Digital Approaches to Increasing Subscriptions to Five Points Journal

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Project Overview

As a leading literary journal, Five Points produces high-quality creative work but faces challenges translating that excellence into subscription growth. Digital marketing is relatively new for literary journals, and it is a crucial tool to subscriptions which occur primarily online. Therefore, new practices must be implemented in order to raise the Five Points website to modern e-commerce standards that can successfully encourage users to subscribe.

Project Objectives

Considering the scope of digital marketing, I am focusing on improvements concerning the Five Points website. This excludes email marketing, newsletters, and social media. My goals are to optimize User Experience(UX), SEO, and digital content in order to build a sturdy foundation for increasing subscriptions over time. UX includes creating website mockups that improve the layout, design, color scheme, typography, and imagery. As for SEO, my goal is to suggest SEO improvements for existing web content, including page headings, keywords, and more. Improving SEO in the long term will also require a comprehensive SEO guide on best practices relevant for Five Points. Digital content improvements will come in the form of implementing both UX and SEO tactics to blogs. In addition, I want to investigate what topics of blog content are best for Five Points considering style, voice, topic, and length. This information will inform a guide for blog content.

Methodology

My first line of action is reviewing existing data on UX, SEO, and digital content. This includes broad data, and data relevant to literary journals, if possible, and publications overall.

This data will inform my next method, which is to survey different groups concerning UX, SEO, and digital content available on the Five Points website. The survey will have questions concerning the participants personal opinion on different aspects of the Five Points Journal using a rating system for most questions, multiple choice for others, and open response for a couple. In order to gather a range of qualitative data, several surveys will be conducted.

For literary journal staff, the survey will include questions on Five Points UX and SEO, as well as the UX, SEO, and overall digital marketing methods of their own. Participants will rate Five Points web design and web performance.

In order to investigate the blog content specifically, a survey concerning questions on selected Five Points blogs will be distributed to English students. Participants will rate the blog topics, the blog lengths, and the blog quality.

Another survey will be given to web design students at Georgia State concerning Five Points UX and SEO. Participants will rate several elements of Five Points web design in detail.

Lastly, a survey will be given to Marketing students at Georgia State concerning their impression of digital marketing methods on the website. Participants will rate current e-commerce appeal on the website.

The final stage of gathering primary data will involve focus groups from, ideally, each of the survey groups listed above. This step should help to clarify survey results. If need be, focus groups with web design and marketing students will be prioritized, because they are the most likely to have technical advice.

Obstacles

Five Points Journal is housed by Georgia State University. All payments must go through an official GSU bank account, and sales must take place on the GSU marketplace. This creates a hiccup in the checkout process for potential customers, and may be contributing to lower subscription rates. It is generally considered bad UX design for users to check out on a different, redirected website. However, this is non-negotiable with the university. Furthermore, the web design of the GSU marketplace is not optimized for e-commerce due to its plain layout and design. Changes to the Five Points marketplace page are largely limited, creating another area in which Five Points must navigate. In addition, funding is limited as it is, and the data may suggest changes that require funds to enact.

An obstacle that may arise during the project process includes less focus groups than intended. Performing a thorough focus group session for staff of peer literary journals may not be possible due to availability and access. The same can apply to other focus groups, but is less likely.

Project Benefits

As a model Literary Journal, Five Points contributes to the landscape of high quality publishing. In order to continue its mission, Five Points must produce the funds to maintain operating. Implementing effective practices ensures that staff at Five Points can focus primarily on acquisition, editing, and publishing rather than insufficient subscriptions. Overall, the website should serve Five Points, and not the other way around.

Research Questions

Questions to guide my research will be broken down by phase.

Comparative Analysis Phase:

Specific to Literary Journals:

How are the websites of similar or aspirational journals designed?

What do the websites of similar or aspirational journals have in common?

What are notable UX and SEO practices seen within their homepage and overall website?

What typography is used?

How much imagery is present?

How do they showcase their latest issue and their subscription?

General to consumer data on UX and SEO:

What are the best practices of UX and SEO?

What are the most common UX and SEO issues?

What UX and SEO issues are easiest to fix?

What UX and SEO issues take more time?

How can UX and SEO impact sales?

Survey:

Peer Literary Journals

From the perspective of other professionals in the field, how does Five Points rate in terms of UX and SEO?

What digital marketing methods are other literary journals employing?

English Students

From the perspective of potential website users interested in literary journals, how does Five Points rate in terms of UX and SEO?

From the perspective of potential website users interested in literary journals, how does Five Points rate in terms of blog content?

Web Design Students

From the perspective of emerging web design professionals, how does Five Points rate in terms of technical UX and SEO?

Marketing Students

From the perspective of emerging marketing professionals, how does Five Points rate in terms of digital marketing methods involving UX and SEO?

Focus Groups:

Peer Literary Journals

How can the experience of industry professionals guide improvements to Five Points UX, SEO, and blog content?

What digital marketing methods are other literary journals employing and why?

What costs are associated with their methods?

What human resources are associated with their methods?

What structures do they have in place for UX, SEO, and blog content?

English Students

From the perspective of potential website users interested in literary journals, what would make the Five Points website more appealing and why?

What topics are interesting for a literary journal blog?

Web Design Students

How can the education of emerging web designers guide improvements to technical UX and SEO?

Marketing Students

How can the education of emerging marketing professionals guide improvements to the commercial appeal of the Five Points website?

General:

How can Five Points utilize the collected data in a way that complies with resources available?

Proposed Solutions

Using data, Five Points can assess options available to improve the website with consideration to budget, time, and other resources. Guides for SEO and Blog practices can be created using data from both the surveys and focus groups. Improvements that require little to no resources can be implemented as soon as possible.

More complicated changes may point towards efforts to secure funding and relevant talent. For example, recruiting Georgia State students from several departments may be of interest. Web design students can provide practical advice and guidance to improving the website, lessening the costs related to renovating the website. Marketing students can provide relevant suggestions for increasing the commercial appeal of the website, lessening uncertainty in implementing changes to the website.

For changes that require more resources than available, Five Points can consider plans to secure those resources including applying to grants.

Overall, the data provides Five Points an opportunity to make data driven decisions towards increasing subscriptions.

Expected Outcomes

Considering the scope of the proposed project, there is promising potential to discover suitable solutions for Five Points. Through a combination of some or all of the proposed solutions, Five Points can navigate the steps necessary to improve the website, turning visitors into customers.

Solutions related to UX will guide changes that aligns Five Points with the commercial appeal relevant to customers of literature journals. This includes emphasizing the Five Points subscription, and implementing design and visuals that invites users to explore the site, and return to it. Solutions related to SEO will improve how Five Points ranks on Google and other search engines, which in turn increases the likelihood of interested users finding Five Points and subscribing. Solutions related to blog content concerns both UX and SEO, but also takes into account the digital content itself. Improvements to the digital content can encourage users to continually return to the website, which not only reminds them of the subscription, but also encourages Google to rank Five Points higher in search results.

Subscriptions should increase steadily over time, and maintain so long as the quality of UX, SEO, and digital content is of quality and up to date. This allows Five Points to focus on the journal primarily, and with possible further recruitments, Five

Points can consider researching digital marketing practices concerning social media applications, emails, newsletters, and more.