

IAs and Content Publishing:

Expanding your influence to ensure design success

Why should you care about content publishing?

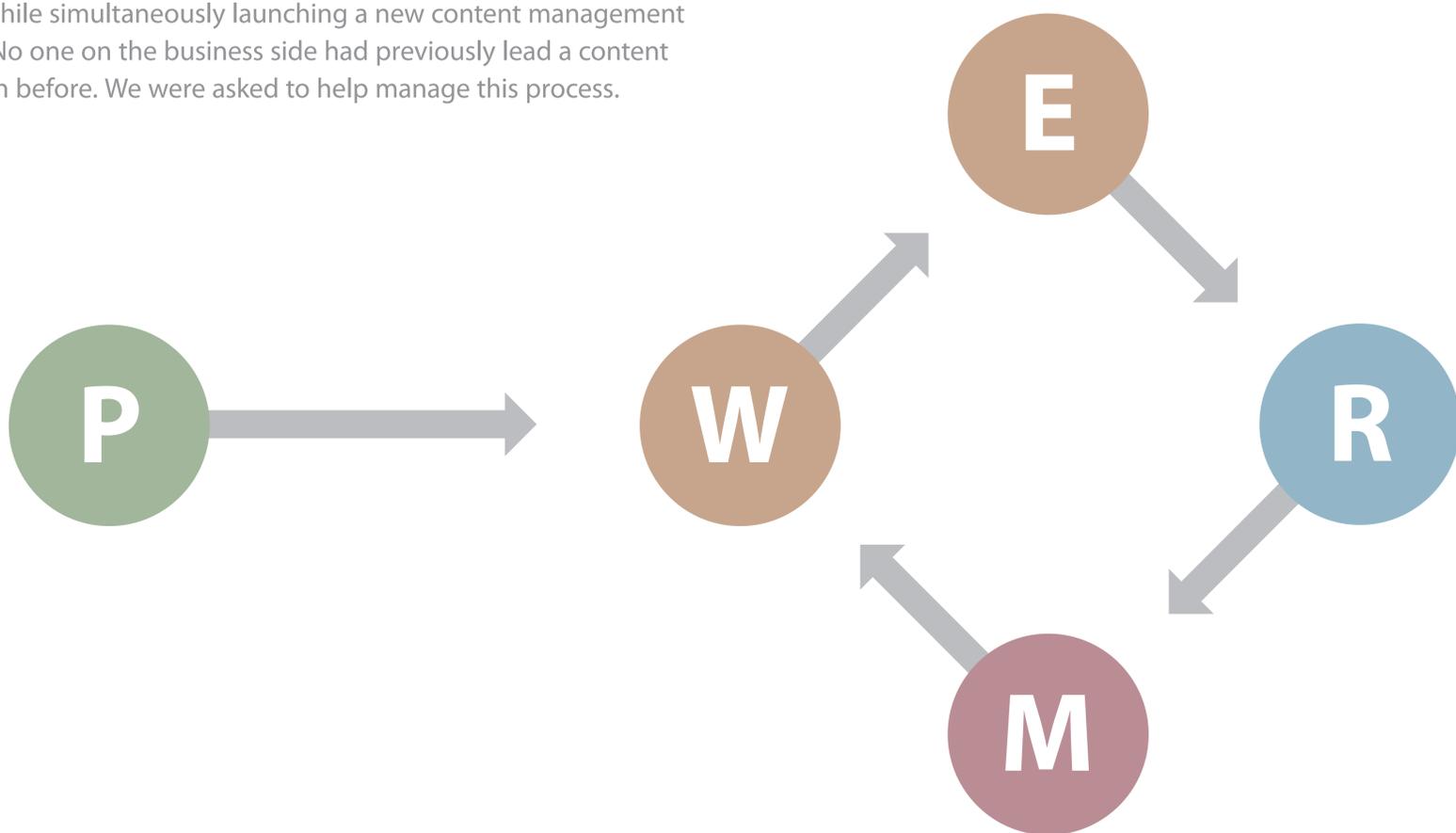
- Nothing can destroy a great design like a poorly planned and managed content process.
- Good content is often what stands between a great design and a great site.
- Most companies are “accidental publishers;” they know even less about the process than you do.
- You might be wrong! (Your design may work in theory, but not in practice.)

What can you do to expand your influence?

- Plan for content creation and migration
- Oversee this process
- Protect the integrity of IA when content and tech issues arise

Here’s what we did:

Hot was hired to redesign a 300-plus page corporate site for a large specialty retailer. Our client’s IT team was implementing the new design while simultaneously launching a new content management system. No one on the business side had previously lead a content migration before. We were asked to help manage this process.



Plan

Assign roles

- Writers
- **Managing Editor**
- Copyeditor
- Approvers (legal, compliance, subject matter experts)
- Technologists
- **Visioneer**
- **Project Manager**
- **The Diplomat** (working w/ stakeholders and content owners)
- **The Negotiator** (between IT/team and business owners)

Content inventory

SS	A	B	C	D
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				

- Tracks status of every page
- Columns included:
Work, Status, Site map number, Page name, File name, Page type, Modules, Comments, Images, Content input
- One person should maintain the content inventory
- Writers, editors and designers must be consistent in how they communicate updates

Editorial calendar

M	T	W	TH	F
		1	2	3
6	7	8	9	10
13	14	15	16	17

- Gives deadlines for writers, editors, approvers and people inputting content
- Organize content into drops and staggered deadlines
- Writing, editing, approving and inputting should happen simultaneously
- The first and last drops should be the easy ones

Write & Edit

Word template

- For writers and editors
- Gives standard format and instructions on what information to include
- Ours included:
Page title, Body text, Module text, Keywords for metadata
- Instructions on file names (use naming conventions listed in the content inventory)
- Where to save document
- Don't make this too hard or people won't do it

Content needs analysis

	👤	👥	👤
1	•	•	•
2	•	•	•
3	•	•	•
4	•	•	•
5	•	•	•
6	•	•	•

- Part of our strategy process
- Used to show stakeholders why some of their requests were addressed but others were not
- Simply used as a way to show how decisions were made
- Should look “finished” – i.e., this will not change!

Schematics

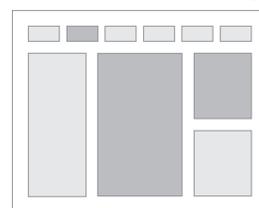
- Wireframes that show key pages and page types
- Becomes a tool for writers so they can envision how their content fits in
- Give only relevant pages to each team of writers
- When appropriate, give guidelines for text length
- Give suggestions for page “modules”
- Naming conventions should match content inventory and style guide

Content inventory

- Writers get a subset of the content inventory so they can see what pages they are responsible for
- Teams of writers divided work among themselves
- We gave deadlines
- One person manages the “uber” content inventory

Revise

Revise schematics & content inventory



- Changes to content can lead to changes in IA
- Both documents must be updated, or chaos ensues
- If discrepancy, content inventory trumps schematics
- One person should own each document
- IT team also needs updated versions

Migrate

Approved content

- Editors, writers and designers are all involved
- CMS released one “template” at a time
- Inputting process broken into four parts:
Body content, Modules, Images, Keywords
- At the same time, we were QA'ing the CMS interface (not recommended!)

Outcome:

Instead of throwing our designs over the fence and hoping for the best, we were there when technical and content issues arose, and we modified the design as needed. The client was happy because we didn't leave them to solve design problems on their own. We were happy because we were able to ensure the integrity of our original vision. A few months after it launched, the site won a 2005 Standard of Excellence WebAward.