

Bronze Quill Awards 2011: Work Plan

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Entrant's Organization: Vancity

Title of Entry: Are you ready? Vancity launches a new intranet

Division and Category: Division 2 – Category 19 (Communication Skills – Audiovisual)

Time Period of Project: September to December 2010

Brief Description: Vancity, Canada's largest credit union, created an informative, engaging video to launch its new intranet. The video prepared employees for the coming changes, highlighted the benefits and encouraged participation in the social features of the new site.

Need/opportunity

In the 2009 business plan, Vancity's executive leadership team (ELT) identified the intranet as a key piece of infrastructure that needed attention in order for the business to operate more efficiently. The credit union's existing intranet (called "insite") was overrun with outdated, poorly organized information and delivered poor search results. It was getting increasingly difficult for employees to find the right information and people at the right time.

That summer, Vancity's intranet team worked with Habañero Consulting Group to do more research and develop a business case. The research, which included staff focus groups and interviews, confirmed that the key pain point for frontline employees was the inability to quickly find the right information or subject-matter experts in order to best serve the credit union's more than 414,000 members. The research revealed that each frontline employee wasted an average of 30 minutes per shift searching for policy and procedure information or assisting others find and interpret information. This issue was also evident in the annual employee engagement score, which had been on the decline since 2007. One of the lowest-scoring areas was *resources*, which indicated that employees felt they didn't have the tools and resources they needed to be as productive as possible.

A few months later, the ELT approved a business case for a roughly \$1 million project to build a new intranet. The new intranet would address the "findability" issues that plagued employees, as well as provide an improved communication channel that could facilitate collaboration and two-way symmetrical communication.

Research showed that to ensure adoption of the new intranet, the team had to consider the following issues:

- **Education/training**—employees felt that they had not been properly prepared for past technology changes (employee engagement focus groups, fall 2008).
- **Fun factor**—employees said that Vancity used to be more fun, but that has declined (employee engagement focus groups, fall 2008). Adding to that, 2009 was a rather "unfun" year as the credit union went through a number of significant organizational changes and restructurings.
- **Cynicism**—Vancity had experienced a couple of "false starts" with large projects, resulting in cynicism about the ability to deliver on the objectives of large initiatives (employee engagement focus groups, fall 2008).
- **Internal divide**—employees identified an "us vs. them" mentality between the branches and head office (intranet interviews, summer 2009).
- **Competition**—a number of other projects were being launched during the last few months of 2010, so there would be a lot of demands on our employees' attention.

Intended audience/stakeholders

The new intranet was targeted to Vancity's 2,400 employees. The employee population is predominantly female (68%), with an average age of 40. Almost half (47%) of employees have worked at Vancity for more than 5 years and 22% for more than 10 years. Just over half of employees work on the frontline—45% in branches and 10% in the call centre. Frontline employees are particularly high intranet users due to the nature of their work.

There is interest among staff in multimedia and social media tools. In Vancity's 2010 employee communication survey, 79% of respondents strongly or somewhat agreed that video is an effective tool for communicating information in the organization. Almost half (47%) of the respondents said they would use social media tools for work purposes (28% said they weren't sure and 25% said they wouldn't). In terms of videos, only 73% of respondents said they are technically able to watch videos—the most common issue being a lack of earphones or speakers. Of those able to watch, 59%

said they find it difficult to watch videos during work due to time constraints or their work environment (this mostly came from frontline employees who can't wear earphones while serving members at branches or on the phone).

Goals and objectives

Based on the research, the team knew it had to create a communication launch that would grab employees' attention, visually orient them to the new site and clearly explain what was changing and when. The team decided that a short video would be the best vehicle to accomplish this. The team set out to create a video that:

- Prepares employees for the changes coming
- Highlights how the new intranet meets employee pain points
- Encourages employees to participate in the social features of the new site—specifically My Site, a personal site that employees can use to share information about themselves and connect with colleagues.

To ensure these high-level goals were reached, the team defined the following objectives:

- Before launch day, 50% of employees have watched the launch video.
- Before launch day, 40% of employees have visited the new intranet homepage.
- Before launch day, 90% of employees are technically able to watch videos on their computers.
- By the end of 2010, 25% of employees have created a My Site.

Solution overview

Concept: The team originally played with the idea of doing the video in the style of a movie trailer, but decided to go with a more authentic approach that featured real employees and focused on informing staff in a fun way. The research indicated that employees felt unprepared for past technology changes, so it made sense to focus primarily on education rather than creating buzz. The video needed to be less than five minutes long, since time constraints were an issue. It also needed to communicate the key messages visually, so that employees could see what the new site looked like and understand most of the video without earphones (video briefing, item 9).

Key messages: The video focused on three simple key messages to prepare employees for the coming launch and address the key pain point identified in the research. The team created a script and storyboard (items 10 and 11), but encouraged the cast to put the messages into their own words. The key messages were:

- A new intranet is coming at the end of November.
- The new intranet will make it easier to find information, serve our members and connect with your peers.
- The new intranet will give you a voice.

CASTING: The concept was to feature real employees who were genuinely excited about the benefits of the new intranet. Through the project blog, two frontline employees—Morgan and Viken—had emerged as "evangelists" for the new intranet. They were invited to participate in the video and enthusiastically accepted. Heather and Jane from the project team were also included in the cast as they had authored the majority of the previous communication about the project and would be able to convey their passion for the project on screen (final video, item 1).

Earphones: Research indicated that 27% of employees couldn't hear sound on their computer mostly due to a lack of earphones, so we distributed Vancity-branded earphones to the entire staff a week prior to the launch of the video (item 2). The earphone giveaway not only increased access to the video medium, a benefit that would last well beyond this particular project, it also served as a teaser to the launch of the video and a thank you gift to employees (item 3).

Launch: The launch of the video was paired with a virtual open house, in which employees could preview the new intranet and get familiar with it—a key step in preparing them for the switch to the new intranet. The open house ran for two weeks leading up to launch. It was initially opened up to all branches, the call centre and a few head office departments through tailored email invitations and then to the whole organization through the existing intranet. A heads up message for managers was also included in the manager e-newsletter. The written communication accompanying the video highlighted key changes and encouraged employees to create their My Site (items 4 to 8).

Jane's role: Jane was the communications lead on the intranet project and worked closely with the intranet manager (Heather). For the video, she helped write and revise the script, acted in the video, organized the earphone distribution, planned the video launch and developed customized launch communications for internal audiences.

Implementation and challenges

Vancity's intranet team had ideas but not the technical know-how, so turned to Giant Ant Media, a local production studio. Together they brainstormed the concept and wrote the script. Giant Ant managed all the filming and post-production. Vancity handled the casting, earphone distribution and video launch.

Schedule: Initially the team had just four weeks to complete the video, so it started on a fairly aggressive schedule (see schedule below). There were challenges booking people's time and getting materials reviewed on such short notice, but persistence paid off. After filming, the launch date was pushed back due to technical issues so there was more room in the schedule for post-production. The packing and distribution of 2,400 earphones turned out to be a larger undertaking than originally planned, so the team enlisted the help of some colleagues from the Communications and Marketing teams. Many hands made light work and the packing was completed within a few hours.

Budget: The team had a \$10,000 budget for the video. This price was agreed to with Giant Ant, so when costs ran slightly over the team was not charged more (see budget below). There wasn't a specific budget for the earphones, so the team negotiated with several leaders to secure the funds for them. In total, the direct costs of the video project totaled \$30,870. The indirect costs included employee time—two

SCHEDULE

Week of...	Activity
September 27	Choose vendor
October 4	Brainstorm and begin writing script
October 11	Review and revise script
October 18	Finalize script Complete filming (half-day)
October 25	Review video graphics
November 1	Review video rough cuts Order earphones
November 8	Finalize video Organize earphone distribution lists
November 15	Pack and distribute earphones Post teaser about earphones/video Launch video and virtual open house
November 22	Launch video and open house to all employees
November 29	Launch new intranet

BUDGET

VIDEO	
Concept development	\$1,130
Filming	\$4,050
Design, animation, editing	\$7,725
Subtotal	\$12,095
Discount	(\$2,905)
Subtotal after discount	\$10,000
Taxes	\$1,200
VIDEO TOTAL	\$11,200
EARPHONES	
2,600 sets x \$6.65 each	\$17,290
Setup fee	60
Shipping/handling	212
Taxes	2,108
EARPHONES TOTAL	\$19,670

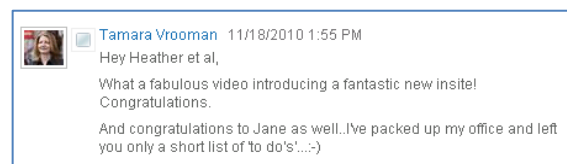
employees allocated to the project, plus approximately 30 hours of other employees' time.

Measurement/evaluation of outcomes

As a result of the communication, the team met all of its objectives (percentages based on 2,400 employees):

- By launch day, 50% of employees have watched the launch video.**
By launch day, 50% of employees had watched the launch video. It was viewed 1,210 times (assumed that duplicate viewings by one person were balanced out by group viewings).
- By launch day, 40% of employees have visited the new intranet homepage.**
By launch day, 42% of employees had visited the new intranet homepage. It was viewed 7,912 times by 1,010 unique visitors.
- By launch day, 90% of employees are technically able to watch videos on their computers.**
By launch day, earphones were distributed to all employees. The 2011 employee communication survey will measure this in the fall.
- By the end of 2010, 25% of employees have created a My Site.**
By the end of 2010, 39% of employees had created a My Site (933 employees).

The video launch article received a five-star rating (out of five stars) and received over 50 comments (item 8). One of the best comments was from our CEO Tamara Vrooman. In the video, Jane jokes about taking over Tamara's job some day and Tamara doesn't hesitate to get in on the joke (see right).



What's harder to measure is the momentum and excitement that the video created. A number people have said that the launch video has set the bar for future Vancity videos. In addition to being an effective communication product, the video inspired pride in the entire project team and was a much-appreciated reward for the intranet "evangelists".