

Content Strategy Sample Task:

This was given to me by one company as a test to see how I apply my content strategy skills.

IMDb for the Theater

Your client, an industrious theater veteran, would like to build IMDb for plays and musicals.

Your job is to organize and structure content in the experience in a way that allows users to access all of the relevant content about their favorite plays and musicals, discover works that are new to them, and generally get them excited about live theater, even if they are new to it.

Be sure to consider:

- The motivating factors for users of the experience
- The challenge of finding relevant content within the experience
- The challenge of creating consistency within the experience

Because I knew I had a 30 minute presentation to do for this task, I had to keep it brief and simple, although in reality, this could be a much larger and deeper project. My approach was to limit this to the pages of an internationally known theater near me, as something to supplement the website they already have in place.

The following documents are some of the documentation I would use in this scenario.

1. A list of questions for the client to help me clarify what they really want and what their goals for this addition are.
2. A solution brief that outlines how the task will be approached after those questions have been answers (or mostly answered) to set up the expectations of both the client and me, and,
3. A PowerPoint presentation showing how the content model and plan could be executed within the framework of the client's current website.

Questions for the Walnut Street Theater IMDB project client:

First round of questions – initial determination of the scope and purpose behind the project:

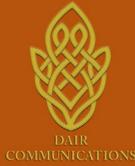
- Why do you want this resource site? What do you see as its purpose?
- Do you have another website that this database would be a sub-site, or is this an independent site?
- What do you envision to be the experience your user would have? They would get to the site, and...what would they do? What are they looking for? Why are they looking for it? What do you see as a successful interaction on the site for your user?
- Who is your audience? Is it only for theater buffs, theater students, or for the general public to use as a resource?
- What is the purpose of this theater data base site? Is it being used to provide solely a repository of information/education, or is it to promote certain theaters, plays, productions, actors, etc.?
- Do you already have content that you want to include that we can inventory and see how it fits into your vision? If not, we need to think about how we will research and gather the content in order to develop it.
- When would a user use this? Anytime, anywhere? Only when in attendance of a production? For research?
- How will people access this—is this a web-based app or a standalone?
 - Does it need to be accessed from mobile devices as well as desktop?
 - Will they need a wi-fi/internet connection to access it?
 - Is this a subscription-access that would be used by those who sign up and/or pay for the service?
- Will the site include sponsored spaces/ads/commercials/promotions on the site?
- Will there be social media connections associated with this website/database?
- How do you see this project/product being different from these?
 - Internet Broadway Data Base: <https://www.ibdb.com/>
 - Broadway World Data Base: <https://www.broadwayworld.com/bwidb/>
 - The Broadway League Internet Data Base: <https://www.broadwayleague.com/research/ibdb/>
 - Playbill: <https://playbill.com/>
 - The Internet Theater Database <http://www.theatredb.com/>
- What parts of these current Broadway data bases do you like or not like?
- Since you are using IMDB.com as an example of your vision, what are the features you like about it? What features don't you like about it? What are features that you wish it had, but it doesn't have? This is a site that does more than just looking up stats on movies and TV productions.
- How "deep a dive" do you want to go with the depth of the content? Meaning, how complex do you want this? This could go very deep very fast—a rabbit hole if not planned for carefully.
Some relatively obvious topics would include:
 - Titles of plays and musicals
 - Play/ musical plot summaries
 - Cast
 - Crew
 - Year of production(s)
 - "Story by"/source (some plays and musicals are based off books or other sources)

Questions for the Walnut Street Theater IMDB project client:

- Playwright(s)/author(s) of play/musical
- Composer(s) and lyricist(s) (for background music as well as full musical songs used)
- Theaters played in
- Producers
- Choreographers
- Directors
- Set Design
- Costuming
- Critic ratings at the time of the production
- Audience ratings
- Age Appropriateness (Family friendly?)
- Cast soundtracks
- Video productions available through movies, YouTube or other official sources
- Print publications available of plays/musical text/music scores
- ---list could go on and on.

Depending on how deep you want this to go, we should identify the top 10-15 things to include, and add things in phases as we build it up more.

- Is this limited to only plays and musicals that have made it to Broadway, or are we also extending this to off- and off-off-Broadway and regional theaters? Is this also global, or just in the US? Or for one specific theater? Or one particular region?
- Like IMBD, would you want to include access to articles, blog posts, ticketing opportunities to see productions locally, news, coming soon...etc.? If so, what would you like to see?
- In an ideal world, is accessibility an issue for your users so they have access to the content on this website? Or have just the basics and bake in more later?
- Once we have this set up, how would this database be maintained?
 - How would new listings/information be added?
 - If there are ads and ticketing info, who would do the updates?
 - Who would be the contributors to articles/news/blog posts?
 - Is this site something you (the client) would maintain, or would we be helping with the maintenance?



Walnut Street Theatre – Trivia Database

Solution Brief

Document Version : 1.0

Date: April 2020

Background

The Walnut Street Theatre (the “Client” or “WST”) contacted Dair Communications (“DC”), with interest in developing a website feature (the “Feature”) to provide a trivia database relating to the theater (the “Solution”), including content similar to the IMDB, but for (the “Content”). The Site will be accessible by Walnut Street Theatre customers (the “Users”). This document details our proposal for developing the first release of the Site, focusing on a specific minimally viable product (MVP) of immediate benefit to the Users. Future phases will introduce additional functionality to enhance the value of the Site and its Content.

Vision

To create a WST trivia database that will help to entertain and inform users about the productions that have played at WST throughout history, not only learning more about their favorite shows, but learning more about the history of the theatre and its importance not only to the theatre world at large, but to the Philadelphia community in the process.

This Brief

This document identifies the Site users, outlines their needs and objectives, and projects how the Site Content and functionality will satisfy the Site vision. Once the solution brief is approved by the client, it will be used to guide development of the Site.

Site Launch Objectives

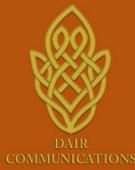
The objective of this website is to allow theater fans to research information about cast members, plays, musicals, dates, and other facts related to productions presented at the Walnut Street Theatre.

Target Audiences

There are at least two **key users** who will be served by the website:

While the public will have the website content available to them, the main users are:

1. **Walnut Street Theatre fans** – Primary interest: historical trivia about WST
The Influencers want to quickly find the details of different productions that have been done at WST.
2. **Theater fans**– Primary interest: find details about their favorite productions that may or may not have been produced at WST.
The Influencers are general theater fans, who want to know if particular productions, or particular actors or other details ever played at WST.



The main users are described or **characterized** briefly here:

1. People who are interested in preserving the historical information and legacy of WST.
2. People who are interested in plays, musicals, and the entertainment culture in general, and want to see how their interest connects with WST.

Use Cases

The following is a list of user objectives and an initial description of how the site's content and functionality will succeed in meeting those objectives. NOTE: these are not prioritized.

Walnut Street Theatre Use Cases

- **Use Case: I want to know what events were produced in the 1976 Season.**

Content to include to meet this need:

- Searchable index to find information about plays from that years
- Searchable index to find Information about musicals from that year
- Searchable index to find information about events that did not fit into either category (ex. the first presidential debate between President Gerald Ford and Governor Jimmy Carter during the 1976 election was at WST).

- **Use Case: I need to look up information about how often or what years an actor/actress participated in WST productions.**

Content to include to meet this need:

- Search field to type in actor/actress' name, and detailed results if there are matches.

Theater Fans Use Cases

- **Use Case: I want to know if my favorite actor/actress ever acted in a WST production.**

Content to include to meet this need:

- Searchable index to find information about the actor/actress by looking up their name, and finding detailed results.

Content Description

The content described below represents our initial recommendation for database content on the MVP site, derived from the research provided initially by the client. This general background supports several categories of content, which would be applied to each search results as applicable:

- Titles of plays and musicals or other events
- Play/ musical plot summaries
- Cast/ Participants

- Bios and Photos, if available
 - Crew
 - Year of production(s)
 - “Story by”/source (some plays and musicals are based off books or other sources)
 - Playwright(s)/author(s) of play/musical
 - Composer(s) and lyricist(s) (for background music as well as full musical songs used)
 - Producers
 - Choreographers
 - Directors
 - Set Design
 - Costuming
 - Critic ratings at the time of the production
 - Audience ratings
 - Age Appropriateness (Family friendly?)
 - Related Cast soundtracks
 - Related Video productions available through movies, YouTube, or other official sources
 - Related Print publications available of plays/musical text/music scores

These categories of content must be supplied or vetted by subject matter experts (SMEs) who will be provided by the client. The Scope of Work includes messaging, UX copy writing and copy editing, database entry, development of the search engine, editing for “fit” on the webpage, and proofreading.

The content will:

- Include all historical information available
- Provide complete information based on the search parameters
 - Includes links to related information
 - Includes content to alert user that the searched item does not apply. (Ex. Certain actor has not been in a WST production.)
- Site Sections
 - Home page – link from the home page and website navigation
 - Section: Education or About Us/History (Need to discuss with client for best placement)

We ask that client and SMEs provide:

- All applicable content as required
- Advice is a content is not easily categorized
- Any clarification and validation that the content is correct.

Initial Draft Sitemap (Example)

0.0 WST Home Page

1.0 Education

1.1 WST Database



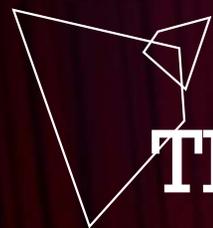
- 1.1.1 Search fields based on categories listed in Content Description
- 1.1.2 Response field providing the details sought from the search, or a response that the information is not available.

Assumptions

The users will understand how to use the search fields and understand any theater terminology used in the content.

Next Steps

The client is asked to review and approve this document. Upon approval, Dair Communications will schedule its first sprint and begin execution. Dair Communications may also anticipate a meeting with content experts, to be scheduled by the client.



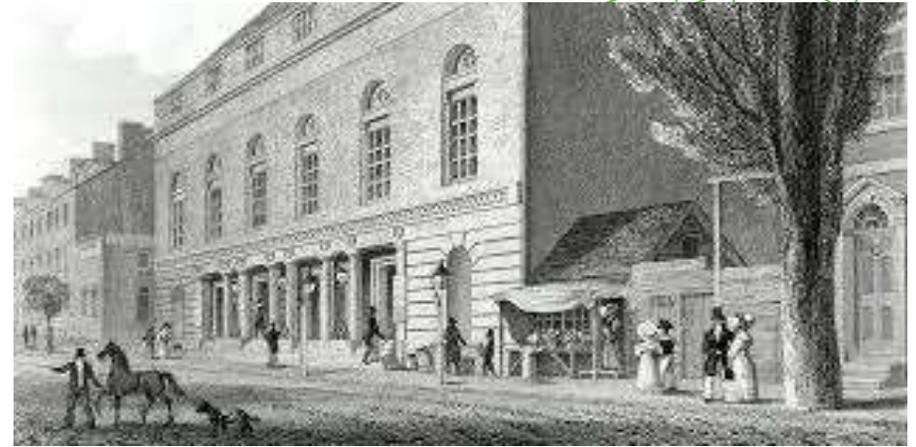
Walnut Street Theatre Database

A fun, interactive, and informational
offering for Philadelphia area theater fans.



About Us

We're a team of business-minded designers, developers, and thinkers who help you create great products and services for your customers and employees.



The task:

The Walnut Street Theatre has requested our help to create a "theater IMDB" to archive their historical production information in an easy to use, searchable way that can also be used by the public.



What does Dair Communications need to do?

- We work closely and collaborate with you to ensure that you get what you wanted in the best way possible.
- We help you address the "adverb" questions about the project (Who? What? Where? Why? etc.), sometimes helping discover new solutions.
- We break the project up into phases so that we address the biggest needs first, and then fine-tune and add features in later phases.
- Most importantly, YOU are part of the process. You own this content in the end, and we want to make sure YOU are happy with the results.



The Problem



Need to raise the profile of the theatre

The public doesn't understand the value of this historic theater.



Need to bring in younger generations

Need to encourage interest in our future patrons and customers.



Appeal to theater fans.

Need to keep our current patrons and customers engaged.



Support historical value of the theater

Demonstrate the value of the theatre's history in a way that connects with the public.



There are already several theater databases out there.

Theater fans already have several resources available, such as [Internet Broadway Data Base](#).



The Solution



Create a WST Database

Create a simple, searchable database that connects to WST historical information.



Promote the database through gamification

Promote the database with a weekly trivia game similar to the "Seven Degrees of Kevin Bacon" game.



Engage future customers

Reward participants with free tickets or tours or other promotional items.



The Product

The Database

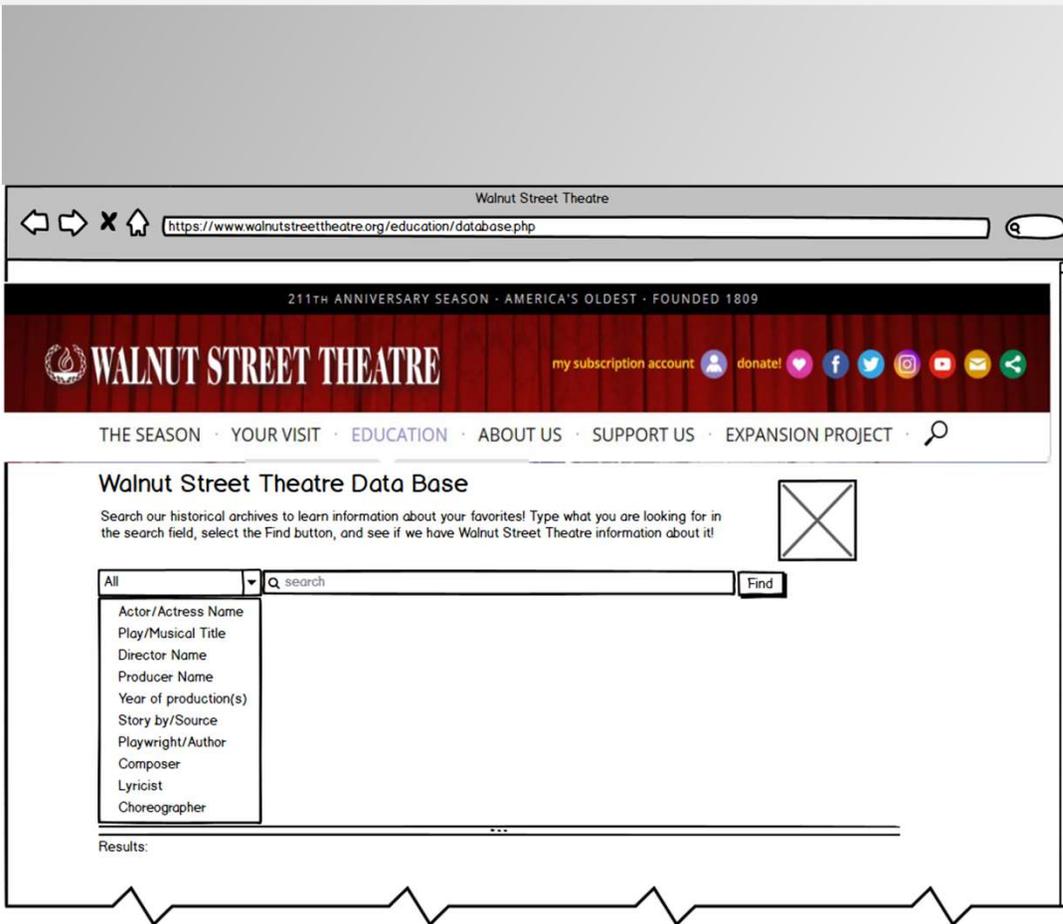
Will include all WST information in a SQL database, including connections to outside DBs if information isn't available.

Easy-to-use Search Function

Users can search on several categories provided

Easy-to-Understand Results

All text, images, and links are easy to understand, and links to connected information is easily retrieved.

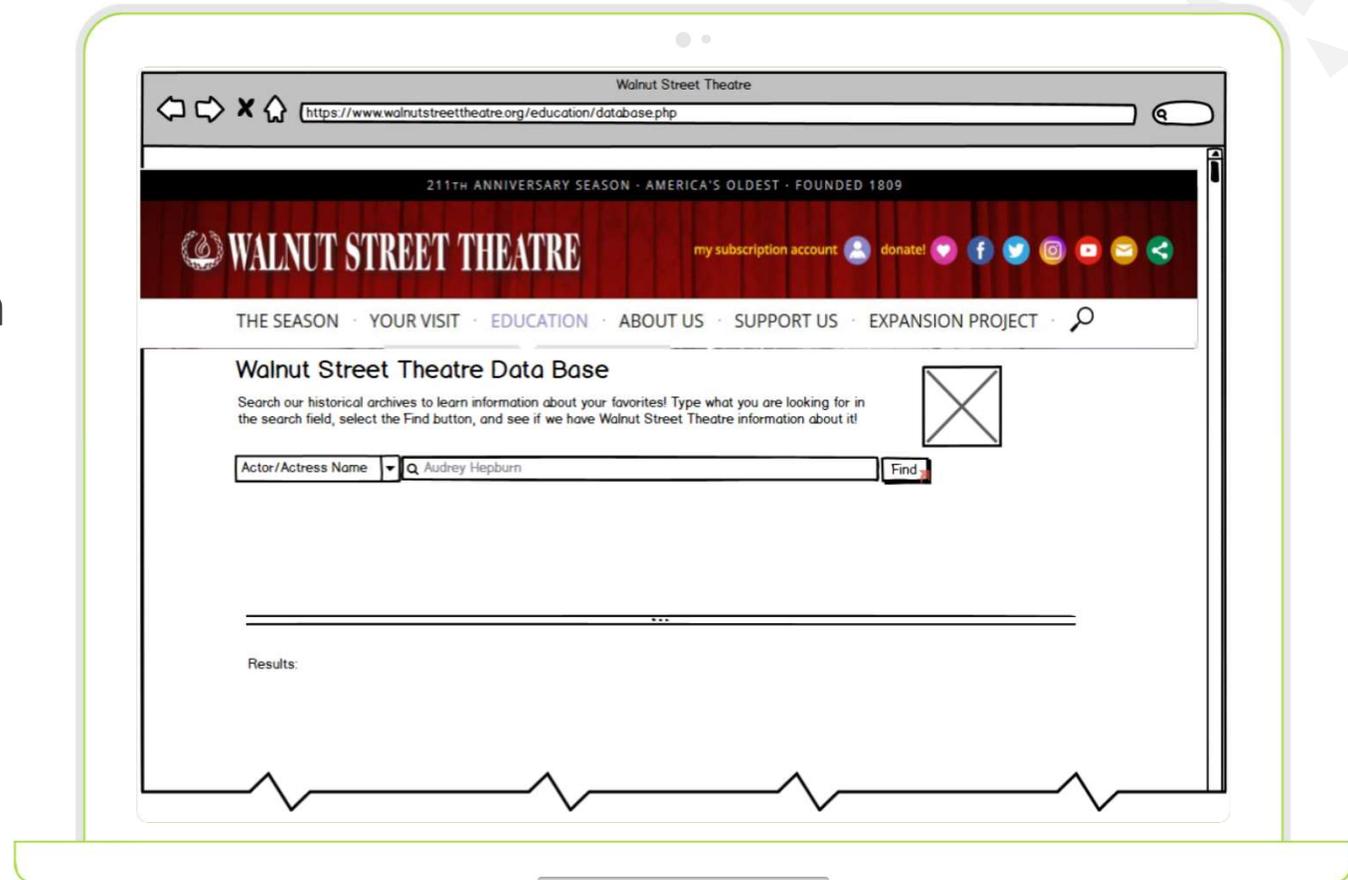


The Walnut Street Theatre Database (WST-DB)

Easily searchable,
informative, and fun
to use

Other benefits include

- Provides a means of archiving basic historical information about WST with public access
- Connectivity between topics is easily navigated.
- Results displayed are clear and concise.

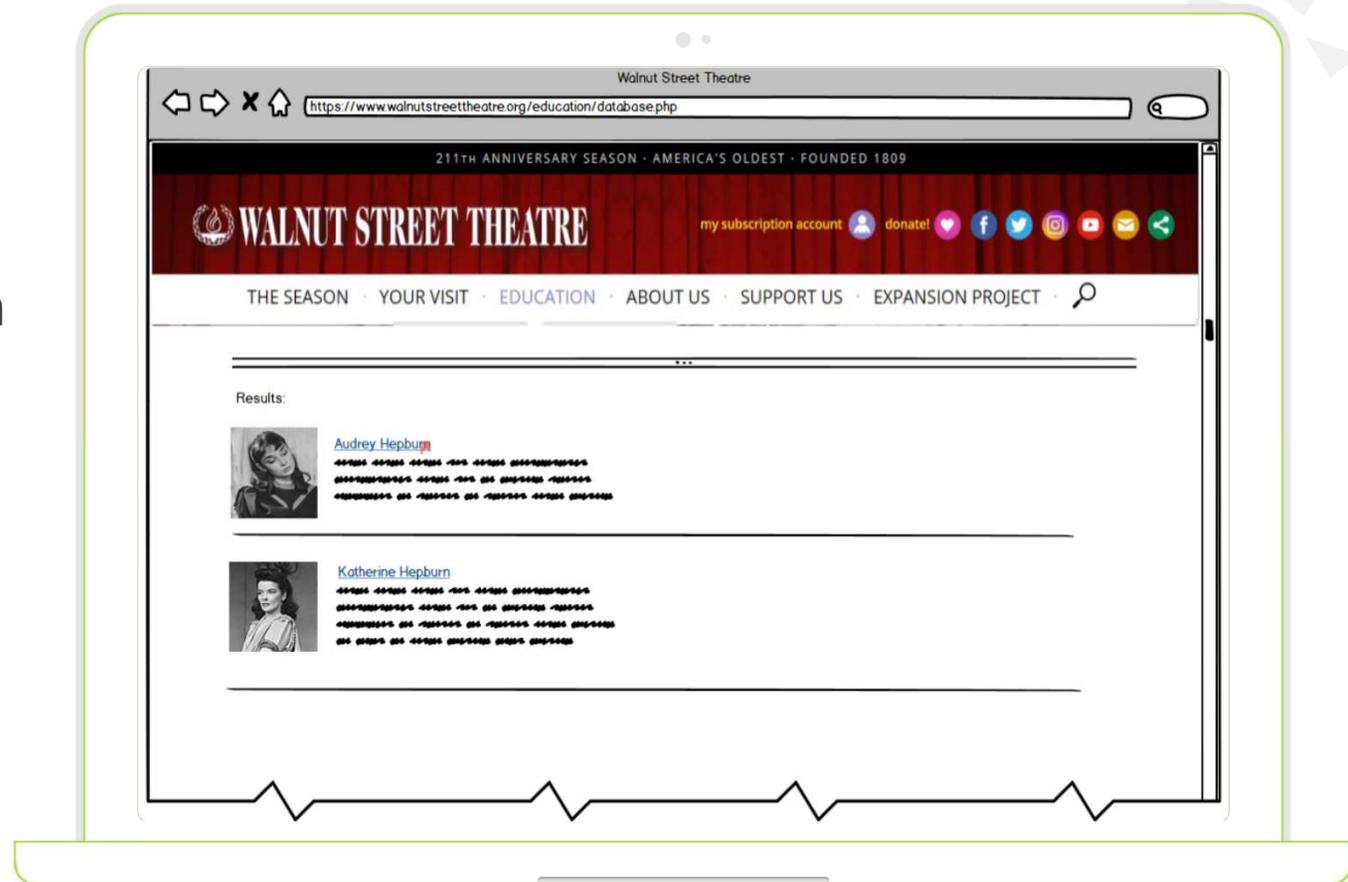


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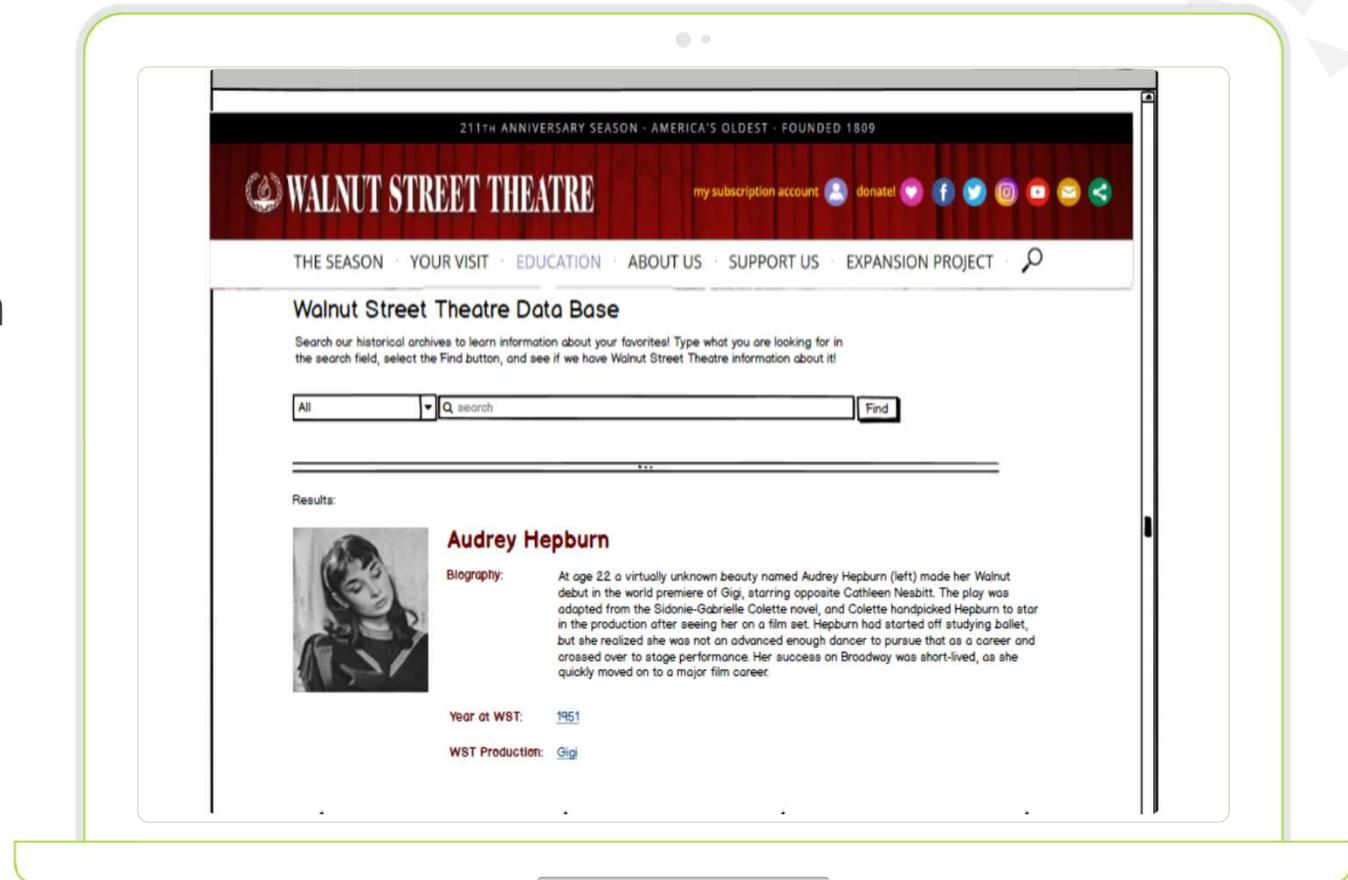


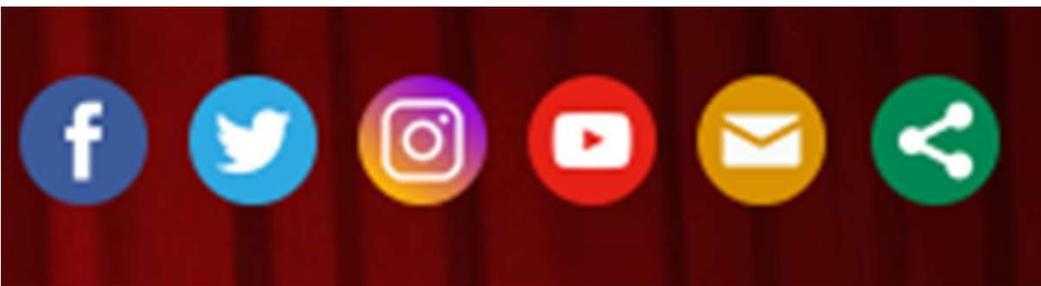
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How would the database be promoted?

Through a marketing campaign using gamification, WST would offer users a chance to participate and use the database in a weekly trivia game to win weekly prizes.

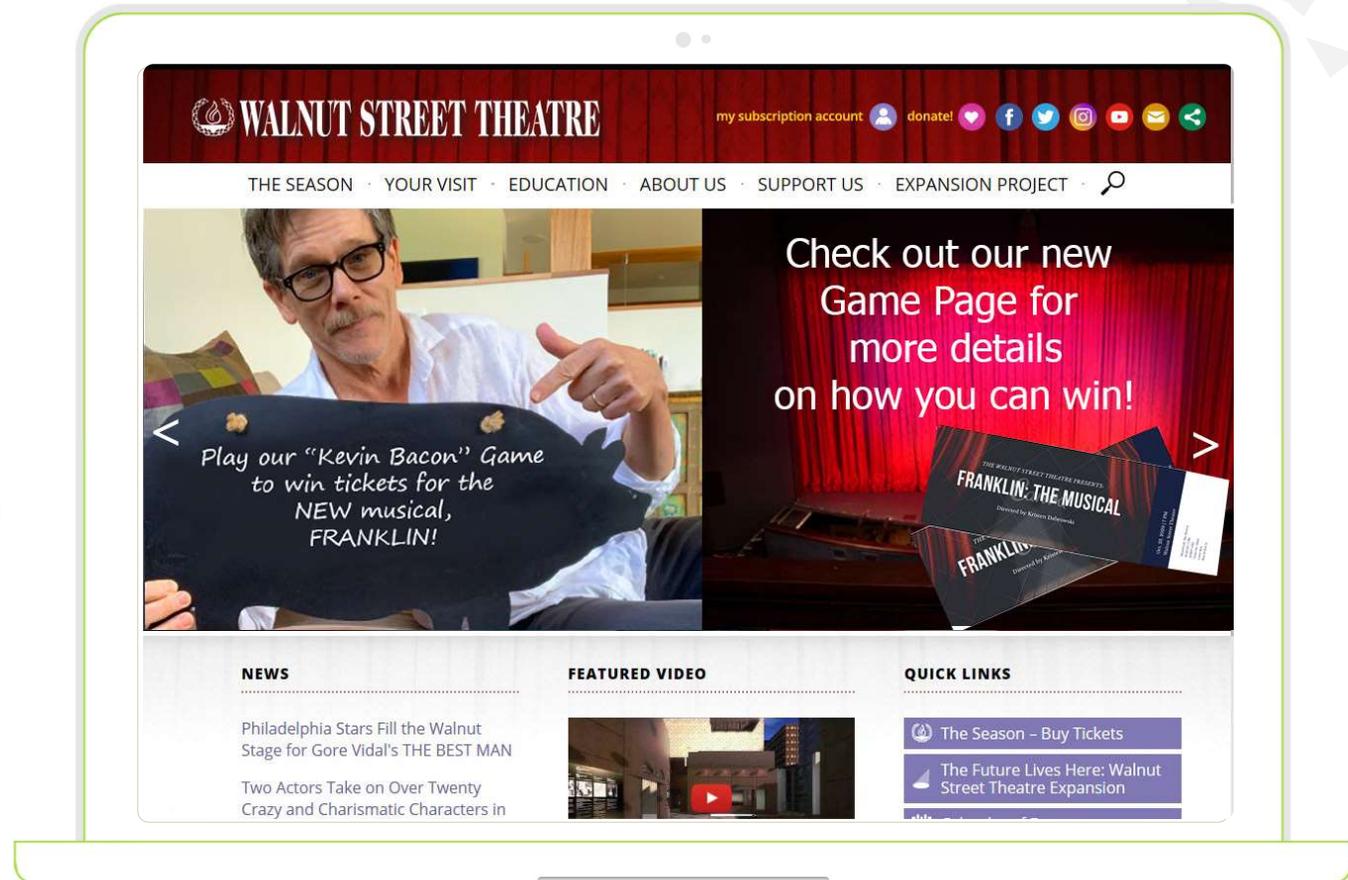


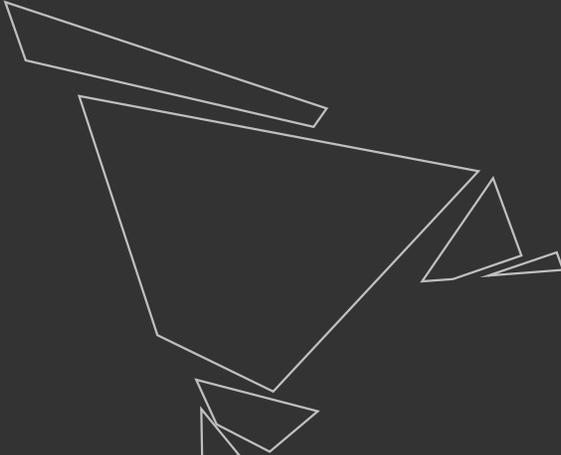
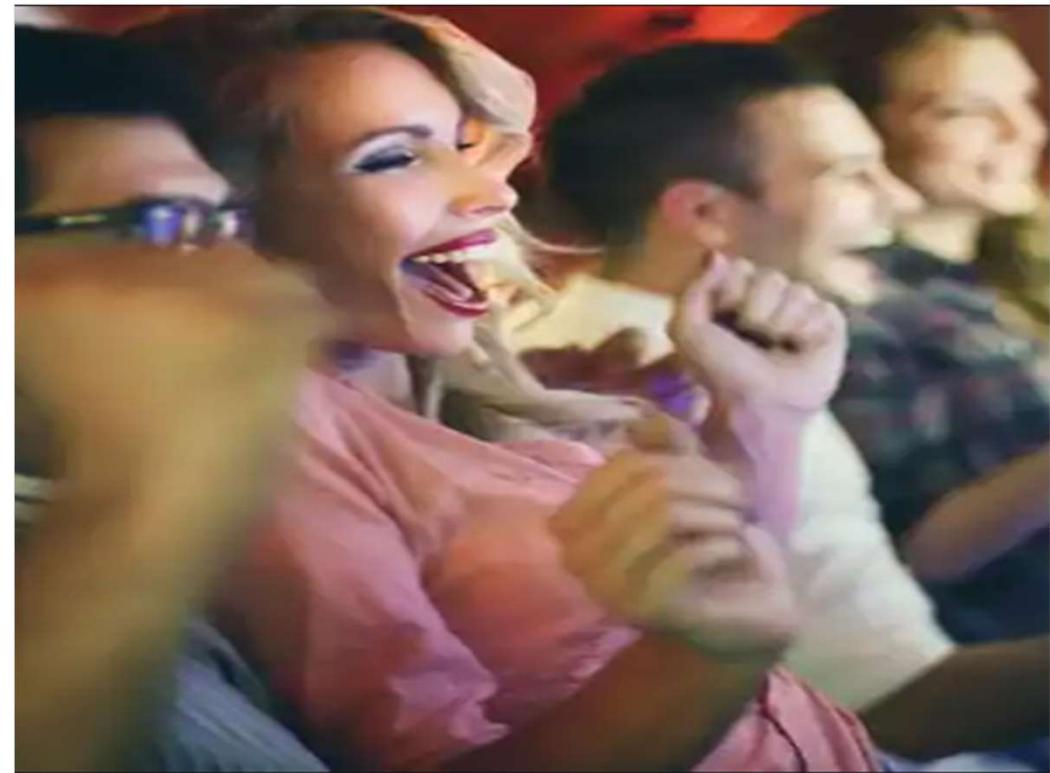
Promotion of the Seven Degrees of Walnut Street Theatre Game

Using the game to promote the product builds ROI.

The benefits include:

- The game directs users to the WST-DB and helps them learn how to use it to their advantage.
- Learn more about WST in the process
- Motivates them to want to get more involved with the theater.





How would the game work?

An example would be a game following the "Seven Degrees of Kevin Bacon" game rules. Users would connect one item to another in less than seven steps to connect to the final item.



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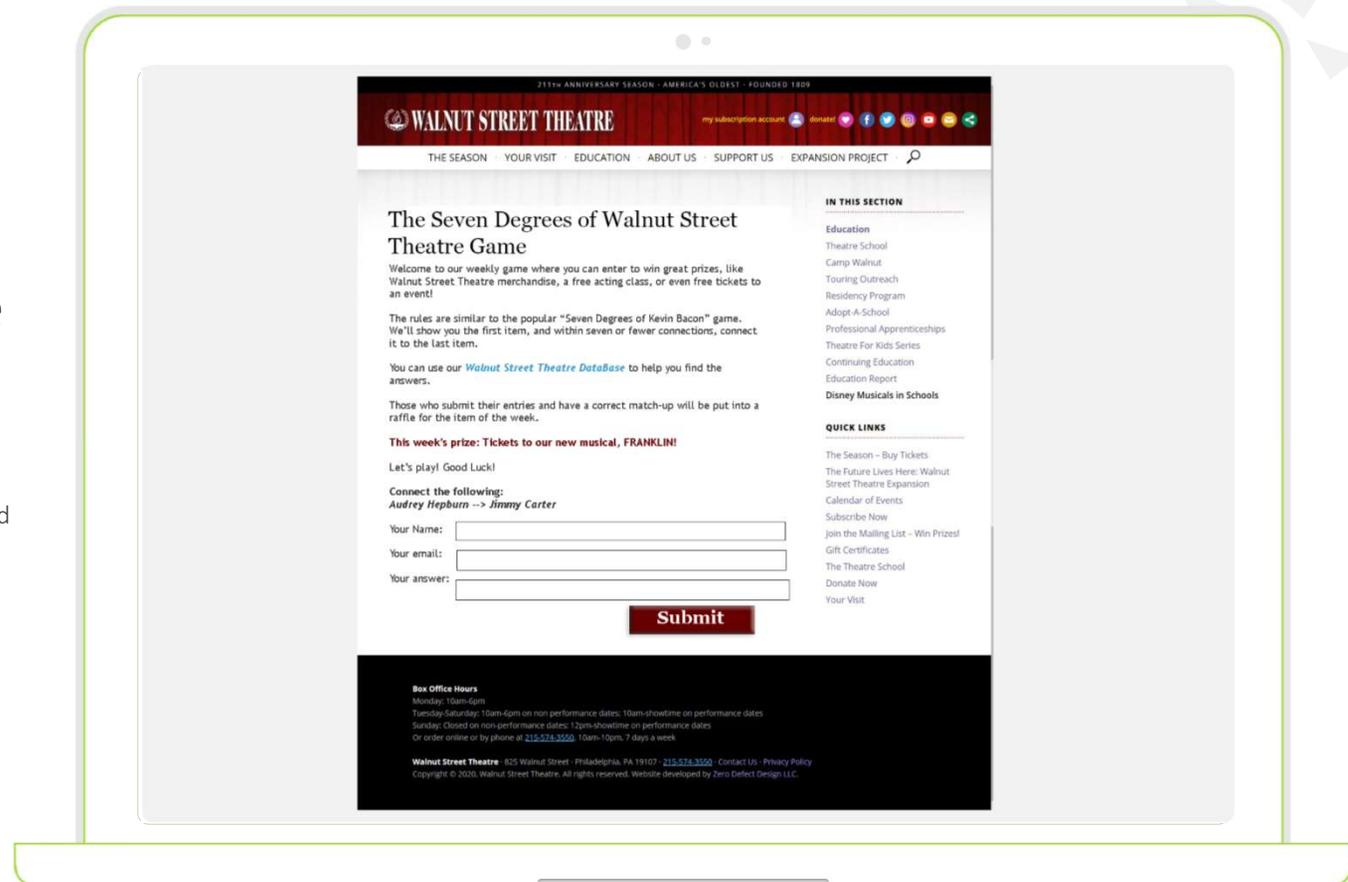


The Seven Degrees of Walnut Street Theatre Game

Weekly Trivia Game that encourages use of the WST-DB

The basic rules:

- Use the WST-DB to find the answers (linked in the page)
- Add new users to marketing list (they can unsubscribe later).
- Marketing campaign is something fun yet educational.



Business Model

There is an opportunity for success



Fortify

Creating a publicly accessible archive of WST information will enhance the reputation of the theater.



De-Marginalize

The WST-DB allows anyone with access to Wi-Fi and a browser to access the information—on desktop, tablet, or smartphone,



Research

Site analytics can help us understand how users find and use the site, and its success in usability and findability.



How does this fit into the current content structure?

- This could fit under one of two categories (client choice)
 - Education
 - or
 - About Us > History
- These could also crosslink between both of these sections, depending on how you want to promote it. This warrants some further discussions with the client.



What items would be included in the database?

Phase 1

- Titles of plays and musicals
- Play/ musical plot summaries
- Cast
- Crew
- Year of production(s)
- “Story by”/source (some plays and musicals are based off books or other sources)
- Playwright(s)/author(s) of play/musical
- Composer(s) and lyricist(s) (for background music as well as full musical songs used)
- Producers
- Choreographers
- Directors

Phase 2

- Set Design
- Costuming
- Critic ratings at the time of the production
- Audience ratings
- Age Appropriateness (Family friendly?)
- Cast soundtracks (iTunes, Spotify, Amazon links)
- Video productions available through movies, YouTube or other official sources
- Print publications available of plays/musical text/music scores (publisher links, Amazon links)



Growth Strategy

How will we scale in the future

Phase 1

May-Mid August, 2020

- Build the database in SQL with the help of the WST subject matter experts.
- Include a digital asset management (DAM) that integrates with the database to manage images and multimedia available for entries.
- Build the search engine and functional UX/UI for the website.

Phase 2

Mid August-September, 2020

- Create the criteria and content that the “Kevin Bacon” game can use.
- Determine sponsors who might be able to support the promotional costs.
- Determine what the promotional prizes are.
- Create the campaign for the game to promote the database.

Phase 3

November, 2020

- Revisit the analytics and feedback from both database access and the game.
- Make adjustments as needed.
- Expand database with new categories as needed.



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Summary

History of Walnut Street Theatre is secure!

- A well-planned, well-executed Walnut Street Theatre Database will help save details about WST productions as well as educate the public.
- Promotion through marketing gamification of the WST-DB will help raise awareness of the product as well as a better appreciation of the theater and its history.



Thank You



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