CMGT 528 | Section 21723 | Fall 2019

Website Strategies For Organizations

Content Strategy For Websites With A Purpose

Instructor: Freddy Tran Nager, MBA, fnager@usc.edu
Class Time: Tuesdays, 6:30-9:20pm
Classroom: ANN L101
Office Hours: Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays 2-5pm (by appointment)
Units: 4

The web isn't what it used to be. Since public websites first launched in 1993, the responsibilities of web developers, strategists, and managers have evolved significantly. Web professionals no longer simply repurpose print media to create static "brochure-ware." They now plan, direct, and manage dynamic websites that *perform* as well as *inform*:

- reducing business costs
- improving customer service
- contributing to the bottom line

In short, today's websites must solve problems and meet organizational goals. Consequently, this course does not teach "design" in terms of graphics, although design principles will be discussed. Nor is it a programming course, though students will learn how to use WordPress and Google Analytics. Rather, this course emphasizes *website content strategies*: how to plan and direct websites to serve a purpose.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This course combines theory, research, practical skills, teamwork, and hands-on experience in the process of creating and launching an actual website. By the end of this course, you will acquire expertise and experience in the following:

- Researching site users and other stakeholders to gain insights into their web-usage habits and needs.
- Evaluating and selecting website publishing platforms and content management systems.
- Directing website content to shape, enhance, protect, and promote brands.
- Optimizing online content (text, images, video, etc.) for both search engines and user experience.
- Analyzing site traffic and behavior to discern trends and improve performance.
- Planning and managing ecommerce content amidst global competition.
- Creating governance policies and standards to meet short- and long-term objectives.
- Establishing and managing website production processes and vendor management policies.

INSTRUCTOR

Freddy Tran Nager is the Entrepreneurial Communication Expert in Residence at Annenberg, where he has taught graduate courses since 2012. Freddy also founded and runs the consultancy Atomic Tango LLC, and has over two decades of experience in online marketing. In1994, he served as Editor of one of the world's first entertainment websites, *AMP: MCA Records Online* (a division of Universal Music Group). He then joined major ad agency Saatchi & Saatchi as Sr. Interactive Copywriter for Toyota's award-winning website and online advertising. Since then, he has worked on sites for Nissan/Infiniti, the National Lampoon, and numerous startups. A second-generation Trojan, Freddy received his MBA from USC and his BA from Harvard.

READINGS & RESOURCES

In addition to the books and online sources below, you will read and discuss assigned articles (detailed in the Lecture Schedule).

Required:
- Jaime Levy, *UX Strategy*, 2015 O'Reilly Media (free via USC library)
- Tim Ash, Landing Page Optimization, 2012 Wiley (free via USC library)
- Moz, "Beginner's Guide To SEO," https://moz.com/beginners-guide-to-seo
- Moz, "Beginner's Guide To Content Marketing," https://moz.com/beginners-guide-to-content-marketing
- Various articles will be assigned and discussed. Please see the Lecture Schedule.

For additional guidance on WordPress and other applications:
- Annenberg Digital Lounge (for all your how-to/tactical needs), http://annenbergdl.com

ASSIGNMENTS

These assignments are not reports. They should demonstrate your ability to apply graduate-level research, academic theories, analytical frameworks, creativity, and critical thinking. In addition, all papers will be graded on the quality of the writing, presentation, and production. Note that the following are just overviews: complete assignment requirements will be provided in detailed prompts.

- **Website Evaluation & Writing Assessment (10%):** In 500 words, evaluate the website of any B-Corporation (http://bcorporation.net) on the basis of the 3B's:

  - **Brand:** How does the website support the organization's image, reputation, and trustworthiness?
  - **Buzz:** How does the website support and promote "word of mouth" and press coverage?
  - **Behavior:** How does the website encourage and facilitate desired actions from users?

  This assignment also tests your writing skills. Your first draft will be marked up and returned to you for revisions. Note: revised papers are not guaranteed a grade increase.

- **Website Development:** Throughout the course, you will create a website to promote yourself. Note: You may choose a different topic/client with instructor approval. You also have the option of working in teams of up to 3 members. This assignment comprises 3 parts:

  - **User Research (20%):** Analyze 4 different stakeholders: yourself (or your client), key competitor, and 2 different users. No guessing or stereotypes — your analysis must be based on direct research of the stakeholders or secondary research of authoritative sources.

  - **Content Plan (20%):** Based on your Stakeholders Analyses, create a style guide (design and voice), content matrix, sitemap of top content pages, and wireframe of the homepage.

  - **Website Execution (20%):** Based on your plan, develop a WordPress-based website integrating SEO tactics. You will share this on Blackboard December 17.

- **Google Analytics Individual Qualification (10%):** You will take Google Analytics Beginning AND Advanced courses online (https://analytics.google.com/analytics/academy/), then pass the Individual Qualification (IQ) exam. You may submit your I.Q. certificate any time before the last day of the course.

- **Weekly Article Evaluations (10%)**: In addition to assigned readings, every week you will select a relevant, recent (within six months) article from an academic journal or one of the following sites:

  - Los Angeles Times, http://latimes.com
  - New York Times, http://nytimes.com

- o   Wall Street Journal, http://wsj.com
- o   MOZ (SEO and content strategy), http://moz.com
- o   Avinash Kaushik: Occam's Razor (analytics), https://www.kaushik.net/avinash/
- o   Baymard Institute (ecommerce UX research), https://baymard.com/
- o   Content Marketing Institute, http://contentmarketinginstitute.com/

In approximately 100-300 words, you will summarize your article, add your opinion and/or real world example, and share it on Blackboard. Each week, one student will be randomly selected to present their evaluation in class. I also encourage you to read and comment on articles posted by your classmates. Your comments count toward your course participation grade.

- **Class Participation (10%):** Attendance alone won't earn participation points. You must contribute to most discussions in class and on Blackboard: speak, ask questions, and debate respectfully. Preparation is essential: complete assigned readings before class, research additional materials, and apply theories to personal and professional experiences. Staying silent is unacceptable, especially in the company of guest speakers, since it conveys disengagement. Here is how your class participation is evaluated:

  - o   Is it relevant to the discussion and respectful of others?
  - o   Does it address ideas offered by the reading and by classmates?
  - o   Does it increase everyone's understanding or merely repeat facts?
  - o   Does it support views with data, third-party theories, and research?
  - o   Does it test new ideas and challenge assumptions, or just "play it safe"?

GRADES + GUIDELINES

A	93.0% or higher (extremely rare)
A-	90.0%-92.9%
B+	87.0%-89.9%
B	83.0%-86.9%
B-	80.0%-82.9%
C+	77.0%-79.9%
C	73.0%-76.9%
C-	70.0%-72.9%
D	60.0%-69.9%
F	59.9% or lower

Grading Components
- Class Participation   10%
- Weekly Article Evaluation   10%
- Website Evaluation   10%
- Google Analytics Individual Qualification   10%
- User Research   20%
- Content Plan   20%
- Website Execution   20%

- **Criteria:** A's and A-minuses must be earned by "going the extra mile" to develop professional caliber work that could be presented to a client or CEO. A-level work is mistake-free, reflects in-depth research of authoritative sources, demonstrates a strong understanding of the course material, and shows high-level creativity, critical thinking, and communication skills. Recommendations will be provided on request to students who earn an A.

  B's are awarded for graduate-school caliber work, reflecting in-depth research of authoritative sources, critical thinking, and a strong understanding of course material. The ideas and writing would need to be stronger to succeed in a professional setting.

  C's are given to undergraduate-caliber work, reflecting little critical thinking and insufficient research.

D's and lower are given to amateurish work, marked by insufficient research, many errors, or superficial analysis.

- **Deadlines:** Without an exceptional circumstance and permission from the instructor in advance, late assignments will not be accepted.

- **Attendance:** You must attend every class, arrive on time, and stay for the entire class (missing more than 10 minutes counts as a half absence). Makeup assignments will be given for any *excused* absences, such as illnesses or athletic commitments. Should you need to miss a class, notify the instructor in advance (except, of course, in the case of emergencies), and obtain what you missed from classmates and Blackboard. Two unexcused absences will result in a complete loss of participation points. More than two unexcused absences will result in a course grade of C- or lower. Note: coming to class while ill, or using a phone or computer in class, will be counted as an absence, since you are in attendance but not truly present.

- **Critical Thinking:** In communication there are few "right" answers: what works for one company might fail for another, or even for the same company at another time. Assignments must describe "why" and "how," not just "what," and will be evaluated on the quality of the reasoning.

- **Professional Writing:** Since this is a graduate program in communication, writing matters. Eliminate all errors by proofreading carefully, using Microsoft Word spelling and grammar check, and/or Grammarly.com (recommended). If you need help with fluency or simply polishing your work, contact Annenberg's Graduate Writing Coach: http://cmgtwriting.uscannenberg.org/

- **Research and References:**

    o Your work must be supported by research from authoritative sources, such as academic journals, professional news publications, and credible experts. Vet each of your sources using the SMELL test:
        - **Source:** What is their background, including education and experience?
        - **Motivation:** Why did they write/say what they did? Is there a bias?
        - **Evidence:** What is their proof?
        - **Logic:** How is their reasoning?
        - **Left-Out:** Did they leave out key points or jump to conclusions?
    o Start with the USC online library instead of Google.
    o Interview experts on campus or online, or conduct focus groups and surveys.
    o If you use Wikipedia, do not cite it as a reference. Rather, refer to the sources listed in the Wikipedia article, and cite if applicable.
    o Bibliography entries must include complete source information — a URL alone is never enough. Chicago Manual of Style format preferred (https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org), but you may use any format that includes ALL the following: COMPLETE author names (not just surnames or initials), article/chapter titles, the name of the publication/website, and dates of publication.

- **Respect:** Treat classmates and guests with courtesy. You may certainly question and criticize ideas — that is encouraged in the learning environment — but never criticize the person. (Say "I see it differently" instead of "I disagree.") You may eat in class, but not when clients are present.

- **Electronics:** Phones may NOT be used at any time in the classroom. To complete some class projects, you may need to use your laptop during sessions, *but only during designated work periods and only for course-related work*. Using phones or laptops will otherwise count as an absence.

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism — presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words — is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, "Behavior Violating University Standards" policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

Support Systems

Student Health Counseling Services - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call
engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling
Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call
suicidepreventionlifeline.org
Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call
engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) | Title IX - (213) 740-5086
equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu
Information about how to get help or help a survivor of harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following protected characteristics: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations.

Bias Assessment Response and Support - (213) 740-2421
studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support
Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions for appropriate investigation and response.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776
dsp.usc.edu
Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710
studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa
Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101
diversity.usc.edu
Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call
dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu
Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call
dps.usc.edu
Non-emergency assistance or information.

LECTURE SCHEDULE

This schedule will likely change depending on the pace of discussions and the availability of guest speakers. For final requirements, please refer to the lecture slides, which will be posted to Blackboard the night before each class. Assigned readings should be completed prior to the *NEXT* class. All articles are on Blackboard unless otherwise indicated.

Class 1, August 27: Intro
- What is website content strategy, why it's important, and how it's evolved
- **Assignment due next class: personal bio (on Blackboard and on paper), syllabus acknowledgment**
- Readings (complete before next class, September 3):
  - Moz, "The Beginner's Guide To Content Marketing," https://moz.com/beginners-guide-to-content-marketing, chapters 1-4
  - Weekly Article Evaluation

Class 2, September 3: Purpose
- The 3B's: Brand, Buzz, Behavior
- SMART Goals
- Writing for the Web
- **Assignment due by end of September 13: Website Evaluation (10%)**
- Readings (complete before next class):
  - Moz, "The Beginner's Guide To Content Marketing," https://moz.com/beginners-guide-to-content-marketing, chapters 5-9'
  - Nager, *Copyediting With An Attitude*
  - Weekly Article Evaluation

Class 3, September 10: Users
- Defining, researching, and analyzing key stakeholders
- Creating personas
- **Assignment due by September 27: User Research**
- Readings (complete before next class):
  - Levy, *UX Strategy*, Forward + Preface + Chapters 1-5
  - Weekly Article Evaluation

Class 4, September 17: Platforms
- Content Management Systems vs Custom Designs
- Familiarize yourself with WordPress (see Annenberg Digital Lounge)
- Readings
  - Levy, *UX Strategy*, Chapters 6-10
  - Weekly Article Evaluation

Classes 5 & 6, September 24-October 1: Architecture
- Structure: Hierarchy, Taxonomy, Site Maps, and Purchasing Funnel
- **Assignment due by end of November 1: Content Plan**
- Readings (complete before next class):
  - Ash, *Landing Page Optimization, Introduction* + Parts 1-3
  - Weekly Article Evaluation

Class 7, October 8: SEO
- Search Engine Optimization vs Search Engine Marketing
- Keywords, link bait, and what does the Panda E.A.T.?
- Black Hat vs. Penguin
- **Assignment due by December 10: Google Analytics Individual Qualification**
- Readings (complete before next class):
  - Moz, "The Beginner's Guide to SEO," http://moz.com/beginners-guide-to-seo
  - Fishkin, Rand, "What Does It Mean to 'Write for SEO' in 2018? - Whiteboard Friday," Moz, 2 February 2018, https://moz.com/blog/write-for-seo-2018

- o Singhal, "More Guidance On Building High-Quality Sites," by Google Webmaster Central Blog, 6 May 2011, https://googlewebmastercentral.blogspot.com/2011/05/more-guidance-on-building-high-quality.html
- o Weekly Article Evaluation

Class 8, October 15: Writing
- Blogging and the Long Tail
- Content sourcing
- Readings (complete before next class):
  - o Anderson, "The Long Tail," Wired, October 2004, http://archive.wired.com/wired/archive/12.10/tail.html
  - o Scott, "The Gobbledygook Manifesto"
  - o Kelleher & Miller, "Organizational Blogs and the Human Voice: Relational Strategies and Relational Outcomes," Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 9 August 2006, http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2006.00019.x/abstract
  - o Weekly Article Evaluation

Class 9, October 22: Design
- Style guides: look and feel
- Readings (complete before next class):
  - o Davis, Wang & Lindridge, "Culture Influences On Emotional Responses To On-Line Store Atmospheric Cues," Journal of Business Research, August 2008
  - o Cai, S., & Xu, Y. (n.d.), "Designing Not Just for Pleasure: Effects of Web Site Aesthetics on Consumer Shopping Value," *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, 8 Dec 2014
  - o Anastasia Marushevska, "How To Build A Better Product With UX Writing," UX Collective, 21 May 2018, https://uxdesign.cc/how-to-build-a-better-product-with-ux-writing-926d78209ce8
  - o Weekly Article Evaluation

Class 10, October 29: Revenue
- Banner (display) advertising and affiliate programs
- Programmatic is problematic
- Readings (complete before next class):
  - o Joshua A. Braun & Jessica L. Eklund, "Fake News, Real Money: Ad TechPlatforms, Profit-Driven Hoaxes, and the Business of Journalism," *Digital Journalism*, 14 January 2019
  - o Ghose &Todri-Adamopoulos, "Toward a Digital Attribution Model: Measuring the Impact of Display Advertising on Online Consumer Behavior," *MIS Quarterly*, December 2016
  - o Weekly Article Evaluation

Class 11, November 5: Ecommerce
- Online retail
- Gamification and Dark Patterns
- Assignment due by end of December 17 on Blackboard: Your Completed Website
- Readings (complete before next class):
  - o Insley & Nunan, "Gamification And The Online Retail Experience," *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*, 2014
  - o Ariely, "Gamed: How Companies Get You to Share More and Spend More," Wired, 20 June 2011, http://www.wired.com/magazine/2011/06/ff_gamed
  - o "Types Of Dark Pattern," Dark Patterns, https://darkpatterns.org
  - o Kumar, "Making 'Freemium' Work," *Harvard Business Review*, 6 May 2014, https://hbr.org/2014/05/making-freemium-work/
  - o Weekly Article Evaluation

Class 12, November 12: Analytics
- Statistics that matter — and some that don't
- Site audit requirements (qualitative criteria)
- Assignment: Google Analytics Certification — upload to Blackboard by end of day December 3
- Readings (complete before next class):
  - o Ash, *Landing Page Optimization*, Part 4

- o Kaushik, "Are You Into Internal Site Search Analysis? You Should Be," *Occam's Razor*, 26 June 2006, https://www.kaushik.net/avinash/are-you-into-internal-site-search-analysis-you-should-be/
  - o Christian, "The A/B Test: Inside the Technology That's Changing the Rules of Business," *Wired*, 25 April 2012, http://www.wired.com/business/2012/04/ff_abtesting
  - o Weekly Article Evaluation

Class 13, November 19: Governance
- Site policies
- Editorial calendars and page tables
- Approval processes and client management
- Readings (complete before next class):
  - o Ash, *Landing Page Optimization*, Part 5
  - o European Union General Data Protection Regulation, https://www.eugdpr.org
  - o Nicholas Thompson, "Mr. Nice Guy: Instagram's Kevin Systrom Wants To Clean Up The &#%$@! Internet," *Wired*, September 2017, https://www.wired.com/2017/08/instagram-kevin-systrom-wants-to-clean-up-the-internet/
  - o Google, "Help, I Think I've Been Hacked!" https://developers.google.com/web/fundamentals/security/hacked/
  - o Weekly Article Evaluation

Class 14, November 26: Online Ethics Discussion (meet on Blackboard, not in the classroom)
- Mandatory discussion: native advertising
- Readings (complete before next class):
  - o Weekly Article Evaluation

Class 15, December 3: Website Presentations
- Sharing draft versions of sites and constructive criticism

December 17: Final Website Shared On Blackboard