Content Strategy Roadmap

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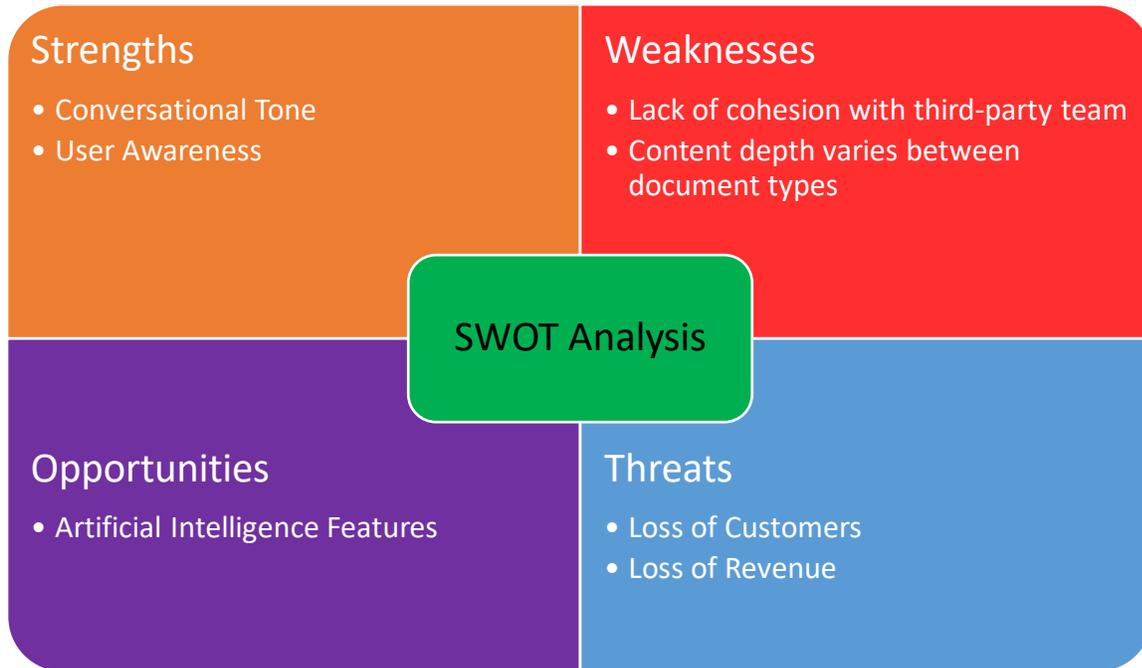
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Introduction

As the Product Documentation Manager for Client X, you informed my team and I of consistent lag between your technical writing team's Product A in comparison with the third-party's Product B, so we conducted a content inventory and audit to aid in identifying areas of improvement.

Product B is a resource for information to provide the most current support information to your users of this software. The content audit assessed if Product B is updated with content from Product A. Your audit guidelines include identifying information gaps in Product B to inform your team in making updates. Because Client X introduces new or updated fields, permissions, settings, and buttons biweekly and quarterly in Product A, it is essential that Product B is kept current and the information in Product B is accessible to your users. This will help your team reach the desired goal of reducing the number of support calls from your users.

In the audit, our team conducted an inventory of topics in Product A and searched for corresponding information in Product B or a logical place for Product A information within Product B. We checked Product B pages for Information Design classification and Style Guide compliance. We compared our top audit criteria, based on your resources and interviews, with areas your team may consider for content reorganization within Product B.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Conversational Tone • User Awareness	• Lack of cohesion with third-party team • Content depth varies between document types

SWOT Analysis

Opportunities	Threats
• Artificial Intelligence Features	• Loss of Customers • Loss of Revenue

Strengths

Your team did a wonderful job maintaining consistency with Client X's Style Guide in speaking to your users rather than at your users. By inviting this conversational tone in your writing, Client X feels relatable, and your users feel valued. Your users' reliability in Client X soars when maintaining consistency through stylistic choices and brand imaging as your team has demonstrated. Considering how much content Client X has, this is a win.

Your team's awareness of user issues, as demonstrated through the Information Design document, is a strength as well. Improvement is continuous and awareness is the first step in gaining perspective and creating solutions for a successful user experience.

Weaknesses

The process of producing content seems independent from the third-party, which creates a lag of content. Additionally, the content's depth differs between Product A and Product B, creating inconsistency and confusion for your users that the content is "not detailed enough" (Client X Information Design). During our audit, our team could not connect 55% of Product B topic pages with Product A (Fisher et al., 7).

Opportunities

Your team's goal is to reduce the amount of support calls, which will decrease expenses for Client X. One opportunity to explore is implementing an Artificial Intelligence (AI) element, such as a chatbot feature, on your website. The chatbot can answer quick questions from potential users and resolve troubleshooting questions from current users, "engag[ing] with thousands of customers simultaneously" (Chatsimple) versus a human attending to only a couple of users at a time. Chatbots can also enhance business goals like "promot[ing] software, offer[ing] product trials, and help[ing]…increase sales" (Chatsimple).

Threats

Weaknesses and threats, in this case, directly correlate: if the content is lagging and inconsistent, users may leave. The threat of users leaving is exponential, but ultimately it may lead to decreased revenue and increased risk of direct competitors gaining your users as their new customers.

Maturity Levels, Strategic Directions, and Tactics

Maturity Levels

Based on JoAnn Hackos' Information Process Maturity Model (Hackos, 2), I assigned maturity levels for the two interactions that need improvement: the interaction between you and your team; and the interaction between your team and the third-party team.

I ranked the interaction between you and your team a Level 2: Rudimentary. There is collaboration within the team and adherence to uniform practices (Client X Style Guide), but because there are quick deadlines to meet on an almost biweekly basis, this can lead to inconsistencies.

I ranked the interaction between your team and the third-party team a Level 1: Ad hoc. While Product A and Product B correlate with each other, the creators (your team and the third-party team) work independently, which leads to the consistent lag of content between the two.

Recommended strategy directions and the tactics to increase each maturity level are outlined below.

Strategic Direction: User Focus

Gaining insight into your users' experience with your software is crucial in understanding how to improve it. Based on your "Client X Information Design" PDF, you've already performed some user surveys, but the results didn't seem specific enough to implement. Enhancing this tactic by creating more tailored user surveys/testing allows "direct access to actionable insights" (Mao) and identifies how users are navigating your software. An additional tactic includes combining personas and customer journey maps, enabling you "to find gaps – places where you aren't supporting your customers enough…" (Land, 9).

Lastly, running content analytics on your internal and external websites is a beneficial tactic because it allows your team to receive a "good indication of which pages are popular and whether people are spending time on them or immediately leaving" (Land, 54).

Coupling those results with our team's suggestion for reorganizing content (Fisher et al., 9) and Client X's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will help your team gain a better insight into "ROT (redundant, outdated, or trivial content)" (Land, 54).

Strategic Direction: Collaboration

The root of your team's weaknesses, threats, and strategic directions stem from being backlogged with not enough, or not enough valuable, communication. A tactic to improve this includes implementing a content planning calendar, or project management tool, to identify action items, the owners of the action items, and due dates for the action items. Employing a project management tool, like Trello, between your team and the third-party team will "improve team collaboration by facilitating communication...reducing miscommunications and misunderstandings" (Henderson). While cards labeled "To Do", "Doing", and "Done" seem most common, customizing cards for your team's process flow is one of the benefits of a project management tool. One card recommendation I implore your team to include is a "Parking Lot" card, which will host any questions or issues that need resolution before proceeding.

Another tactic for collaboration is attending weekly meetings with both teams. This will be instrumental in "improving problem-solving, directing focus on key tasks, [and] creating a culture of accountability" (13 Benefits of Weekly Check-Ins with Your Team). Additionally, if questions found in the "Parking Lot" card from the previous tactic do not have a resolution, additional parties can be included. Being able to interact with each other, share processes, and identify gaps will make each tactic more successful when everyone has the same understanding.

Client X's Current Tactical Wins

Most of the suggested tactics above are building on what your team already possesses, and the summary of your current wins are outlined below.

User Focus:

- Conducting user surveys and planning to conduct more.
- Awareness of content gaps and how they're affecting users.

Collaboration:

- Awareness of Product B that may be applicable to Product A.

Conclusion

User Focus Strategic Direction Obstacles

Possible obstacles when implementing the user focus strategic direction may include finding your target audience and receiving skewed results when performing content analytics.

Because Client X's software reaches a variety of businesses and people with differing software experience levels, it may be difficult to identify who your target audience is to better tailor your reorganization process. If surveys and tests are not performed with the target demographic, results can be unhelpful when attempting to implement.

My recommendations for identifying your target audience could have been stronger if I had known your audiences' software skill levels represented as percentages. I would have been able to provide recommendations for tailoring the specificity of Product A or Product B topics based on your audiences' software skill levels.

Next, if your website is not organized in a way your customers are searching, results from performing content analytics may not accurately represent the correlation of information. Additionally, bounce rates could skew results since it could indicate "...users may be able to get what they need in a single viewing and leave satisfied" (Land, 110).

My recommendations for performing content analytics could have been stronger if I had known the comprehensive scope of that process, including the users you originally surveyed and the list of questions you asked. Additionally, having known the current content analytics could have provided additional clarity in our team's organization recommendation (Fisher et al., 9) for chunking content based on how users were searching for information.

Collaboration Strategic Direction Obstacles

Possible obstacles when implementing the collaboration strategic direction may include deciding which project management tool works best for everyone and scheduling conflicts.

It may be hard to decide, as two teams uniting for perhaps the first time, on which project management tool suites the needs of distinct roles such as technical writers and developers. If all members are not on board, people may use their own project management apps on the side and provide little scope to the team on their progress or hurdles.

My recommendations for selecting a project management tool could have been stronger if I knew the needs of both teams. For example, a more visual option, a spreadsheet type option, or a heavily-AI focused option.

Next, scheduling conflicts may arise since there are a multitude of people that may have different working hours. Meeting synchronously could be a challenge, but it's crucial in improving comprehension of needs and roadblocks.

My recommendations for scheduling weekly meetings could have been stronger if I knew each teams' average working hours and consistent roadblocks when interacting to suggest a meeting time and a meeting itinerary so pressing issues are addressed.

References

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