"Reduce" Your Work Load, "Re-Use" Existing Extension Print Materials, and "Recycle" to New Digital Platforms

Abstract

This article provides information and guidance on how to take traditional means of communication and information sharing and repurpose and digitize that content for the Internet and posting on social media sites. Suggestions and templates are provided from primary to secondary format development and how to then take those formats and adapt them to the Internet. Case studies and examples are also cited that highlight successful adaptation of materials and presentations to maximize programming efforts without adding to the workload.

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Introduction

People gather and evaluate information when faced with major decisions or milestones. The Internet has become an important source of information as people gain experience and embrace broadband. Fifty-eight percent of Americans perform online research concerning products they are considering purchasing (Jansen, 2010). Ninety-five percent of American teens ages 12-17 and adults ages 18-29 use the Internet (Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2011), with 30-49 year olds at 89% and 50-64 year olds at 77% (Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2012). In 2012, 53% of American adults (65 and older) use the Internet or email, which is the first time half of seniors are going online (Zickuhr & Madden, 2012).

Extension is moving away from sharing information in print form only and toward digital forms:

- News media (text or audio in formats shared electronically and on media websites)

- Web pages (blogs, on-line articles, and newsletters)

- Audio and video pieces for the Web (YouTube, Podcasts, and Vimeo)

- Social media and Images (Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and SlideShare)

This transition away from print publications is likely to continue, and must continue according to an assessment team studying Extension' readiness to adopt technology for delivering programs and reaching new audiences (Diem, Hino, Martin, & Meisenbach, 2011). "Survivors in any revolution are those who can adapt old skills to meet the needs of the new environment," states Fredrick Friend, writing on electronic publishing (Friend, 2000). Making the transition to multiple formats might seem like additional work. After all, it would mean writing material five or six different times, right? Not necessarily. One approach is to write a central or primary piece once, then adapt it for use in other formats.

Guidelines for Adapting Materials to the Web

The central or primary piece would differ from past Extension material. It should be written in a web-friendly style, which is a sound recommendation for effective writing in any format for general audiences. Jakob Nielsen states, "Web content must be brief and get to the point quickly, because users are likely to be on a specific mission" (Nielsen, 2008).

Guidelines for adapting materials to the Web:

- *Be concise and succinct*. Write about half as much text as for a print publication. Reading from a computer is about 25% slower than print. Less print improves the user experience by offering less scrolling (Nielsen, 1997).

- *Write for scannability*. Write shorter sentences and shorter paragraphs. Limit each paragraph to one idea, and use subheads and bulleted lists (Meloni, 2010). Nielsen found usability improved 47% with a scannable layout (Nielsen, 1997). People don't visit a Web page to linger over words; most people are visiting the web for information or doing tasks (Redish, 2007).

- *Start the piece strong*. Make the lead paragraph sharp because first impressions count. An inverted pyramid style is recommended, with the most important information at the top (Redish, 2007). Eye-tracking data shows readers looked most at the first paragraph, then the beginning of bullets, and then proceed to less vital items (Nielsen & Coyne, 2009).

- *Write for the reader*. Be clear, and focus on the reader's experience and needs; put yourself in the reader's frame of reference. Use simple words, and avoid jargon and scientific terms. Concentrate on keywords that people will use to conduct searches.

- *Use the active voice*. Use more verbs and fewer modifiers. For example, write: "Make half your grain choices whole grains" versus "Half your grain choices should be whole grains." The active voice is shorter and reads as a "call to action" (Gunelius, 2009).

- *Edit mercilessly*. Collaborate with a coworker whose judgment and editing skills you trust. You should agree on the guidelines above and be willing to give and accept suggestions. Having a co-editor is useful because authors might miss inconsistencies in their own writing. Fresh eyes bring a

fresh perspective, a useful thing when the product is likely to be read by many people with many perspectives.

The authors have developed a suggested workflow for adapting content for use in several formats (Table 1). Note that basic audio, photo, and video editing skills are required for some steps. Those who can rely on communications staff are fortunate. For do-it-yourselfers, tutorials are available on-line and elsewhere. Some general advice for audio, video, or photos: Keep it simple; resist the temptation to get cute or fancy; and ask yourself whether it serves your basic purpose.

Table 1.

Suggested Workflow for Adapting Content for Use in Several Formats

Format	Length	Pointers
Primary: Print news release, column, guest opinion or similar piece	• 650 words maximum (500 words if possible)	• Keep the topic focused and localize when possible (or tie into regional, statewide or broader trends). • Consider using bulleted lists.
Secondary: Audio public service announcements (PSAs) or interviews	• The original (primary) text can be broken into several 30-second PSAs. • Maximum length: 70-80 words per 30-second spot.	• Each bullet point could be turned into a 30-second PSA. Close each audio segment with an identifying tagline. • The original (primary) text could be broken into a couple interviews, 2-3 minutes each, with a communications person asking questions and the author/expert responding.
Tertiary: Audio and/or video for the web	• Expect 500-750 words (1 page of single-spaced, 12-point text) to produce 5-7 minutes worth of content.	• Shoot video to illustrate points or add detail (such as a how-to demonstration that might not fit in the original piece). • This requires some advance planning and extra time for editing. • Practice makes for a quicker, smoother process. • Good-quality audio is the single most important consideration here.

| Quaternary: Posting documents/presentations on-line so they can be shared on social media sites | • Some social media sites have word or character limits (for example, Twitter has a 140 character limit on posts).

• Short, descriptive, and catchy posts with an image and URL are more effective at redirecting traffic to content | • When repurposing documents and presentations on-line it is important to avoid having "dead-end pages" (pages with no hyperlinks back to and from another page). Dead pages prevent Web users from finding a page from another page and from visiting other pages in the website from the page.

• Adding or embedding a short evaluation (3-5 questions) on a webpage can provide valuable information.

• Using quality images that can be pinned or posted to various social media sites is important for attracting people to content. |

Case Studies: Repurposing and Reformatting Material for Multiple Web Venues

Following are two case studies of how material can be adapted multiple ways for use on the Web.

Case Study One: Repurposing and Reformatting Print Material

Repurposing and reformatting print material to the Web can greatly expand outreach (Table 2). While print materials have limited exposure, Web content is always ready and waiting to be seen by anyone, anytime (Johnson, 2009). Several possibilities for promotion of Web versions exist through social media and linkages by other sites. Additionally, PowerPoints, can be downloaded and shown to groups; materials can be reproduced and distributed; and with author permission, viewers can embed videos and slide shows to websites and blogs. There are also several ways to evaluate whether social media efforts are effective and producing desired results (Franzen-Castle & Henneman, 2012).

Table 2.

Repurposing and Reformatting Print Material for Multiple Web Venues Increases Outreach

Original Print Article		Repurposed for Web	
Distribution Method	**Number Reached**	**Distribution Method**	**Number Reached***
1. Article on the	11,000+	1. Information from print article reformatted	8,700+ (data

2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA 2010) written for a mail out print newsletter.	house-holds received the newsletter.	for web by shortening content, and having more bullets.	from Google Analytics for website)
		2. Original print copy reformatted to fit on standard 8 ½ by 11 copy paper; saved as a pdf and uploaded/linked to from web article. Used by web visitors who wanted an additional, more extensive copy for distributing at programs, etc.	6,400+ (data from content management system for the website)
		3. Some of article material was used in a PowerPoint. Information was kept to about one bullet point per slide and illustrated extensively with images. The PowerPoint was uploaded to Slideshare.net and also embedded on our Extension website.	58,800+views (data from Slideshare.net)
		4. The copy and images collected for the PowerPoint, were edited to basics and made into a simple YouTube video (slightly over 1 minute).	19,000+ views (data from YouTube.com)
TOTAL	**12,000 households**	**TOTAL**	**92,900+ views**

* The number reached for the repurposed materials is the number spanning a period from early / mid 2010 to the end of December, 2012.

Case Study Two: Repurposing and Reformatting Photos

Perhaps you have taken or paid to have photos taken for a print publication. Visuals are highly important on the Web—just think of all the photo-sharing sites. A photo can convey a lot of information quite rapidly on the Web. There several ways photos can be re-purposed (Table 3).

Table 3.

How to Repurpose and Reformat Photos

Where to Use	How to Do It
Web Pages	Create a webpage that features the photo used in the publication. Include a short description of the content. And then upload the print publication as a pdf file and link to it. The picture will help generate interest in your content so people will download and use your original print publication.

Pinterest and Related Social Media	Once you have a photo on a webpage, "pin" the photo on a Pinterest Board, another way to draw people back to your website for more information. Then tweet about it from Pinterest and/or share it on Facebook from Pinterest. Also, you can upload a photo directly to Twitter to include with your tweet.
Facebook and LinkedIn	When a link is shared on Facebook or LinkedIn, usually you have your choice of a thumbnail of a photo from that page that will be included in the post. Also, you have the option of uploading a photo to call attention to a post on Facebook. When Hubspot, a company devoted to inbound marketing and attracting people to become customers, evaluated 8,800 Facebook posts from B2B and B2C company Facebook pages, they found photos on Facebook generated 53% more likes than average post (Corliss, 2012).
Flickr.com	Upload photos to Flickr.com and include a link back to your website for more information. We have uploaded several photos of locally grown food, with a link back to more information on planting and preparing local foods. A second possibility is to put your photos together into a "set" and then using the "slideshow" button, create a "slideshow" that can be shared via email or embedded on a website. • One way we used this, was to include a slideshow of 4-Hers (whose families had given permission for use of their photos) on our 4-H website. It advertised both what 4-Hers were learning and the fun they had as a 4-H member. Also, it gave 4-H parents and leaders a reason to visit our website for more information. • A third possibility is to use the Facebook and/or twitter buttons on Flickr and share your photos (and their accompanying information).
Blogs	Incorporate the photo(s) into a blog. One of the authors took pictures for a print publication (also available through download on the web). Several of the pictures were incorporated into a blog, with links given back to the publication for more information.
PowerPoints and Videos	If you've created a print publication with photos, consider using them to also create a short PowerPoint and/or video. This can be used as part of the educational package; also, it can attract attention and draw people back to a website for more information.

Conclusion

The purpose of this article is not to suggest that traditional means of education and communication should be discontinued, but rather to extend the reach and audience by digitizing and multi-purposing content. Our audiences are already everywhere, so we need to be there too. Instead of asking why we should be there, we should be thinking about what is the best way to be there. Chris Brogan, social media guru, states: "While face-to-face is just as important as it ever was, now that we've got all kinds of new tools, let us tighten bonds in between those in-person moments" (Brogan, 2010).

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