



CREATING THE FUTURE

Change the Questions, Change the World!

Creating a Website from Scratch (part 3)

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Participants:

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Participants began by sharing what has been awesome in their lives (community building).

Summary of catalytic process for this website

- what can this website make possible?
- walk backwards from the maximum possibilities to what will it take to achieve them

So far we have:

- Identified the audiences we want to reach
 - Influencers within systems (persuade & convince)
 - People drawn to the creating the future philosophy (collect & nurture)

What do these audiences need to think and feel to know when they get to our website?

- Timely, curated information
- Easy on ramp
- Start with relationship building

Why would people come to the site?

- Learn, teach, practice, connect, explore, share what they are learning, visualize possibilities, track the progress on the 10 year plan
- Last time looked at what people need/want who are coming to connect, learn and contribute

TODAY:

- **Look at the rest of reasons why people are coming to explore, teach, practice, etc**
- **Determine what they need to think, feel, know in order for our high potential goals to be achieved.**



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Janet: Any commonalities among these individuals? Are they founders? Pre-founders?

Hildy: No, more like Creating the Future resonates because they work that way, they sense what is possible, they are interested in focusing on possibility – connect on a spiritual basis of how people are and can be.

Carmen: it's about the energy you feel on the site; many sites are stagnant. If I am coming to practice and want to come to formulate a new approach or way to socialize a new concept I'm dealing with and then make that new way my new "natural" then I want to come to the site and find something that helps me or someone I can reach out to that will help. It's not natural yet, but I want it to be natural. So every time I go back to the site I want to have the ability to feel like this is a great new practice for me to start, and also, who can I reach out to talk about that particular practice. I feel like the kind of action and energy that we build into the site is really important to generate the behaviour we need to support the mission.

The energy is welcoming but also inspiring. The energy I'd like is a commonality with the discussion and the terms and the people providing their sources of info, but also a buoying effect in that those at the site are aware the conversations I'm crafting outside the site will receive pushback initially. And that can be defeating to some people and be all it takes to not move forward. But if they have something to reach out to and say this is the next step, this is what you could do, these are the challenges I also face it's going to build their awareness of issues and keep them coming back to learn more.

Hildy: **What would indicators be of that energy?**

Annette: I think when you get to the first page you'll have portals to different simple and basic categories. Not too much on front page. Appealing and energetic. And people engage in different ways. Someone's first method of engagement will be reading what's already there. Others it will be the web version of someone picking up a phone

Janet: Don't do the Manhattan closet. It looks good on the surface, but stuff is falling out of every nook and cranny. At the Glasspockets site (<http://glasspockets.org/>) we started with the call to action on the home page, because that's why we wanted to present all our data. For people not ready to act, there are passive materials people can read. But the key message is the call to action and giving data and information that supports the reasons to act.



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Justin: The energy is about questions, about piquing curiosity. As Annette was talking about the front page, I was thinking about the power of presenting a question. Imagine coming to our front page and, following our philosophy, having the first question be “what did you think coming to this page would make possible for you?” To reframe that whole thing – a lot of what we are doing is figuring out what people are doing here, but part of our methodology is they should be asking why they are there. That energy of using their own curiosity and piquing it through our frame – that energy is “oh, this is what it is like to use this framework, to change the questions”

Carmen: The google approach – your question is our home screen, and the answer is connecting to the portals and calls to action

Janet: A lot of organizations focus on the home page, but in my own behaviour I don't look for the home page. I start in “about”. If that's not good, I get ticked off and leave. Part of that is my transparency bent. If you don't “get it” from the home page, the “about” page gives the establishing shot to help you know what is going on.

Hildy: I rarely come into a site from the home page. Usually from a link or a tweet. Always go to “about” next, no matter where I started from. It's about having the same energy in the site no matter where you are in the site. Whatever essence we want people to feel, they should feel it in every blog post, every place. **What is that “stuff” that energizes?**

Dimitri: Envisioning something very dynamic. Wherever you enter it can mold to you based on your curiosity and questions. It may take you to home page based on what you ask, or not. The structure of websites is based on the available technology. The home page is from notebook based technology, but this has the potential to be much more than that. I'm trying to think about that from an energy standpoint. Maybe the home page rearranges itself based on who you are or what you are looking for

Allison: When I get there I want to know that I've found my people. I want a sense of belonging. Pictures of real people. I want to engage. It has to be as interactive as possible. What does that feel like? What are some sites that do some things we really like? Elements like belonging and engagement and not being overwhelming but creating a sense of community. Should we have a wiki or google drop to collect examples? The site should communicate we are thoughtful and dedicated/driven to create the future.

Nancy: I've been struck by the curiosity idea in the feel of the website. I keep envisioning someone with their hand out saying come on in. And since I am a book geek, I see a library with cozy corners I can curl up in, or just come in and get a book and leave. Feeding curiosity and having a place you can explore without having someone shove something in my face (to collect information, etc). I want to be able to wander around and explore where I want to, and if I want to click on a button for more connection, I can.



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Dimitri: You get popups, sometimes you can't move on to the information you want until you give your contact information. Feels inauthentic, they are trying to get into your pocket.

Gayle: People in this space would want to feel safe being seen practicing something new. Feeling safe, or at least not alone, might include examples and stories of how other people are practicing, what kinds of risks they are taking. One of the best community organizers I ever knew was someone who tried very hard to stay out of formal spaces. She had a car with a bunch of lawn chairs in her trunk. She would pull out the lawn chairs and see who else came to sit down. This meant the person whose yard you were in was the person who could offer hospitality, and those who wanted to come join in could offer themselves. For the site: someone is always there to do convening. Someone ready to go when someone arrives. Google hangouts that allow people to pull up their lawn chair to share stories and examples.

Dimitri: How do we do this in a non-retail way? The pop up asks if you have any questions, but you know it's just about the retail. But that pop up does give the opportunity for a real interaction that can create engagement. Figuring out how to do this in real time would give the site that kind of energy and a way of welcoming people in.

Annette: How about seeing quotes and talk bubbles on the front page about the ah-ha moments from the last webinar? Would help people want to see what is being said today.

Gayle: And responsive to a variety of learning styles – not everyone wants to read long blocks, but happy to read a few ah-ha moments.

Carmen: I like the bring-the-lawn-chair approach. Sites are never stagnant. I wonder if we can provide some outward-in perspective from our folks, in that they make the site as they grow with us. Spaces are created in the site as users change and grow. Our intranet is internal and is based on our staff and is place to gather information. There is so much to be found that even the search function doesn't capture everything. We look at the heat maps to see where people leave a page or travel through the site, and then we can change the page to improve the processes. We do this twice a year. It's really community driven by the community we want to engage.

Gayle: So to do this we might have to design something we haven't seen before.

Nancy: The a-ha moment really ties into what I was thinking about welcoming. In a sense it invites you to be part of the conversation if there is a moment that resonates with you. The a-ha moments identify you as one of "our" people. It organically draws you in, like someone having a conversation.

Dimitri: It's full of energy but also authentic. It's an authentic response based on what information you want to get.



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Hildy: Many sites use placeholder language for what they really want. We want to be explicit to tell people we know what you are feeling, we know where you are stumbling, we have the same questions. We need to be explicit about what people are feeling and coming forward with...

Gayle: and not give answers but always respond by sharing the journey of the questions.

Annette: Robert said something about we come to this because we feel pain somewhere, or alone in wanting things to be different, so being real about that – it's Pollyanna and also shows that we can talk about the hard pieces and can still move forward together.

Hildy: Language piece is growing – it's not just words, but also what we say. It's not definitions, it's what we say and how we say it in every place.

Dimitiri: The tag line “change the questions, change the word” didn't change what we do, but it changed how people understand what we are doing.

Hildy: What if I have played with this, I read an article about Creating the Future, I am putting my toe into a new way of being, I want to practice and learn from others who are practicing – **what do I need to see, feel, experience when I get to the site?**

Janet: It's kind of like flow in a building. You don't want to have to think about where to do next, you want to have a path laid out to guide you. Peer ambassadors of some kind?

Annette: Have examples. **What's an example of a question?**

Janet: You know how you have ambassadors to a place? This site needs ambassadors to the future. You could have baseball cards or yearbook-like thing of ambassadors to the future and you go through each door and that ambassador introduces you to very future thinking.

Hildy: We already have a framework that is a flow. Okay, so if the whole site is built around that flow, it's transparent and in alignment.

Dimitri: The language of an ambassador of the future, it makes the future a very real thing. A real and creatable thing. It's a very powerful image that engages. Immediately I ask questions. I already want to know more.

Janet: It gives you a way to engage your core. You have an instant team that wants this distinction, and you get curiosity from those who haven't heard of you before.

Hildy: This pulls together with the idea of having office hours on the site. And you could have ambassadors from different walks: corporate ambassadors who are integrating Creating the Future into business. My brain is exploding.



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Nancy: It feels very intentional. It's that you have ambassadors who are there to guide you through the process.

Hildy: **What is it in a website that makes me want to explore?**

Annette: Part of it is visuals. Part of it is different people want different entry points

Janet: Incentives are good. We give a badge to people who take the Glass Pockets assessment tool. Maybe we can give out a futurist badge? Carrot, not stick approach. There are fun ways to use the ambassador as a thematic thing throughout the experience. You could have a passport to the future and you could get virtual stamps – might be childlike, but you know what I mean.

Hildy: A button: Who else is creating the future?

Janet: And could be categories of future: corporate, whatever your buckets are.

Annette: And geographically – who in my region is creating the future? And gamification is huge in the learning world. It's done well where the bar for entry is low, non-competitive. It shows involvement. It's fun.

Dimitri: Badge: you visited our website at 2 in the morning.

Hildy: **What would I need to see that would make me want to explore?**

Janet: Lists create hooks. What are the top 10 habits of future-oriented leaders? Click through a slide show.

Dimitri: Yes, and each of the slides could have more info on the habit, or you could move on to the next slide.

Hildy: I like the idea of hooks. The habits are one, the who else is doing this is one. Questions will lead us into wanting to explore – not answers. **What else leads you to explore?**

Annette: Visuals. Infographics. Grantcraft website example - <http://www.grantcraft.org/>

Hildy: In all the places that we go, including our current website, we label the destination rather than asking a question. Library. Class. Those are our labels, but not the question the user is asking.

Gayle: In the volunteer centre I worked at the labels focused on the user, not what we had to share with them: I want to volunteer. I have a volunteer opportunity.



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Justin: It is not uncommon to come to a site and feel lost. Lots of clicks and digging, one thing at a time; lost context; no big-picture view. So the opposite is sense of place and context. If you don't have the context at any given point you wonder why are we doing this. Why am I here? Something about continuity of experience and context that has to unify that back, whether it's something that frames the curiosity and inquiry or keeps the focus on question, or is common to all the things you might start doing with us. I'm not sure what it looks like, except avoiding the feeling of being lost.

Hildy: There used to be web maps. I need to know all that's here and where I am in the scheme of things.

Janet: That is where a map is a good analogy. I'm thinking of a mall directory with a "you are here" dot.

Dimitri: So what does a site map look like in a site that molds itself to you? It's doable – it's just a map that is tailored to you, and tells you where you are and where you've been. The other thought about pulling you in, we started talking about our overall online presence. Does this also provide opps for a facebook type of place? A place for real-time conversation with the people who had the a-has. I'm also thinking about the tech of push and pull. This site is all pull – you come to the site and pull what you want. But I also want push: I want to know when something I am interested in happens, when someone is talking about this topic. That extends the welcoming by making me part of the site into the future.

Gayle: We already have some good examples of interaction on Facebook, eg. Consultant page. It would be good to have direct links to those accessible from the website. One thing that stuck out for me on how Creating the Future used twitter is how engaging it was to use it for conversation and engaging people.

Annette: The other thing that's good about making it a social platform, in my world of child welfare people aren't active on social media – but they are on listservs. Enough said. Having a space for them would be helpful.

Hildy: How about people coming to the site to see what's happening with Creating the Future as an ongoing demonstration project? **What do they need to see, feel, experience on the site?**

Gayle: I think they would need to see how Creating the Future is achieving not Creating the Future's mission, but their mission.

Justin: That links to the experience is about them, not us. We don't set the destination, and we don't want to make this about us.



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Hildy: But if someone is coming to see what we are doing – so a middle manager wants to track our learning and report back, or a foundation wants to look at us for partnership?

Nancy: So the site has a way to tell those people what we are doing and what it means for them.

Gayle: I think of a time with an organization I wanted to engage in this approach. I needed to be able to be represented to my peers and colleagues by what was on the Creating the Future website and materials. It's coming back to where people are experiencing themselves in the Creating the Future description.

Hildy: **What will it take for me to connect what Creating the Future is doing to why I care about what Creating the Future is doing?** There's a reason I care. Maybe a million reasons, or maybe 7 reasons. **How do we connect how we are doing to why they would care how we are doing? What's in it for me to know what Creating the Future is doing?**

Dimitri: There is the dual role of being a laboratory, a demonstration. We are being an example, so there needs to be reporting. I was seeing it like a newspaper.

Hildy: So if I want to take an action, partner with Creating the Future or take Creating the Future and present it to my boss, I would need to see proof, success stories, evidence, data presented in a way that I can then use it. And I need to be able to find it, in a form I can use.

Nancy: That speaks to a lot of the issues that Creating the Future fellows have brought up about how can I talk about what I've learned in a way the organizations I work for can understand.

Dimitri: A newspaper that has lots of different sections, and you pick the section you want, that applies to you.

Hildy: We are starting to hear the same answers to these questions of what the site needs to look like. I'm thinking we're getting to the how stage now. **Are we ready to take a deep breath on the conditions that have to be in place and move on to the design?**

Gayle: We need a summary of the outcomes of these three conversations to inform us on the "how" conversation.

Janet: I think the "what's in it for me" question is important, but looking at other websites will help us see how others have cracked that nut. Do you have any peers we should look at?



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Hildy: My initial response is there are peers in a whole bunch of different categories. I'd love us all to be brainstorming those questions. I think it will come from all kinds of unexpected places. There are others wanting to accomplish the same things, even if not doing the same things.

Janet: Might be people trying to reach the same audiences or create the same kinds of changes. Seeing what they are doing might help us answer the "what's in it for me" question

Hildy: Would be good to find other sites operating at the meta-capacity level, and also sites with the kind of functionality we want. The other thought that never occurred to me, but Carmen brought up, is that many of the functions we want to accomplish are on intranets, not available to us externally.

Annette: Especially corporate ones (e.g. insurance broker for celebrities) that have the resources to fund a well-developed intranet. Non-profits don't have that resourcing.

Aha's / Reflections

- Thinking of the future as a physical place
- A place you could go for a vacation, learn a new culture
- Set up hotels, the Restaurant at the End of the Universe
- Behavioral change website: <http://dsd.me/>
- How exciting it can be to embark on a change with the company of others
- Ambassadors to the future
- Flow – rooting the site flow in the Creating the Future process
- Excited to connect with tech builders about how to design this site

**Creating the Future expresses deep gratitude to
Stacy Ashton
for sharing her skills in transcribing this meeting**