



Strategy worksheet: Your single-subject news site plan

The American Press Institute developed this worksheet as a guide to getting you started with identifying a topic and building a single-subject news site. Before starting, be sure you've read the accompanying Strategy Study: [The best strategies for building a single-subject news site](#).

Consider sitting down with a few creative collaborators from across your organization to tackle these questions together.

These questions correspond with the three sections of the report: how to strategically choose a topic that makes sense for you and your audience, how to execute a niche content strategy, and how to prepare for expansion and growth.

How to strategically choose a topic

1) What are your organization's strengths? What are you already good at?

2) What are your community's existing passions?

Major annual events, hobbies/activities, popular sports teams, major civic problems, major industries, etc. — What do people show an unusually high interest in?

3) Can you identify any underserved areas or topics?

Think about your competitors. Think about how you could assess the audience's unmet needs.

4) How will you test the above ideas? Are there prototypes you can quickly and cheaply produce to test your hypotheses with some readers?

5) Which passions might have revenue potential?

Do any of these passion areas contain needs that users might pay to have solved? Or do any connect with audiences and activities that sponsors might also be interested in?

6) What are your employees' passions and strengths?

This will help you figure out whether your topic will have a "champion" to lead it.

7) Pick the best passions. Looking at all your responses to 1-6, which passion areas seem to have the best combination of community interest, staff expertise, and revenue potential? These are the ones ripe for single-subject news site experiments right now.

How to execute a niche content strategy

8) Pick some champions

You need a team to oversee the project: Who can lead the editorial vision and process? Who can oversee the technology or vendor aspects of development? Who can lend marketing insight and help design some user-testing sessions? Who will lead a smart, aggressive push for the best monetization strategy? Formalize a group and assign responsibilities, timelines and processes. And remember, some of these people will already exist in your organization and you may be able to take advantage of their knowledge without having to hire new people.

9) Design your MVP - minimum viable product

Decide what's the cheapest, simplest way to start this product — it has to be advanced enough to show clear value to users, but try to do something simple and quick that doesn't have to reinvent existing technology. Think about where your efforts need to focus (quality content, targeting user needs) and where you can take advantage of existing skills in the newsroom as USA Today's FTW did.

10) Identify metrics for success

How will you know if this new product is achieving success? When and what will you measure? How will you use that to guide revisions or decide to pull the plug later? What will you learn that may inform future experiments?

How to prepare for expansion and growth

11) Who is your core audience? Who is in the “concentric circles” overlapping your core audience? *Think about Atlantic Media's CityLab and their concentric circle of audiences.*

12) If you could shift one step, or pivot, from your current news product what would that be? *If your product has a unique tone or approach, can you apply this to other topics? Or, if you stick to the same topic, can you apply a different tone to reach a new audience?*

13) How can you pivot to an audience “horizontal” by serving your current niche audience in other ways?

Consider other topics or information services this audience would also find helpful in their lives, perhaps not directly related to the topic you already cover.

We would appreciate hearing about how you use this process and what comes as a result. If you try this, please send us a note at hello@pressinstitute.org to share your experience.