Association Audience Understanding Workbook

Audience understanding is a key aspect of content strategy. Why? The more you focus on the highest-priority audiences your organization serves, the better you can serve them.

Content is the way an association's work is manifested in the world. Therefore, by "content," we may mean the content OF the offering (advocacy talking points, magazine or journal articles, industry standards, codes of ethics, courses, conference sessions, etc.) or content ABOUT the offerings (marketing materials, blog posts, etc.).

*Content Company can help you complete and use every one of these activities. **For more information, contact us: hilary@contentcompany.biz.***

Activities:
1. Identify the organization's highest-priority audience segments
2. Document the current state of how the organization creates offerings and content for each segment
3. Decide the best ways to best capture data about the audience segments
4. Understand their motivations, aspirations, fears, and challenges – what's going on for them
5. Figure out how the association's offerings help them address their motivations, aspirations, fears, and challenges
6. Articulate the strategic opportunities for the organization to serve them
7. Compare these strategic opportunities with the current state

1. Who are your audiences?

In the first column of checkboxes, note all the audiences your organization serves. In "other," you may list specific member/industry segments or other ways you denote the audiences you serve.

☐ ☐ Association staff
☐ ☐ Consumers
☐ ☐ Current members
☐ ☐ Prospective members
☐ ☐ Donors
☐ ☐ Volunteer leaders
☐ ☐ Government officials
☐ ☐ Current customers

☐ ☐ Potential customers

☐ ☐ Businesses that sell/market our offerings

☐ ☐ Other: _____

☐ ☐ Other: _____

☐ ☐ Other: _____

☐ ☐ Other: _____

☐ ☐ Other: _____

Which are the most important segments?

From the group above, in the second column of checkboxes, choose up to 4 who are most important to the organization. You may want to share the full list with your staff and bring everyone's choices together in order to ensure that you have a common understanding of the most important audiences.

Most important may mean those who
- have the most loyalty to the organization
- are likeliest to join and engage
- are likeliest to attend conferences and events
- are likeliest to volunteer
- are likeliest to benefit the profession or group the organization serves
- stand to contribute the most revenue to the organization

Common levels of audience understanding now

Does everyone in your organization have a similar understanding of who your top-priority audiences are?

☐ Yes

☐ I'm not sure

☐ Definitely not

Do you know what the audience members' motivations, aspirations, fears, and challenges are, both in relation to what you offer and in general?

☐ Yes

☐ I'm not sure

☐ Definitely not

2. How does your organization create offerings and corresponding content for each audience today?

☐ One group identifies the offerings and content that we need to create for each audience, determines the content of and about the offering, and ensures that the content is effective (has an explicit audience and measurable goals).

☐ Each audience has a different internal group that identifies offerings and corresponding content, creates the content, and measures it. A central group determines a common voice/style.

☐ There are no central rules, policies, or guidelines for creating offerings or content. Multiple groups communicate with each audience, sometimes with shared communication vehicles or sometimes with their own.

☐ I have no idea.

The more audiences you have, the more complex your content needs are. The more complex your content needs, the more you need centralized policies and an efficient way to create metrics and use them to inform your content creation and publishing practices.

3. Which of these artifacts for audience understanding does your organization have already?

Audience satisfaction survey
☐ No ☐ Yes, completed within the last 2 years ☐ Yes, completed more than 2 years ago

Audience communication needs analysis
☐ No ☐ Yes, completed within the last 2 years ☐ Yes, completed more than 2 years ago

Member needs analysis
☐ No ☐ Yes, completed within the last 2 years ☐ Yes, completed more than 2 years ago

Strategic goals
☐ No ☐ Yes, completed within the last 2 years ☐ Yes, completed more than 2 years ago

Website satisfaction survey
☐ No ☐ Yes, completed within the last 2 years ☐ Yes, completed more than 2 years ago

Audience personas
☐ No ☐ Yes, completed within the last 2 years ☐ Yes, completed more than 2 years ago

Which of these artifacts do you actively use in assessing content effectiveness?

- ☐ Audience satisfaction survey results
- ☐ Audience communication needs analysis results
- ☐ Member needs analysis results
- ☐ Strategic goals
- ☐ Website satisfaction survey results
- ☐ Audience personas
- ☐ Website analytics (visits, views, downloads, etc.)

4 & 5. What do you know about each of your top-priority audience segments?

NOTE: How many of these you check off is significant! Most organizations will be able to check off only the box for "what offerings and content they currently use most," but there is tremendous opportunity if you are able to check off all of them.

- ☐ Who they are as human beings – their motivations, aspirations, fears, and challenges
- ☐ How your association helps them address their motivations, aspirations, fears, and challenges
- ☐ What offerings and content they currently use most
- ☐ What offerings and content would be relevant and useful to them but that they don't currently use enough

6. How can your organization serve these audiences best?

If you did NOT check off the second and fourth checkboxes above, those are your opportunities for improving the organization's offerings and content.

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7. **How are these different from what you provide today, and how can you facilitate the change?**

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