each issue of the magazine. The magazine filled an important niche in the local scene serving businesspeople, entrepreneurs and small businesses across British Columbia. Additionally, there is no other local magazine that competes with *BCBusiness* for readership. Under the direction of Bonnie Irving, editor for nineteen years, the magazine established itself

as a reliable source of business information, but it did not take many risks and the overall look and feel of the brand remained the same.

### **Online Communities**

During the planning of the new *BCBusiness* website, one of the main objectives, similar to that of many magazines that go online, was to reach a different and wider audience. In the words of Shannon Emmerson: “In almost all cases, the successful websites have attracted new audiences to the brand –people who don’t read the printed magazine but visit the website”.<sup>12</sup> Among the new audiences considered were

1. People who are within the primary target audience but whose commitment to the brand or to print is insufficient for them to buy the magazine; readers of rival national publications or younger people who do not read much in print.
2. Small-business owners or single entrepreneurs, who are tech-savvy and interested in how global business affects local issues. The web enables a brand to attract marginal customers and thus extend the brand’s footprint.
3. Readers outside the home country; expatriates or people in the market but in other countries, who have no access to the print magazine.

Attracting these new target markets would be fundamental for the creation of a stronger community. Whereas magazines have readers that form passive audiences,

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<sup>12</sup> In interview with the author, May 2007.

websites can have visitors that become active members. Although magazines can have direct communication with their audiences via letters to the editor, there is no immediate dialogue or interaction. Websites, on the contrary, communicate with their visitors via comments, RSS feeds, email, eNewsletters and forums. They expect and encourage conversation between authors and readers, and also among visitors. This instant form of communication contributes to creating a sense of community. As Patricia Riley et al (1998) pointed out:

Online communication is viewed by many as nothing short of revolutionary. It is an opportunity to communicate, learn, share, buy and sell, and perhaps most importantly, to build community in virtual space. Newspapers, as key vehicles for the development of community in modern society, have been extraordinarily interested in the notion of building virtual communities as they move their operations online.

How difficult would it be to create and nurture a virtual community? How would the website attract new audiences? And how would it make them stay?

The answers include producing quality content and new ways to deliver it. Interactivity was key in planning a new strategy for *BCBusiness Online*. When people go online they are mainly looking for information<sup>13</sup>, to get in touch with family and friends, and searching for ways to be entertained; when visiting websites, people like to have their voices heard; they are not afraid to participate in forums or comment on stories. Magazine and print media writers had to get used to the idea of having readers who talk back instantly and wait for an answer. Readers

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<sup>13</sup> According to Alexa.com, the five most visited sites in Canada are Google.ca, Windows Live, Facebook, Yahoo and Youtube.  
[http://www.alexa.com/site/ds/top\\_sites?cc=CA&ts\\_mode=country&lang=none](http://www.alexa.com/site/ds/top_sites?cc=CA&ts_mode=country&lang=none). Last visited March 21, 2009.

suddenly had a voice: they were not longer just readers; they had become interlocutors. The way to make them stay on a website includes making them feel like part of a community by creating a membership system; as members, their comments are posted immediately and they can choose a virtual name and a picture. Anonymous comments would be also allowed, but they would have to wait to be approved.

Besides having a say, online visitors like to spread the word of what they have read or seen. There are two main ways to share information online: by email and by linking to social networking sites. The latter have become more and more popular over time, especially among younger audiences; therefore, all content on the new *BCBusiness* website was designed to include an “Email to a Friend” link and make available sharing tools to sites like Facebook, LinkedIn, Digg and Delicious. While the use of sharing tools is an easy way for readers to quickly recommend content to their peers, for the publisher, sharing tools are inexpensive forms of promotion that could lead to more traffic and attract fresh audiences.

It was an important marketing goal to create an online community focused on business in or around British Columbia. *BCBusiness* magazine already brought together a strong community three times a year through the following events: The Top 100 Companies in British Columbia Awards, The Entrepreneur of the Year Award and The Best Companies to Work for in British Columbia. The decision to launch the new website at the time of the Top 100 event was the first effort to introduce the online brand to the right target audience and to invite them to be part

of the new online community. The website was presented by the editor in her welcoming speech and the current issue of the magazine itself had various mentions of the site.

### **Online Traffic**

Circulation and readership are the numbers that are used to measure print magazines' success and to sell advertising. In contrast, websites measure their popularity in terms of visitors, visits and page views. This traffic determines how advertising is sold. This is why one of the main marketing goals for the new *BCBusiness* site was to increase web traffic and offer measurable results.

There are several ways in which a website can increase its traffic. *BCBusiness's* marketing strategy included search engine optimization (SEO), web analytics, electronic eNewsletters, social media and offline promotions.

### **SEO (Search Engine Optimization) Strategy**

Search engines (specially Google and Yahoo) are the main source of traffic for most websites as people typically use the Internet to look for information; search engines have become an indispensable Internet tool. People tend to click on the first few items in search results lists. Therefore, it is very important for a website to be near the top of the search results page.

Search results are of two kinds: paid and non-paid (organic). The first kind is clear: a website pays to be in the first position of a results list every time somebody looks up terms relevant to that website's content. Not everybody can pay for such a

service, and in order to get ranked “organically” on top of page results, it is important to understand how search engines work; they use special software called crawlers that explore the content and metadata of each page of a website (url, title, body text, tags or keywords, meta-tags and meta-titles, as well as the links to and out of the page). There are techniques to make a site friendlier to search engines, such practices are referred as Search Engine Optimization or SEO. By its launch date, *BCBusiness Online* adhered to the following SEO rules:

- 1) Friendly URLs: Full text URLs that included the subject of the article or post, the section that it belonged to and the date it was published. E.g. <http://www.bcbusinessonline.ca/bcb/bc-blogs/insider/2009/03/26/take-it-outside>.
- 2) Meta Tag Generation: The assignation of keywords to every piece of content on the site. This was a time-consuming task that was partially accomplished by launch date. In the following months, additional staff helped with the labelling of all content on the site. Because *BCBusiness Online* is a content-driven site, tagging every article appropriately is a vital resource for directing site traffic.
- 3) Page titles and meta-titles: Titles had to include the topics and keywords included on the article, which helped create a better ranking on search engine results pages.
- 4) Cross-promotion: Linking related articles within the site.



5) Inbound links: Having other sites link to *BCBusiness* would help crawlers to find the site faster; each link counts as a vote and “Google counts the number of votes a page receives as part of its PageRank assessment”<sup>14</sup>. Inbound links to *BCBusiness Online* would develop over time and by building relationships with other online properties.

### **Web Analytics**

Measuring campaign results and the activity on the site was one of the most critical and important parts in the planning of the *BCBusiness* web strategy. The ad server would provide basic reports on specific campaigns, but it was also critical to provide statistics on the overall performance of the site. How many people are visiting the site? How many pages are being viewed? How long are people staying on the site? These are some questions that web analytics tries to answer.

Web analytics is the activity of tracking, collecting and analyzing Internet data “to optimize websites and web marketing initiatives.”<sup>15</sup> Web analytics is a discipline that has been evolving alongside the web; according to Kaushik, (2007: 2), “the very first standardized definition was not proposed until 2006” and such standardization has not reached all aspects of web analytics. While there are a variety of methods used for measuring website activity, there remains no harmonization or agreement as to best practices, sources or even metrics.

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<sup>14</sup> From *Google Friendly Sites*  
(<http://www.google.com/support/webmasters/bin/answer.py?answer=40349>)  
Last accessed February 19, 2009.

<sup>15</sup> Web Analytics Association <http://webanalyticsassociation.org>

The digital media team started to measure the success of the marketing, content and advertising strategies, as well as the general performance of the site, shortly after the relaunch, based on the following metrics<sup>16</sup>:

- Page Views – The number of page views reports the reader’s engagement: the more pages viewed, the more appealing the content is to the visitor. Page views are an important metric for advertising reports because advertising exposure grows with the number of pages visited.
- Unique Visits – A visit is a session. Sessions are measured in thirty-minute increments, after thirty minutes, another session starts counting. If the visitor visits the site twice in thirty minutes, it will count as one visit, but if the visit lasts forty to sixty minutes, it will count as two visits. This metric will tell how many times and how often a unique visitor comes back to the site.
- Unique visitors – The number of IP addresses plus browser IDs and cookies that visited the site. Assuming that one person is behind each IP address or computer, this metric would tell how many people have visited the site in a certain period of time.

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<sup>16</sup> It is important to mention that analytic tools do not measure people’s activity but the interaction between browsers and servers. Since computers are used by people, it is common to think of web traffic as actual human beings visiting a website. However, some web analytics tools still count crawlers, robots and spiders as human traffic.

- Time spent on site – Determined by how long each unique visitor made requests to the server that hosts a site, this metric gives some clues on how visitors move within a site.

Following the recommendation of the consulting company, *BCBusiness Online* provided reports for editors, marketers, salespeople and advertisers on the graphics and descriptions of the performance of the site. The main challenge would be to analyze the data and try to understand why people came to the site, why they stayed and why they left. This information would help the digital media division to plan future changes or improvements for the site.

Online marketing is evolving as the Internet and the World Wide Web does. Canada Wide Media realized that it needed to ensure that its content is on a variety of channels to capture as many readers as possible. After producing a great product, making it available to the right target market and increasing traffic and referrals turned out to be complicated tasks that required knowledge of how the Internet works, what are the trends on social-media trends, best practices in email marketing, what to avoid and how to apply new SEO techniques. The need for a full-time marketing manager was evident after the relaunch of *BCBusiness Online*. Instead, Canada Wide Media relied on internal marketing staff and consulting services during the first year of *BCBusiness Online's* life.

## **Email Marketing**

*BCBusiness Online* would have an electronic newsletter that would be emailed twice a month to subscribers of *BCBusiness* magazine. It would be set up as a bi-weekly reminder or invitation to visit the site to have a look at the newest or most popular content. The main objective of this tool was to increase traffic, attract current magazine subscribers the site, establish a relationship with subscribers, and have a tool for letting readers know what is new on the site.

The “Need to Know” eNewsletter (Figure 4) was designed and produced by the consulting company that was developing the *BCBusiness* site, and the first issue was delivered to all *BCBusiness* print subscribers in April 2007, four months before the relaunch of *BCBusiness Online*. The design of the eNewsletter imitated the look and feel of the website. Before the launch of the site, the eNewsletter offered a summary of the contents available in the current magazine and transcribed “Need to Know” articles from past issues. After the launch of *BCBusiness Online*, the eNewsletter also included online content, the first paragraph of Tony Wanless’s blog and links to visit the site.

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM BC BUSINESS ONLINE

LOOKING FOR MORE BUSINESS ADVICE?

VISIT **BCBUSINESS ONLINE** FOR MORE *BUSINESS SENSE*, TOP STORIES, IN-DEPTH ARTICLES, PROFILES OF INCREDIBLE BC PEOPLE AND BC BLOGS.

Also on *BCBusiness Online*:

- We were there with our cameras at the Entrepreneur of the Year awards - check out the video of Lukas Lundin's acceptance speech, along with a slideshow of all nominees
- Read about Radical Entertainment's composer-in-resident, Mark Baril's oh-so-sweet gig in *Score a Living*
- Should we be bracing for a *Hydro Shock*? John Calvert suggests that despite the heavily promoted 'green' private power agenda, BC Hydro customers will be facing major sticker shock in the coming years
- **Online exclusive:** Peter Severinson's *Inquiring Minds Podcast* series - in the October Podcast series, Peter asks John Fluevog, Chaz Romalis and Lori Joyce what they wish they had known before starting their business (new podcasts added weekly)
- *BCBusiness Online* picks our favourite business blogs. Submit yours, too!

**CGAjobs.org**  
Discover a hire power.

## BCBLOGS TONY WANLESS

THIS WEEK'S IN TONY'S BLOG

### RESIDENT BCBUSINESS BLOGGER

Credit unions in BC are sprinting to the altar like mad these days, trying to differentiate their brands in the financial services landscape. But a proposed merger between two big suburban Vancouver credit unions has been called off. Apparently, the dating that's been going on for several months convinced the two that any marriage between them would end up as a constant battle over style.

I'll say.

There are similarities that probably created the dating discussions in the first place. Abbotsford-based Prospera Credit Union works the eastern suburbs of Vancouver and extends all the way to Kelowna. North Shore Credit Union works the - you guessed it - north shore of Burrard Inlet and Howe Sound.

Want more? Read the rest of Tony's blog on *BCBusiness Online*.  
Read Tony's previous blog entries here.



## NEED TO KNOW BUSINESS TIPS FOR YOU

YOUR SURVIVAL GUIDE FOR THE MODERN WORKPLACE

### HOW TO GET YOUR S\*\*T TOGETHER (AT WORK)

by Jessica Werb

The truth is, most of us could use a little help in the organization department. How else to explain the growing popularity of TV shows like *How Clean is Your House?* and *Clean Sweep*, and the increasing numbers of professional organizers in the Yellow Pages? Here's what the pros have to say about how to get your work life in order.

#### Your desk

According to Sherry Bersheim, organizing guru at Simply Productive, your desk is not a storage area; it's a "command centre." That means what you need at your fingertips should be there on it. [Business 101](#)



Cover by Dina Goldstein

### IN THIS ISSUE

#### ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR 2007

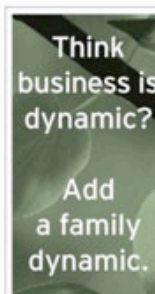
Once again, we roll out the red carpet for the dreamers, dealers and daredevils who are making big things happen in B.C.

#### TRADE SECRETS

Shady stock traders and promoters breathe easier as market watchers dim the lights.

#### BEAR MARKET

Who's really saving the Great Bear Rainforest? Hint: look south of the border.



Everything you need to support your family business.

Join today and receive a complimentary course.

> Learn more



### CROSSROADS



Figure 2. *BCBusiness* eNewsletter "Need to Know." Reproduced with permission of Canada Wide Media Ltd.

The eNewsletter was successful in attracting advertisers because it offered the opportunity to reach loyal and specific audiences directly in their email inboxes twice a month. For the first three months (April to June 2007) advertising in the eNewsletter was primarily offered as bonus to print campaigns for advertisers that were still unsure about the effectiveness of online advertising.

By the time of its launch, *BCBusiness's* eNewsletter subscriber list was around 4,000. This list was composed using lists of *BCBusiness* magazine subscribers, customers and advertisers, as well as personal contacts from sales account managers. The goal was to increase the number of subscribers to 5,000 by July 2008.

As a weekly invitation and reminder to visit the website, the eNewsletter was, and continues to be, a great source of traffic for the site. The software used to deliver the eNewsletter, Constant Contact, provided clear statistics on open rates, bounces and click-through rates. Such information has been used to monitor advertising campaigns and drive future changes in the design and content of the site.

## **Social Media**

Social Media is the equivalent of word-of-mouth promotion on the online world. Businesses can use social media to promote themselves because it generates quick response, has impact on search engine ranking, and has a low monetary cost.

Canada Wide Media's digital strategy did not include a long-term social networking initiative. However, shortly before the relaunch of *BCBusiness Online*, the Digital Media team thought that a short-term social media initiative would attract a younger demographic, who are heavy users of social media sites like Facebook, MySpace, and YouTube. This strategy would be mainly used to create awareness of the new site as well as to increase the eNewsletter subscriber's list. The use of social media seemed important to promote the new site, and once the site was live, to attract traffic.

The first incursion of *BCBusiness Online* into social media applications was through Facebook, the biggest social network site to date, where it was possible to create a group for people interested in doing business in British Columbia. The group was created a month before the live date of the site with the sole intention of creating awareness of the upcoming relaunch during the Top 100 event. The group got a good response and soon it had more than two hundred members; however, the challenge at this point was maintaining the group, because there was not a dedicated person to follow up with online marketing initiatives. Canada Wide Media realized that social media evolves rapidly and it was necessary to invest time in order to produce ideas to keep up with the trends; however, the social media strategy was put on hold until August 2008 when Canada Wide hired a Digital Marketing Manager.

## Offline Promotions

How did *BCBusiness Online* promote itself? The first resource available was the print magazine. Starting in July 2007 the magazine included a mention of the new website contents in the front of the magazine, and a full-page ad for the site of advertising in the interior pages, as illustrated in Figures 3 and 4.

If ever there was a time for bipartisan co-operation and support, it is now. So to the premier and the government I wish only to say: if your plan to get it done is as impressive as your reduction targets, tell us what we can do to help expedite it; we might have a fighting chance to turn things around.

Thanks for a great issue and a fantastic article. It got a lot of us talking.

*Christopher Ian Bennett,*  
**Interim leader,**  
**Green Party of British Columbia**

### Condo concerns

On the very day (March 3) I read your "Cost of Living" article (March '07) about strata corporation management, there was an item in the *Vancouver Sun* about a strata management company that has disappeared along with substantial amounts of money belonging to its 18 clients. So much for your statement that "licensing has banished the day when any misfit could hang up a management sign."

While I commend you for being the first in the media to delve into the murky industry of strata corporation management (long, long overdue), your writer has, unfortunately,

fraud. At that, the strata owners affected have only limited compensation for their losses through the legislation.

As one might imagine, the cost for a reliable and honest management company to operate under the new law has caused the better firms to drastically increase their fees for service. Consequently,

many small strata corporations now cannot afford good professional management, which is quite ironic given that the bottom-feeders will ostensibly serve them, but with less professional service and with greater risk. Indeed, the number of self-managed strata corporations will dramatically increase now, and most of them have little understanding of or concern about the law that governs them, i.e., The Strata Property Act. The new licensing scheme (The Real Estate Services Act) completely exempts all these strata corporations. Tens of thousands of condo owners are unprotected.

Licensing has also resulted in fewer people wanting employment in the industry. The effect, of course, is that existing personnel are deployed by their employers only on the large, profitable portfolios, and the smaller clients are punted out the door. Ah, the unintended consequences of seemingly great ideas, eh?



### Check it out !

**BCBusiness** is thrilled to announce the launch of our new and improved website, [bcbusinessonline.ca](http://bcbusinessonline.ca). It's packed with analysis and insight, and we want you to join the discussion. With new online tools, this is the place to learn, contribute and connect. □



### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR?

Email [ttjaden@canadawide.com](mailto:ttjaden@canadawide.com). Please include contact details. Letters may be edited for brevity, clarity and taste.

10 *BCBusiness* July 2007

**Figure 3. Announcement of the relaunch of *BCBusiness Online* published in *BCBusiness* magazine July 2007. Reproduced with permission of Canada Wide Media Ltd.**

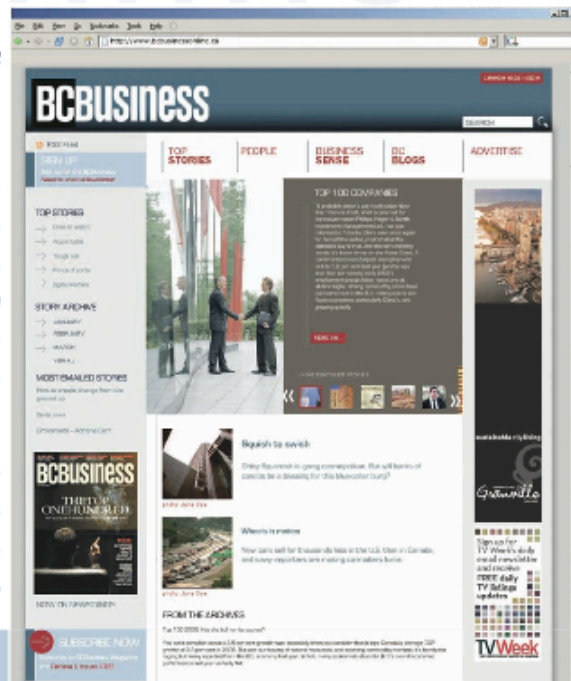


# BCBusiness NOW ONLINE!

If it's about business in BC,  
find it on **BCBusiness Online**:  
your new business community.

**Be competitive.**  
**Expand your network.**  
**Keep up with current trends.**  
**Be informed about the**  
**issues facing business.**  
**Stay on top.**

Full articles and columns  
Weekly updates | Podcasts  
Profiles | Archives  
BC Blogs | RSS feeds



**BCBusiness Online**  
your new business community  
**bcbusinessonline.ca**

Figure 4. Full-page ad in *BCBusiness* magazine July 2007. Reproduced with permission of Canada Wide Media Ltd.

The cross-promotion of *BCBusiness* online on other Canada Wide Media sites as well as the magazines that the company owns – like *BCBusiness* itself, *TVWeek*, *Granville*, and *GardenWise* – would take place by the time of the launch of the *BCBusiness* website in July 2007. The cross-promotion among Canada Wide’s sites would be an ongoing part of the marketing strategy.

### ***BCBUSINESS ONLINE ADVERTISING STRATEGY***

Online advertising has been developing quickly and in many directions. We have passed the time when it merely mimicked print advertising with simple text and static images. Today, online advertising includes movies, expandable banners, music, interactive games and contests, among others. Two main factors have allowed the web to become this remarkable marketing tool: firstly, the technology to host and deliver multimedia elements; and secondly, special software to manage, measure and track campaigns and visitors’ behaviour. During the first era of the Internet (the late nineties) and the World Wide Web, there were no reliable standards or methods to measure advertising delivery, campaign response and return on investment. At present, advertisers and publishers have set agreements and best practices on formatting, sizing, pricing and measuring tools that have helped greatly to set clear goals and expectations for publishers and advertisers.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Organizations like the Interactive Advertising Bureau ([www.iab.net](http://www.iab.net)) are making important efforts to set international standards for online advertising.

According to Guy Consterdine's survey on online magazines (2007: 8), there are many factors that attract new advertisers to online advertising; in the following section, I will explain them in the context of *BCBusiness Online*.

*Audience type:* Websites can reach different audiences than print magazines; advertisers are interested in reaching broader audiences. The new *BCBusiness* website could attract people who do not live in British Columbia, but are interested in investing or making business in the area; it could also attract younger people who read less in print, but visit magazine websites regularly.

At the same time, new technology allows advertisers to target very specific markets limited by geography, demographics and time; for example, a specific ad banner could be displayed only for people living on Vancouver, Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

*Speed and flexibility:* The Internet gives advertisers the opportunity to start their campaigns at any moment, since websites are not attached to a release or publication date. Online advertising has more flexibility as to when the ads are updated, changed and renewed.

*Audience size:* The old *BCBusiness* website had around 15,000 visits per month; the new website aimed to increase traffic to 50,000 visits by the end of September 2007. Thus, the *BCBusiness* website had the potential to attract higher traffic than the magazine circulation numbers of 26,000 copies per month.

*Low cost:* Online advertising is cheaper than print advertising; rates are flexible as well as deadlines and duration of campaigns. Many advertisers that cannot afford print banners could have an affordable and easy option to reach their customers.

*Ad packages:* Many advertisers that buy print campaigns are also interested in reaching online audiences. With the relaunch of *BCBusiness Online*, it would be easier for print advertisers to include the online version in their campaigns as an added value.

*Continuous presence:* In contrast with print campaigns, online advertising can be maintained for as long as the advertiser desires. The duration of a campaign can be measured in terms of time, impressions or click-throughs. *BCBusiness Online* would start selling on a monthly rate during the first year, and could adopt other revenue models once traffic increased: for example, pay by impressions, pay per click or pay per action.

*Interactivity:* Online advertising has a great advantage over print advertising due to the level of interaction between a customer and the product. Within the website it is possible to create activities like games, surveys, polls and contests produced or sponsored by a brand or a specific product. Thanks to online possibilities, customers are just a click away from various advertisers' offers.

*Sales leads:* The website has the ability to drive consumers to advertisers' websites through hyperlinks, giving them the opportunity to translate every sales lead into direct purchases.

*Measurability:* The reach of online advertising can be measured more accurately than print advertising. Advertisers are attracted to the fact that they can know how many people are getting their message and how many sales leads result from any given campaign. *BCBusiness Online* would use online tools to get basic statistics on banner views and clicks, as well as more elaborate results from campaigns that include polls, games, and contests.

### **Online Rates**

There are many ways to establish online advertising rates (cost per thousand, CPM; or cost per impression, or CPI; cost per click, or CPC; and cost per action, or CPA to mention some). The web has brought new ways to deliver and measure advertising campaigns; thus, establishing fair rates can be rather difficult. As a start, *BCBusiness* website decided to remain with monthly rates, so magazine advertisers could pair their online and print campaigns easily (see Figure 5.). The rates were considerably cheaper than the rates of the old website (see Figure 6.); these introductory rates were planned for the first year of the website, until advertisers, sales representatives and accounting staff were more familiar with online advertising procedures, specifications and distribution channels.



Enhance your *BCBusiness* print advertising on *bcbusinessonline.ca*. This is an effective way to gain full reach of the affluent senior business decision makers who visit *BCBusiness* magazine online. *bcbusinessonline.ca* offers a variety of advertising units to deliver your message effectively.

With over 4,710 unique visitors and more than 50,000 page views (tripled since the launch July 4th), the *BCBusiness* website is growing faster than ever!



### online advertising rates

Advertisers can contribute creative content to *BCBusiness* Online in the following sizes and formats:

AD TYPE	AD SIZE (Pixels)	MAX FILE SIZE	FORMATS	RATE-NET CPM*	RATE**
LEADERBOARD	728x90	40 k	GIF, JPEG, SWF	\$ 30	\$ 900
SKYSCRAPER	120x600	30 k	GIF, JPEG, SWF	\$ 30	\$ 850
VERTICAL BANNER	120x240	20 k	GIF, JPEG, SWF	\$ 25	\$ 750
BUTTON	125x125	10 k	GIF, JPEG, SWF	\$ 20	\$ 500
BIG BOX	468x300	30k	GIF, JPEG, SWF	\$ 30	\$ 900

\*CPM is 'cost per mile', and estimates the cost per 1000 views of the ad.  
 \*\*Rates for August, September, October 2007.

Figure 5. *BCBusiness Online* introductory rates after July 2007. Reproduced with permission of Canada Wide Media Ltd.

# MAGAZINE

## bcbusinessmagazine.com

### Online Advertising

Enhance your *BCBusiness* print advertising on *bcbusinessmagazine.com*. With over **35,000 impressions each month** it is an effective way to gain full reach of the affluent senior business decision makers who visit *BCBusiness* magazine online.

#### Rates for *bcbusinessmagazine.com*

*bcbusinessmagazine.com* offers a variety of advertising units to deliver your message effectively.

Format	Size (pixels)	Cost per Month
<b>Buttons</b> A button (104 x 67) is a rectangular ad located on the low left of the content page	<b>104x67</b>	<b>\$750</b>
<b>Mini-Box</b> A mini-box (100 x 100) is a square ad located on the right of the content page	<b>100 x 100</b>	<b>\$1250</b>
<b>Banner</b> A banner (468 x 60) is a rectangular ad located at the top right of the content page	<b>468 x 60</b>	<b>\$1500</b>
<b>Skyscraper</b> A skyscraper, also called a column, (100 x 500) is a large rectangular ad located on the right side of the content page	<b>120 x 600</b>	<b>\$1750</b>

#### WEBSITE STATISTICS (per month - based on ads running on all pages\*)

Visits 15,090  
 Average visits per day 486  
 Unique Visitors 4,920  
 Page views/impressions 35,735  
 Average pages per visitor 2.36  
 (\*numbers will change if ads are rotated)

#### ADVERTISEMENT SPECIFICATIONS:

**Maximum file size:** 25KB  
**Format:** Static or animated GIF, JPEG, SWF  
 Send ads to Brianne Roe at [broe@canadawide.com](mailto:broe@canadawide.com) (ph: 604-473-0317)  
 (Ad creation: \$300 - \$500 for static ads, \$750 - \$1000 for flash ads)

ADVERTISING • EVENTS • SPONSORSHIPS • INTERNET • PROMOTIONS • INSERTS • POLYBAGS • CREATIVE SERVICES



Figure 6. *BCBusinessmagazine.com* online rates before July 2007. Reproduced with permission of Canada Wide Media Ltd.

## Advertising Management

The consulting company recommended using ad-serving software to manage internal and external campaigns successfully. According to company, the use of an external advertising server has the following advantages:

- Ads are managed by software that is designed with this one task in mind;
- A variety of “rules” are available to determine which ads are placed where, when and how often;
- Ads can be sent to zones on pages without having to change code on the web site;
- Ad serving software includes reporting tools that allow for the tracking of views and click-through;
- Ad serving enables campaigns to be limited by geographical and time zones.

There are many options for ad serving software; there are companies that offer complete management, maintenance, troubleshooting and reporting services. Basic ad-server software is also available for free, although it requires that all maintenance, upgrading, backing up and management be done in-house. The recommendation from the consulting company was to use an open source ad-serving tool then called Open Ads and now called OpenX<sup>18</sup>, one of the most robust pieces of free software available at the time. OpenX was implemented by the consulting company and was managed by in-house staff. OpenX proved to be an excellent tool that simplified the management and placement of online advertising

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<sup>18</sup> The first generation of this ad-serving software was called PhpAdsNew, during the development of *BCBusiness* new website it changed it's name to OpenAds. Finally, in 2008 it changed its name to OpenX.



inventory, all of which could be done by one person. This situation gave room for the inclusion of a web production coordinator to the digital media staff shortly after the relaunch of the *BCBusiness* website.

### **Advertising Revenue Models**

*BCBusiness Online* included in its advertising strategy the following revenue models:

*Site ad placement* - Regular ad banners would be the first and easiest way to start advertising campaigns. The consulting company recommended using the sizes approved by the Interactive Advertising Bureau<sup>19</sup> that had been accepted as industry standards. The banners chosen were Skyscraper (120 x 600 pixels); Leaderboard (728 x 90 pixels); Vertical Banner (120 x 240 pixels); Button (125 x 125 pixels) Half page (300 x 600 pixels); the last one was switched for a custom size, a horizontal box (468 x 300 pixels), due to changes in the layout at the final stages of development.

The web consulting company that helped Canada Wide to start their digital strategy also recommended against using expandable banners (*i.e.*, banners that increase their size when the mouse rolls over, covering part of the webpage), banners with music, pop-up windows or gimmicks that try to catch the readers' attention at all costs. The reasons to avoid them are many; for instance, pop-up windows are blocked by a number of browsers, requiring the user to click to allow

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<sup>19</sup> Visit [www.iab.com](http://www.iab.com) for more information.

their display on the site; moreover, *BCBusiness* has portrayed itself as a magazine that features serious content, thus expandable or musical banners would distract and even annoy the audience; not to mention that in general, those kinds of ads are more expensive to produce and manage.

*Banner ads and text ads in newsletter* –The newsletter would also have advertising in the form of banners or advertorial, *i.e.*, advertiser-sponsored text that praises a product or service, with a link to the advertiser's site.

### **New Challenges**

In summary, Canada Wide Media could increase its advertising revenue by offering advertisers rich tools like animated banners, video, more audiences, targeted campaigns, low-cost initiatives, print and online packaging, speed of implementation, time flexibility, measurements and sales leads. However, online advertising also represented challenges for both advertisers and publishers, and the relaunch of *BCBusiness Online* helped to clarify some of those challenges. On the one hand, advertisers and sales representatives had to learn new terms and technical specifications for sizes, advertising models and distribution channels. On the other, the digital media division had to work with limited resources. It learned that as the advertising inventory grew, and the account sales representatives had more requests and questions, the online advertising coordination would have to be done by one dedicated person who would work in coordination with the sales department in order to establish clear production processes, rate cards, campaign measurements and reporting systems.

As planned, *BCBusiness Online* was up and running by July 4, 2007. The implementation process did not go as smoothly as was expected, but it ended with the delivery of a fully functional site. By launch date the users were be able to:

- Read full articles from the current issue;
- Read weekly blog entries from Tony Wanless;
- Comment on every entry as an anonymous reader or under a login name;
- Email any article to a friend;
- View the top 5 'most emailed articles' from the site.
- Search throughout the site and soon, through all Canada Wide Media sites, thanks to the multisite set up in Drupal;
- Get access to the magazine's archives;
- Subscribe to eNewsletters;
- Subscribe to RSS feeds;
- Listen to podcasts for free;
- Participate in polls with real-time results.

The process of relaunching *BCBusiness's* site was a great opportunity for Canada Wide Media to test the implementation of its online strategy. Not every part of the plan could be implemented, being time and resources being the main obstacles. The test opened the door for Canada Wide Media to new opportunities it had not considered before, like the scope of advertising models; and at the same time, it revealed new challenges, like copyright issues and the lack of clear standards to measure traffic and advertising results. In the final chapter, this report will discuss the main findings and the lessons learned by the company during its first incursion into online publishing.

## **CHAPTER 3: LESSONS LEARNED**

The relaunch of *BCBusiness Online* was used as a test of the new digital strategy at Canada Wide Media. It was a test designed to assess previous assumptions, to try methods and to identify obstacles. The first chapter of this report described the general strategy that Canada Wide Media prepared for its entrée into online publishing, and how, at each step, the company realized that creating an online business involved more than just developing sites. Canada Wide Media evolved from the basic idea of putting text and pictures online into digital publishing, including online marketing, online advertising, and web-only content production.

The second chapter of this report described how Canada Wide applied its digital strategy specifically in the relaunch of *BCBusiness Online*. During the implementation and after relaunching the site, the company identified the main challenges and new methods to solve obstacles, important lessons that Canada Wide could apply on subsequent sites launches. The most important fact was that Canada Wide confirmed that online and print publishing are different, but can complement each other in order to create a viable business model. The company learned that online publishing redefines the role of publishers, authors, readers, and even the very concept of publishing.

The main objective of the present chapter is to offer an overview of the learning process and the main lessons that resulted from it. This chapter will

recount the way Canada Wide Media confirmed the differences between print and online publishing and the best practices for designing, developing, marketing and advertise its online products.

## **ONLINE PUBLISHING IS NOT PRINT PUBLISHING**

During its first consulting sessions, Canada Wide Media executives grew to understand the numerous ways in which publishing online was different from print publishing. Beyond the obvious differences in medium (paper versus Internet), Canada Wide executives learned that preparing, designing, and maintaining online products would require different resources, owing to the fact that most successful magazine websites have discovered dynamic ways to deliver content, engage readers and obtain revenue, pushing well beyond representing themselves online as a simple archive of their print product.

Moreover, the team understood that websites are not tangible merchandise; they only live in the virtual world. Accustomed to having physical products, there was a generalized feeling that the company was missing a final object when the new *BCBusiness Online* was up and running. Canada Wide Media had to get used to launch products that could not be displayed on a shelf.

There are no official guides or manuals on how to take a magazine business to the online arena; therefore, Canada Wide Media had to learn the process as it was being developed. One of the most critical lessons for Canada Wide Media was that the successful creation of an online magazine goes further than just putting text

and pictures online, it involves delivering magazine content using new strategies for design, content production, marketing and advertising models, which offers potential for interaction with the readers. In what follows, this report will detail what where the main areas in which Canada Wide Media drew the most important lessons.

### **Design Lessons**

A key lesson that Canada Wide Media learned about online design is how different the process is from print magazines. The design of a website is deeply interrelated with its functionality; a good design takes into account how readers navigate through the site and what tasks they perform. The steps that website development involve are more and more complex than print design. According to Van Duyne et al. (2004:88) the development process of a website has seven steps:

- 1) discovery: understanding the target market;
- 2) exploration: creating rough design proposals and decide on one;
- 3) refinement: working on the layout and flow of the selected design;
- 4) production: developing the blueprint of the site;
- 5) implementation: coding;
- 6) launch: making the site available online;
- 7) maintenance: revising functionality and updating content

The design of the website takes place during the first four stages because each step would determine how the site would be organized, what tasks would be performed and how the website would look. The design of the homepage and the landing pages of *BCBusiness Online* illustrated the need of careful planning: the first design approved did not adequately take into account how little content could be featured

every month. After the refining phase the team at Canada Wide realized that by launch date the website would only have content from the July 2007 issue and one blog entry; therefore, there would not be enough content to fill all the positions available, which led to a quick revision of the layout of the landing pages that solved the problem but without an aesthetic appeal. The company learned that changes in design needed to be done before the implementation began, which could save time and money in the long term.

The process of developing a website has proven to be an ongoing one, because after *BCBusiness Online* was built, there was important feedback from stakeholders and users, which conducted to the discovery phase in order to start the overall process all over again. The company learned that website design is flexible because it can accommodate to the user's and publisher's needs, but that some changes online take longer than for print magazines due to the intricate relation between design and functionality. Canada Wide Media learned that in order to continuously improve readability, navigation and appearance of the website, it was necessary to count on an interactive designer in-house, who would have to work closely with the developer on a daily basis. The new designer was hired in August 2007 and started working right away on improvements for *BCBusiness Online*, Canada Wide Media determined that making changes and adding tools gradually, in increments, would be more effective and affordable than relaunching a site every year.

Since the relaunch of *BCBusiness Online* in July 2007 the site has gone through continuous improvements and as of March 2009 the site does not resemble the first version at all, proving that a website is never finished, but that it is an ongoing project that has to keep up with the latest digital trends.

### **Content Production Lessons**

In order to create useful and interesting content that attracts readers, a publisher needs to understand how the medium can influence the way content is delivered and the way it is consumed by readers. At first glance, web and print pages had similar layouts; however, Canada Wide Media realized that a page in a magazine does not equal a page on a website; the former is static and offers a one way communication channel; the latter is dynamic and requires deep and active participation from the reader, therefore, Canada Wide Media faced the challenge of creating new ways to produce, present and design online content that successfully meet the needs and expectations of readers and advertisers. Canada Wide Media confirmed that online magazines should not rely solely on content from the print magazine. The company now understands that it is mandatory for online products to provide exclusive digital content that adds value to the brand, increases traffic and keeps readers interested.

Canada Wide Media found that the production of web-only content may or may not be tied to the magazine production schedule. If online content were planned as a complement to print articles, it would have to be available at the same time the magazine is out. Nevertheless, online content could be published at



any time as independent pieces in form of videos, blogs, podcasts and photo galleries. All of this, however, requires an important investment of time, skilled staff, special software and hardware. Prior to launch, the company determined it would purchase digital audio equipment, having assigned staff to produce audio podcasts, but only later was able to assign resources to video production; it was therefore well after launch when the company acquired a digital camera and a semi-professional video camera as well.

Another important reality about content strategy was related to archival content. Canada Wide Media planned to create an online archive from past magazines. This proved complicated in two ways. Canada Wide Media did not own rights for electronic publication of material produced by freelance writers, photographers and illustrators from the pre-online era of Canada Wide Media. Second, in order to upload the approved archive material, more time and staff effort was required. The result was an incomplete archive and the creation of new contracts that would grant electronic rights to Canada Wide Media.

In order to develop user-generated content, it is important to encourage readers to play an active role on the website, but for *BCBusiness Online*, early calls to obtain user-generated content did not produce the expected results. Comments, for example, were open to everybody at the time of the relaunch of *BCBusiness Online* (July 4), but after a month the site only had a total of three comments. Therefore, Canada Wide Media learned that getting users to participate in the discussions on the site was harder than they thought, as it required continuous

participation and encouragement from staff that was busy preparing other material. Other calls for contribution like “Your Big Idea”, “Your WhoWhatWear”, and “Your Need to Know” were, in principle, good ideas, but they had unclear processes for submitting and vague benefits for contributors. Canada Wide Media learned that the key was to build traffic first through quality original content and then to launch contests and calls for participation based on natural readers’ responses that would need to be monitored and managed by a member of the staff, preferably a marketing manager or coordinator.

In summary, the content issues that Canada Wide Media faced during and after the relaunch of *BCBusiness Online* were the lack of electronic rights, the lack of clear strategies to encourage user generated content, and a lack of staff resources. Most, if not all, of these difficulties could have been resolved with more staff for the Digital Media Division. A clear finding from this process is that in order to produce digital web content for an online magazine, it is an absolute requirement to have an online editor and multimedia producers dedicated solely to the web.

### **Marketing Lessons**

The main marketing goal for *BCBusiness Online* was to build traffic in order to increase advertising revenue. Canada Wide Media learned that traditional marketing strategies like offline events and promotion in print publications were not enough in order to achieve its primary goal: increasing the site’s traffic by 100 per cent over a year of operation. It was necessary to implement online-exclusive

marketing strategies. Once *BCBusiness Online* was “live” it was important to make it present on the web. This meant implementing strategies to make the site “search-engine-friendly” and starting a dialogue with online communities. The Digital Media Division focused its efforts on three basic online methods: email marketing, search engine optimization, and participation in social media. The company noticed that all these strategies were ongoing tasks, not just one-time implementations; besides, online marketing tools and tactics changed continuously, making it almost mandatory to invest time and resources to keep up with the latest trends.

The preparation and delivery of the *BCBusiness* eNewsletter was an excellent marketing strategy that continues to draw readers to the website periodically. It also offered a great opportunity for advertisers to reach potential customers by personal email every two weeks, thereby adding to advertising revenue for the division. These reasons made the eNewsletter an important complement to every website at Canada Wide Media.

Besides eNewsletters, the most important source of traffic is search engines. Canada Wide learned that building a website was just the first step to attract readers: the other important step was to ensure that the websites was discoverable by search engines. Canada Wide Media realized that by applying certain search optimization strategies to its sites, it could increase the probability of being ranked at the top of topic-related search results, thereby increasing the probability of visits to the site.

Finally, social media strategies were limited to Facebook, which was used as a tool to casually and informally spread the word about *BCBusiness Online* relaunch. A Facebook group was built before the launch and that gave the Digital Media Division some time to make the brand known to younger audiences. Once *BCBusiness Online* was up and running, the Facebook group had more than two hundred members and was used to promote new articles; however, the participation in online social networks required a dedicated person to interact with members on the group, engage on discussions about *BCBusiness* content so people could go visit the site looking for more information. Canada Wide Media learned that its social media strategies were just a start. But Facebook was only one of many social networks that *BCBusiness* could and would later use to bring traffic to the site and increase links to the site in other sites. Social media tools and networks are in constant development, which demands a big time investment from publishers in order to build a stable community. Canada Wide Media would need to hire a dedicated person who could follow the steps to social media success: to monitor and observe, to locate audience and find opportunities, to formulate a long-term strategy, to engage and participate, and to evaluate and adjust.

### **Advertising Lessons**

The world of online advertising offered a vast collection of models that were not previously known by Canada Wide Media. In addition to static banners, online advertising includes animated and interactive banners, direct email, sponsorships, interactive contests, rich media, videos and podcasts. However, the company

learned that there were two main factors that prevented the inclusion of special advertising on the relaunch of *BCBusiness Online*. First, the production, management and hosting of these type of ads requires staff expertise and special software to host and measure campaigns; second, it was not an easy task to establish technical specifications, rates (cost per thousand, per click or per action), measurement and billing processes. The company decided to start simply with static banners and monthly rates, and applied the same model to subsequent websites. Canada Wide also realized that it was necessary to train its sales staff and to educate advertisers on how online advertising works: how it is delivered, what formats are needed and what would be the processes for selling, setting up and billing campaigns, before implemented complex advertising campaigns. However, by launch date the *BCBusiness* sales team managed to fill up the five rotating spots available for advertising on the site: leaderboard, skyscraper, vertical banner, button and big box. The advertisers were all sponsors of the Top One Hundred event who had the resources necessary to create extra online banners to complement their print campaigns. At that time, *BCBusiness Online* did not have web-only initiatives, but in just two months, the real estate of the site was sold out with print and web-only advertisers. The Digital Media Division and the sales team agreed on limiting the availability to five advertisers per banner size. The ads were displayed randomly and equally in order to ensure the same number of impressions to every advertiser.

Successful advertising results depend, among other factors, on the number of people that an ad campaign reaches. Canada Wide Media learned that online advertising could be measured in a more effective and faster way than print advertising. As soon as the *BCBusiness Online* was live, performance reports were produced during and after a campaign was in place, which provided valuable information about impressions and click through rates to each advertiser. However, because there are no set standards for readers' response or effectiveness, it was difficult to establish clear parameters for success on return on investment. Again, Canada Wide Media learned that staff with the right expertise would be needed.

Finally, many regular advertisers did not have resources for creating online advertising. This situation presented itself as a new opportunity for Canada Wide for complementing its online business with advertising production. The challenges were to get expert staff, special software and to establish processes for billing and delivery.

All in all, Canada Wide Media was confident that its digital products would be a continuous and incremental source of revenue for the company. The success would be creativity shown by sales representatives and advertisers to conceive attractive online campaigns.

## **MORE THAN A MAGAZINE PUBLISHER**

The relaunch of *BCBusiness Online* was a great opportunity for Canada Wide to learn in-house and from experience what takes to become a digital publisher. The

relaunch marked the end of the transformation of the company from a print to a media publisher, and proved that it is feasible and even necessary for a traditional magazine publisher to enter to the digital arena. The relaunch aimed to clarify many of the new processes surrounding the general digital strategy at Canada Wide Media, especially in areas like content management, production and advertising. The lessons learned during and after the relaunch of the site had helped to set clear and realistic expectations for future products, as well as the differences and similarities between print and digital publishing. Canada Wide Media no longer considered the Internet and the World Wide Web as a threat, but as new tools to reach advertisers and readers in an effective and complementary way. In summary, *BCBusiness Online* relaunch demonstrated that print and online magazines do not always compete, they can complement each other and become two facets of a brand if the demands of producing digital products are taken seriously.

The most important take-away for Canada Wide Media was the creation of its Digital Media Division. The division was created to be a relatively self-sufficient unit that would create digital counterparts to the print magazines produced by Canada Wide. During planning, the company was very careful not to overburden its existing editorial staff with “extra” work online; after all, that staff had a full workload in print. However, as the development of the site was taking place, the need for collaboration between print and digital departments became increasingly evident. In order to be able to plan and create complementary or related online content in advance to a magazine publishing date, members of the Digital Media

Division began to attend editorial meetings where future magazine content was discussed and planned; this gave the digital team the opportunity to brainstorm about potential multimedia features for upcoming stories, and encouraged print editorial teams to think about their stories as belonging to a brand that expands to the World Wide Web, and that can be delivered through other formats in addition to print.

Canada Wide Media expected that a small department would be able to maintain the websites; thus, the addition of specialized human resources to form a competitive and efficient division was completed as the need for a particular role arose. This strategy arguably resulted in a shortage of staff for the *BCBusiness Online* relaunch. There were not enough staff members or resources to maintain the current site and launch others in a sustainable way because every aspect of online publishing required time and resources in order to achieve goals like traffic growth, content production and community building. As a result, the team had to pull together and set priorities. For example, at the time of the relaunch, the digital team was not able to produce a large volume of web-only material and rely on the magazine editorial team to help contribute extra content for the website. The team also had to make decisions about limiting the amount of content that could be published for launch, due to copyright choices. It also suspended some of its community-building efforts until additional resources could be hired to support them. Later on and over the first year of the Digital Media Division there were additions to the staff: web production coordinator (August 2007), interactive



designer (September 2007), online editor (January 2008) and online marketing manager (August 2008). Each position became a liaison between the Digital Media Division and other departments in the company, which was an important step for the fusion of print and digital publishing models.

## CONCLUSION

The creation and implementation of a new digital media business model at Canada Wide Media was an important and necessary step towards the modernization of the company. This report documented and analyzed the opportunities and challenges that Canada Wide Media encountered in order to establish a new digital strategy that complemented its current magazine business. The goal of the report was to describe the obstacles and requirements that a magazine publisher needs to take into consideration before and after entering to the online world. The report contained specifications on preparation, performance and on-going processes that were put in place when establishing the new business model. Specifically, this report illustrates how the new Digital Media division at Canada Wide Media worked and used the re-launch of *BCBusiness Online* as its first test of its new digital strategy, ultimately revealing how different and challenging online publishing can be in comparison to traditional print publishing.

The first chapter of this report shows how in approaching the very new and unknown world of digital publishing, Canada Wide Media sought the advice of an external consultant who provided an assessment of the company's strengths, as well as advice about how to utilize those strengths in a new medium. The advice was followed but ultimately modified as the internal Digital Media Division

observed the successes and failures of the strategies applied during the relaunch of *BCBusiness Online*.

The second chapter describes how the Digital Media Division and the consulting company worked on the relaunch of *BCBusiness Online* and the processes that followed it. This chapter analyzed the challenges that Canada Wide Media and, specially, the Digital Media Division encountered at every step, and the realization that previous considerations did not answer all the questions and situations that arose almost at every stage of the relaunch. The main challenge was to understand each of the steps involved on the production of a website and the time and resources that each phase took. The relaunch of *BCBusiness Online* also taught the company much, as mentioned, about the differences between print and online publishing – as well as the similarities. The company learned quickly that simply republishing existing content from the magazine would not satisfy reader needs. However, particular expertise was required to produce specialized content – and to market it. A key takeaway for the Canada Wide Media, ultimately, was that digital writers and editors needed to be as well versed in dynamic content, multimedia as with written content, and equally skilled at marketing their editorial content as at creating it. In addition, it was discovered that marketing was a key part of launching a site and that specialized skills in online marketing and web analytics skills were required to understand how to support the growth of a site from launch onwards. Advertising, additionally, was revealed to be a completely different game online than it was in print. Existing resources in editorial, sales and

advertising, production and marketing, therefore, were not always qualified to support the new site. The young Digital Media Division quickly developed skills in search engine optimization, understanding and responding to web analytics, online advertising and incorporating optimal tags and metatags into their content.

The final chapter summarized the findings, the lessons learned and their influence in Canada Wide Media's final perception about online publishing. The following considerations are presented in detail:

1. Online publishing is different from print publishing because they have different ways to design, produce and deliver content. Online publishing is dynamic and offers a visual and audible experience to the reader.

2. Online needs to merge with print or at least establish continuous collaboration between print and online departments in order to produce and maintain successful websites. Quality content production, successful promotion and lucrative advertising campaigns depend on the integration of print and online channels that represent one brand.

3. Specialized resources are key to produce and maintain successful online businesses. Great content is not enough; the success of an online endeavour will be directly proportional to the time, money and resources invested.

This report suggests that all the above lessons rely on human resources. Ensuring adequate personnel to provide development, design, editorial, marketing

and sales support was decisive for obtaining adequate results for a sustainable business model.

At the beginning of the process Canada Wide Media created the Digital Media Division in order to solve a specific need: online publishing. This new division was created as a self-sufficient business within a business; however, after the relaunch of *BCBusiness Online*, the company began to understand that some synergies would have to be encouraged done between the new division and existing departments so that ultimately they could create together a successful and sustainable model for publishing.

This report offers a case study on how a traditional magazine publisher can plan and implement a digital strategy for their own publications. On the one hand, this report illustrates the advantages that magazine publishers have over other businesses that want to start an online endeavour: similar administrative and staffing structures in place, well-known processes to produce quality content and experience on how to engage and create loyal communities among readers and advertisers. On the other hand, magazine publishers can benefit from the learned lessons presented because the report contributes to the overall understanding of online publishing as a new business model that can be merged with existing print processes.

## **PRESENT AND FUTURE OF THE DIGITAL MEDIA AT CANADA WIDE**

Since the relaunch of *BCBusiness Online* in 2007 to the final redaction of this report at the beginning of 2009, the Digital Media Division at Canada Wide Media has grown from four people to eleven full-time workers plus two internship positions. After the launch of *BCBusiness Online*, the Digital Media Division has been in charge of developing and maintaining four other sites –*TVWeek*, *GardenWise*, *Canada Wide's corporate site* and *Granville*– and its working on the sixth one –*Youthink*–; six eNewsletters –*BCBusiness events*, *TVWeek*, *GardenWise*, *Granville*, *Real Golf* and *BC Home*– and has helped to produce numerous banners and advertising campaigns for new and old advertisers. The collaboration between the Digital Media Division and the rest of the company has translated to a significant increment in traffic, participation from readers, and eNewsletter subscribers. Every project has been different and has represented a new set of challenges *BCBusiness Online* help in addressing pressing issues derived from digital media, including legal electronic rights and sales and marketing upgrades, among others; and established initial workflows and processes, has been especially noteworthy. The implementation of the new digital strategy at Canada Wide Media opened a new chapter in the long history of the company, in which Canada Wide Media and its Digital Media Division are continuously learning and experimenting with new concepts, ideas, tools and applications that have incremented the benefits for the company, its advertisers and, more importantly, its readers.

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