**Alexa Cookbook Management in 2020**

**What is the Alexa Cookbook?**

Our Cookbook is a collection of small snippets and demos that can be used to help build skills, better understand features, or inspire larger projects.

The Alexa Cookbook generates nearly twice as much daily engagement as the ASK SDK for NodeJS on GitHub. Yet the Cookbook is poorly organized and poorly indexed, leading to large levels of wasted opportunity.

We can serve our customers better, and by doing so, drive higher traffic, better developer engagement, developer productivity, and skill quality.

**Alexa Cookbook goals for 2020**

With active management and promotion by the VDE team, we can at least double the traffic, generate better engagement attribution metrics, ensure correct licensing of samples, and add mechanisms that will not only increase code usage by developers but better measure specific samples being downloaded.

By EOY 2020, we will demonstrate the following improvements on a 2-month trailing basis:

* 100% YOY increase in traffic (12,200 weekly visits from at least 1,700 uniques).
* 200% YOY increase in clones through micro-cloning (at least 70 weekly micro-clones).
* Enable rudimentary conversion tracking.

**How do we reach these goals?**

Goals will be met through four levers:

1. Increasing content — more samples translates to more problems solved and more developers finding their solutions in the Cookbook.

2. Increasing participation — more time spent in the developer forums and on public forums like Stack Overflow, finding questions that can be answered with Cookbook items, will generate more links to the Cookbook, more visitors, and increased SEO. Over the course of the year, we will develop and refine mechanisms to help discover and identify appropriate questions.

3: Better navigation & editorial oversight — The Cookbook is poorly indexed at this time and many of the samples have little or no description. This makes it difficult for customers to find the solutions they need or understand how specific Cookbook entries can help them. In addition, that lack of contextual description means less organic search traffic.

For example, the "guides" section has no README file describing what the guides are. The "Build an Alexa Hello World Skill" guide is located in the "skill-setup" directory and has a filename of "7-cli.md."

The folder and file names have little or no semantic meaning for either human readability or search term matching, and we're leaving navigability and additional SEO on the table by not having a descriptive term linked to it from a README for the folder.

By adding/improving descriptions for the current content, improving semantics in file and directory names, and enforcing an overarching editorial vision (see Appendices A & B) going forward, organic search traffic will increase and developers will find the Cookbook more useful and easier to navigate.

4. Increased Promotion — We will implement a series of blog posts and videos called "Cooking with the Alexa Cookbook" providing demos of how Cookbook elements can be built into interesting sample apps. This will have four benefits: increasing awareness of the Cookbook, increasing overall educational content, driving traffic, and inspiring customer faith in the Cookbook as useful resource.

Cloning and conversion tracking will be improved with micro-cloning:

The blessing and the curse of the Cookbook is that it is a single repository. While it provides a single location for a large amount of content, users cannot easily download one sample or one directory's content. They often have to download the whole thing, which feels burdensome when you're downloading 72 megabytes of content to get a copy of 3 files.

Micro-cloning will use links in directory level README files to an off-Github script to provide downloads at directory levels. Customers wishing to download a specific sample will be able to download just the directory it's in. This will be accomplished through the use of a customized variant of DownGit (github.com/MinhasKamal/DownGit) that we would host.

Micro-cloning provides two benefits.

1: By making downloads smaller and more specific, it encourages more people to download samples and makes those samples more useful by minimizing the clutter of unwanted files while allowing the repository to keep growing.

2: All links to our DownGit service would go to an off-Github web page we control where our marketing tracking mechanisms can be used to not only count that action, but track subsequent actions in our systems such as starting/publishing skills. That provides more insight into what the developers who download our cookbook samples do in the following days or weeks.

**In conclusion...**

Through application of the ideas above, the cookbook will at least double key traffic metrics, increase code downloading, and drive improved generation of marketing metrics.

**APPENDIX A: THE COOKBOOK EDITORIAL MISSION**

**Mission Goals (unless you know better ones)**

1. We will test our samples regularly to ensure they are up to date.
2. We will use best practices for Information Architecture and SEO.
3. We will maintain an internal Wiki to keep teams and editors updated on the cookbook status.
4. We will publish a monthly cookbook newsletter via email with "internal" and "developer" editions.

GOAL 1:

As part of the implementation of Tenet 2, readme files will each receive a "Last tested" footer with the date of test in ISO format. If there is no known last tested date, it will be noted as the last update to the sample.

Samples with a last tested date greater than 365 days ago will be tested in a monthly bug bash. Samples that work will have the date in their footer updated. Samples that do not work will be removed until fixed or removed permanently if we decide they should not be fixed.

Additionally, a script will be run against the repository that will check for broken links in the repo so they may be fixed or removed with the bug bash.

Tentative bug bash date will be the last Thursday of the month. The prior Thursday, items will be identified and testing responsibilities will be distributed per a plan TBD.

GOAL 2:

These best practices are TBD in January. Greg will create a first draft by January 22, then take a comment period from the broader team until January 29nd, then finalize and implement best practices by February 14. These best practices will be detailed in a team wiki and optional training sessions will be offered by the editor(s).

The editor(s) will then create a task calendar by March 2, to bring the existing cookbook content in line with these best practices. This will include adding micro-cloning links, contextual descriptions, readmes, etc. where applicable.

The editor(s) will act as gatekeepers for new content, providing editorial reviews with an SLA of one week. A cookbook editor's responsibility is ensuring that the additions meet IA and SEO standards and have an accompanying and appropriate internal wiki entry. They may also, but are not required to, review and reject entries based on other technical or writing quality judgments.

GOAL 3:

Upon submitting content to the cookbook, contributors will be required to add an entry to the cookbook status wiki noting any dependencies and TBDs in their content. A format for this will be determined by the editors to ensure these dependencies and TBDs can be tracked, especially if TBDs remain when a piece hits 1-year testing.

Dependencies will help identify samples needing to be tested when revisions to tools, APIs, or SDKs create breaking changes.

The author (or in the case of non-Amazonian champions, their coaching evangelist) will be responsible for creating an entry in the wiki for new content they create, and the entry will be considered a requirement for editorial approval of publishing the content to the cookbook.

GOAL 4:

Cookbook editorial will work with developer marketing to provide a monthly communication to developers on updates to the cookbook.

Developer newsletter: This will be a compilation of new additions and updates, based on the indexing text and commit notes.

Internal newsletter: This will be an annotated version of developer newsletter providing context on the additions and updates that is useful to ASK evangelism, documentation, and marketing.

ADDENDUM TO GOALS

Metadata related to testing dates and dependencies should be maintained transparently in the readmes for the samples.

**APPENDIX B: COOKBOOK AUDIT AND PROPOSED INITIAL CHANGES**

This is a list of identified first pass changes to improve indexing, categorization, navigability, and SEO. To keep the "tracking" easy, it is presented in a directory tree format using bullets.

**Top Level**

* Update readme to reflect new structure and guidelines/advice
* Update licensing and contributing docs to state licensing going forward

**code-snippets**

* + Add directory-level readme / index

**skill-flow-builder**

* + - Add readme explaining what it does and linking to [blog post](https://developer.amazon.com/blogs/alexa/post/a3044117-24ac-44a1-8452-fc2f42a84108/skill-flow-builder-tips-and-tricks-use-extensions-to-level-up-your-narrative-driven-games)

**contributing**

* + new folder with contribution guidelines, templates, style guides

**modules**

* + delete dir, integrate content into code-snippets.

**feature-demos**

* + Update directory-level readme / index to reflect current content
  + Explore demos for code that can be extracted for snippets

**apl**

* + - add directory level readme / index

**aws**

* + - add directory level readme / index

**dynamic-entities**

* + - add directory level readme / index

**reminders-api**

* + - add directory level readme / index

**skill-connections**

* + - add directory level readme / index

**guides**

* + add directory level readme / index

**aws-security-and-setup**

* + - add directory level readme / index

**cli**

* + - add directory level readme / index

**hackathon-quickstart**

* + - playtest it and see if it's still valid after 2 years
    - If at least 70-80% valid, update and improve indexing

**migration**

* + - add directory level readme / index
    - add guide on updating lambdas when Node expires

**personalization**

* + - add directory level readme / index

**skill-flow-builder**

* + - add directory level readme / index
    - Maybe convert the PDF to markdown

**skill-setup**

* + - change directory name to hello-world-with-cli
    - add directory level readme / index
    - change file name to alexa-skill-hello-world-cli.md

**style**

* + - delete
    - move content to a top level "contributing" folder

**testing**

* + - this is going to be a long term personal project to increase content here

**tips**

* + - delete, incorporate content into code-snippets

**resources**

* + possibly delete or change to point to external resources (blogs, other repos, etc.)

**cookbook-templates**

* + - move content into contributing folder

**intents and slots**

* + - move content into code-snippets

**lambda-layers**

* + - move content into guides folder (and update for node 8.10 deprecation)

**tools**

* + UPDATE readme to reflect microcloning and betteradvice as well as index the tools
    - TBD

**APPENDIX C:**

Broad Milestones and Timeline

Q1 2020

**January 2020:**

* Get directory reorganization approved by OSA
* Get licensing and new content approval flow approved
* Develop proto cookbook auditing toolkit, define goals and roadmap
* Start conversation about having a cookbook index page on dev site
* Create internal Cookbook Wiki

**February 2020:**

* Update contribution guidelines
* Develop "play testing" calendar and get started
* Educate team on content approval flow & licensing
* Reorganize directories and add indices
* Get micro-cloning service working and have InfoSec ticket approved or pending
* Develop "readme" compiler for cookbook index page on dev site (if approved)

**March 2020**

* Launch bi-weekly "Cooking with the Cookbook" blog series
* Launch micro-cloning in production
* Launch cookbook index page on dev site (if approved)
* Plan 3 "Cooking with the Cookbook" Twitch streams (and determine feasibility as a weekly series like office hours).

**April 2020**

* Launch monthly Cookbook newsletter
* If feasible, launch Cooking series.