SUSTAIN CHARLOTTE
www.sustaincharlotte.org

MMC5427 | Tara Whiteley | Lauren Yockey

FINAL REPORT

Prepared for Ms. Branyn Calegar,
Communications & Development Director,
Sustain Charlotte

Table of Contents

Introduction

In June, our team conducted an in-depth interview with Communications and Development Director for Sustain Charlotte Branyn Calegar that resulted in a situational analysis, particularly as it concerns Sustain Charlotte's online presence and web strategy. As we seek to place this information in a practical context, we will now follow up the analysis with a final report. This report will include a more detailed look into the analytics data available to Sustain Charlotte, as well as sample organic and non-organic SEO campaigns through the use of social media and Google AdWords. It is our hope that the organization will find this proposal helpful as they seek to strengthen their visibility on the Web in the future.

The Client

The client, Sustain Charlotte, was founded by current Executive Director Shannon Binns in 2010 in Charlotte, North Carolina. The organization was created to address the growing sustainability issues faced by a rapidly expanding city. As "the metro area's leading voice for sustainability," the 501(c)3 nonprofit organization seeks to engage the public through three "key strategies:"

MISSION: "To inspire choices that lead to a healthier and more vibrant community for generations to come."

VISION: "A region in which everyone has the knowledge, resources and opportunity to make choices with a clear awareness of their combined social, economic and environmental impacts."

Educate • Engage • Unite

The Industry

Sustain Charlotte works within the nonprofit sector with a focus on regional sustainability. Specifically, the organization sees itself as an advocate for "long-term economic vitality, environmental health, and social cohesion" through means of public education and community action. Through these efforts, the nonprofit hopes to ensure a "high quality of life for the community."

Target Publics

In June, our team conducted an in-depth interview with Communications and Development Director for Sustain Charlotte Branyn Calegar that resulted in a situational analysis, particularly as it concerns Sustain Charlotte's online presence and web strategy. As we seek to place this information in a practical context, we will now follow up the analysis with a final report. This report will include a more detailed look into the analytics data available to Sustain Charlotte, as well as sample organic and non-organic SEO campaigns through the use of social media and Google AdWords. It is our hope that the organization will find this proposal helpful as they seek to strengthen their visibility on the Web in the future.

Millennials between the ages of 18 and 24 who live in the South End area of the city. These young professionals take advantage of the close proximity to their Uptown offices by walking or riding a bicycle to the work. These digital natives are truly passionate about advocacy and sustainability, although others see membership with a nonprofit organization as a valuable resume booster (U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, N.A.). Either way, they are interested in becoming members of local organizations whether via membership or attending events.

Men and women between the ages of 25 and 34 who are daily users of social media - particularly Facebook, Twitter and blogging sites for news, political opinion expression, and for joining causes (Valenzuela, S., 2013). They are not passive users: they consistently engage and comment on matters relevant to them, as well as mobilize information to "spread the word." These individuals are digital natives, who feel like their voice is best heard through Internet activism. However, if the issue is of great concern to them, especially when it comes to political matters, this group will likely take up the cause at the grassroot level in their local community.

Charlotte businessmen & businesswomen between the ages of 25 and 34, who prefer commuting to their downtown office on a bicycle because it saves money on gasoline, it's better for the environment, and not to mention it beats sitting in rush hour traffic. However, these businessmen are frustrated at the lack of bicycle lanes and frequently find themselves dangerously close to the street, or are forced to navigate their way through pedestrian traffic.

subsegments

Millennial • Bicycle & Pedestrian Commuters • Policy Influencers • Active Community Members

Strengths

- Brand equity within Charlotte (testimonials)
- No direct challenges in terms of competition
- Consistently lands above the fold in SERPs
- Responsive website design
- Consistent messaging in social media
- Significant following on Facebook (4.1k), Twitter (2.3k), and Instagram (1.8k).
- Success with #ibikeCLT campaign
- About 3.2k newsletter subscribers

Weaknesses

- Confusion with other niche sustainability organizations like Envision Charlotte
- Content-laden website & difficult navigation
- Landing page for disbanded campaign still featured in website header
- No existing SEO or Analytics goals
- No existing AdWords account
- High bounce rate
- Lower rate of returning users vs. new

Opportunities

- Use available data from Analytics as a starting point for creating AdWords campaigns
- Plans for overhauled site to reduce content/navigation links and enhance usability
- Momentum from #ibikeCLT campaign
- Meta description properties are in place and can be filled with keywords/description

Threats

- Inconsistency in Analytics management
- "Read and move on" use of Analytics
- #ibikeCLT landing page lacks a navigation
- Disbanded campaign landing page could lead traffic away from site

Sustain Charlotte has an online-focused general marketing strategy now, with very little activity occurring through more traditional print media. The low-cost of digital marketing is a sensible option for the non-profit organization, and is attractive to its key audience of millennials who heavily use digital platforms, and also because of sustainability issues associated with print media.

Sustain Charlotte currently promotes its mission and initiatives through digital marketing on their blog, e-newsletter and social media platforms. In contrast, Sustain Charlotte uses very little print advertising; however, they have recently published a brochure.

Ms. Calegar noted that Sustain Charlotte relies heavily on spreading its messages through its e-newsletter, which has 3,200 subscribers, and their weekly blog.

Sustain Charlotte has a strong presence on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. **Facebook boasts the largest following for the nonprofit with 4,158 followers** (as of July 30.) Its engagement on the network varies depending on the subject of the post, with those posts that spark an emotional response doing quite well. Sustain Charlotte has focused much of its efforts on a protected bike lane initiative for Charlotte, so it makes sense that a post about a safer biking and walking initiative

in Atlanta has reached 61 reactions, 14 shares and multiple comments. Similarly, a photo post that shows ample vehicle parking but no area to secure a bicycle outside a municipal building in Charlotte reached 63 reactions and four shares. Calegar who manages the social media pages posts daily to Facebook. Sustain Charlotte budgets approximately $25 a month for Facebook ad targeting for events and membership drives, with more money, approximately $200, devoted to larger annual events.

The nonprofit's Twitter account has 2,300 followers (as of July 30.) They are also active on this platform with daily activity accounting for 3,419 tweets since their account was created. **Engagement on Twitter does not reach the levels of Facebook.** For example, a tweet about a neighborhood's redevelopment plan that drastically reduces the size of its parks has earned only four retweets, and three likes on Twitter, while the same story earned 50 reactions and four shares on Facebook.

Sustain Charlotte has an active following on Instagram with 1,868 followers and 139 posts (as of July 30), made on a semi-regular basis. These photo and video posts do quite well in terms of engagement many easily reaching 20 or more likes. Protected bike lanes is a popular topic among the Instagram feed and those posts have high engagement for the nonprofit.

The nonprofit organization also has a LinkedIn account that has not fared well in terms of engagement, Ms. Calegar said. They have 308 followers on their LinkedIn account (as of July 30), and posts generally garner only one or two likes. They are posting about monthly to this platform. However, they do have a group on LinkedIn with 394 members (as of July 30) where newsletter, updates and relevant information is shared. Those posts also generate little engagement.

A YouTube account has 17 videos posted with the majority posted in the past year. The most recent video was posted one month ago, and the oldest video dates back three years. The video with the most views was a New Year's video dated Dec. 31, 2015, posing the question, "How will you get around the city this year?" Sustain Charlotte would like to incorporate more videos on YouTube and its other social media pages.

Ms. Calegar has considered creating a Snapchat account for Sustain Charlotte, but she is unsure how to incorporate it into the social media mix of the organization. **Snapchat has skyrocketed in popularity with a high adoption rate of millennials.** It now also has more daily users than Twitter with 150 million people using the service each day. Still it is a challenge for many organizations to figure out how exactly to incorporate this platform into their marketing plan,

which is the case for Sustain Charlotte. (Bloomberg, 2016)

The Sustain Charlotte website predominantly features its digital platforms with its social media icons located in the navigation bar at the top of the page and an option to sign-up for the newsletter also located above-the-fold. Feeds from the nonprofit's Twitter and Facebook accounts appear below-the-fold. However, it is noted that an Instagram icon is missing from the navigation bar. Blog posts take up the majority of the main page of the website and include snippets of the four most recent blog posts.

In terms of positioning among other similar organizations, Sustain Charlotte is the leading voice on sustainability issues in Charlotte. The website does mention that on its Mission page, but it could be featured more prominently there and elsewhere on the website. Their branding is uniform in their digital marketing efforts, with their logo and the colors from their logo used throughout the website and e-newsletter design. Their branding is also incorporated into their social media pages with their logo.

It is evident that the nonprofit already has a digital focus to its general marketing strategy, but there is room for improvement. Video is the new medium that is taking social media by storm, with

Continued...

options on every platform for video sharing. A recent Hootsuite article cited information collected from Cisco, Facebook and YouTube and has confirmed what we are all thinking: "video is the internet." When reporting on the popularity of social video, the article cited facts such as "Nearly a million minutes of video will be shared every second," **"More than 50 percent of people who visit Facebook in the U.S. every day watch at least one video,"** and "The number of hours that people spend watching videos on YouTube is increasing 60 percent year-over-year." It would appear that the stats show one thing: video content is now king. (Walters, 2015)

Sustain Charlotte realizes it needs to include more video in its social media and marketing line-up, and doing so will help them reach more of their supporters through the kind of media that they are tuning to. Showing the authentic, raw side of Sustain Charlotte with a "citizen journalism" approach has garnered support on its social media pages, as evidenced by the number of reactions to the Facebook post about a lack of an area for securing a bicycle outside a government building in Charlotte. Switching a camera feed to video feed at that time and doing a live Facebook video would have been an easy way to use this highly popular medium. Other social channels also have video options readily available, including Instagram, Twitter and of course

YouTube. Snapchat would be one more channel that is heavily focused on video and a great way to reach a millennial audience, with a behind-the-scenes look at daily life for the nonprofit organization. The younger audience that is Sustain Charlotte's primary demographic is looking for a more authentic experience and this could resonate with them very well. (Bloomberg, 2016)

A redesign of the website may also highlight active social channels more effectively. Positioning the feeds from Facebook and Twitter in a more prominent position, while keeping yet reducing the real estate taken up by the blog posts would be two primary changes. Including more videos on the website and reducing some of the text-heavy posts on the main page may help provide for a cleaner, less overwhelming design which has been cited as a weakness to the current web design. Ms. Calegar said they have received feedback that there is too much content and the site is hard to navigate.

Search Campaign & Analytics Goals

Sustain Charlotte has a **good organic ranking** on Google Search Engine currently. However, they are not currently using their Google Analytics platform to its potential and they **do not currently have a Google Adwords account**. These two factors are limiting Sustain Charlotte's potential success in meeting its goals of increasing awareness and membership.

By using the features available in Google Analytics, the nonprofit can analyze the data they have available to them and monitor trends they can act upon to improve its search engine rankings. To best achieve this goal, **it is important that the intern provide a scheduled (bi-weekly or monthly is suggested) report on web activity, highlighting areas both succeeding and needing improvement and suggestions for changes.** The intern should also be competent in the process of building an AdWords campaign from start to finish, and be able to assess and adapt the results throughout the duration.

Because of the untapped power behind Google AdWords in placing organizations in front of their target audience, we propose an AdWords campaign to most quickly optimize Sustain Charlotte's SERP presence, **impressions** and ultimately, **conversions**. With an overall goal of increasing awareness about their organization and about the issues they support, it seems that even a small AdWords budget will go far to help realize those goals. This awareness will be measured via impressions and conversions, however, it should be noted that "conversion" in terms of achieving a goal needs to be defined. Conversions will most likely take place when the user clicks on one or more of the calls-to-action such as the "Become a Member" call-to-action.

Google Analytics

Current Situation

Sustain Charlotte currently has a Google Analytics account set up to monitor user behavior on its website. The account is managed by a single seasonal intern, while Ms. Calegar manages in-between hires. The Analytics data is collected and reported over a monthly period; however, Ms. Calegar has stated that there is not much afterthought or analysis given to the data, but was hopeful that with the newly hired intern this would change.

In general, Sustain Charlotte tends to attract more new users than returning visitors, experiences a high drop off rate, a relatively low number of pages per session, and a session duration of under two minutes. As expected for a regional organization, almost all of the visitors are located within the Charlotte, North Carolina area.

The majority of visitors to the organization's website are new, with 67.4% first-time visitors compared to 32.6% returning. On average, users visit 1.90 pages per session for an average duration of 1 minute and 34 seconds. The bounce rate is about 67%, with most users landing on the home page. Unfortunately the organization experiences a high rate of drop-off from the home page, with 21.5% leaving before clicking to another page on the website. This could be explained by the crowded content and frustration with navigation that has been expressed by visitors, according to Ms. Calegar. Having a heavy navigation with no clear direction where the user should go next has evidently led to a high instance of site abandonment. For the users who do continue on from the home page, they typically click next on the Jobs and Internships page (11.9% of traffic), while other users choose instead to visit the Board of Directors (6.63%), Events (6.63%), or Contact (6.08%) page.

The good standing Sustain Charlotte has on search engine results pages is reflected in the method most users choose to get to the organization's site: Organic search leads the way with approximately 35% of sessions originating from search engines. However, it should be noted that while it is generating the most website traffic, it lags behind in terms of conversions. Social media, direct URL or name input and email share a relatively similar percentage of remaining traffic.

Users tend to engage more with the website when visiting from a desktop computer: Overall, desktop users have lower bounce rates, longer sessions, and more pages viewed per session. This tendency could relate to the layout of the website on a mobile device. Even though the site is responsive, users do not have access to call-to-action buttons like "Subscribe to Email" or "Become a Member" above the fold of the home page. Instead, they must either scroll below the lengthy blog post previews or navigate the slide-out menu.

Sustain Charlotte's organic SEO and active social media presence has largely paid off in terms of site visits, but the high bounce rate, high abandonment rate and the few pages per session demonstrate a weakness in website usability. **In other words, web searchers are either not finding the content they are looking for, or are unsure of how to interact with the site.**

User Flow
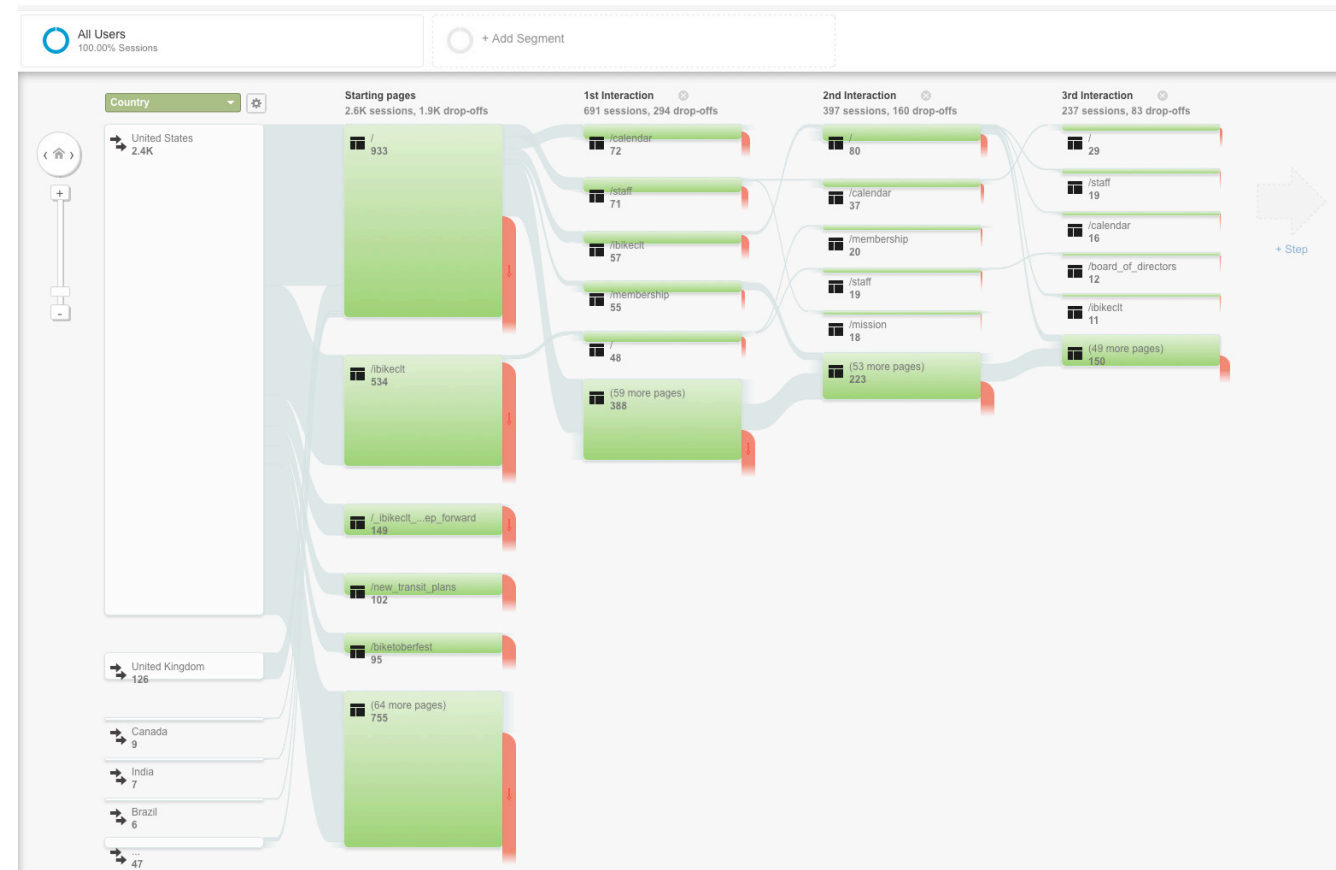
The User Flow reporting tool in Analytics shows the path that users take when landing on Sustain Charlotte's website. The Source/Medium reporting tool below shows how most users get to the website, as well as the amount of interaction by users from each medium .

Source / Medium

Source / Medium	Acquisition			Behavior		
	Sessions ↓	% New Sessions	New Users	Bounce Rate	Pages / Session	Avg. Session Duration
	2,569 % of Total: 100.00% (2,569)	67.19% Avg for View: 67.15% (0.06%)	1,726 % of Total: 100.06% (1,725)	68.28% Avg for View: 68.28% (0.00%)	1.90 Avg for View: 1.90 (0.00%)	00:01:33 Avg for View: 00:01:3 (0.00%
1. google / organic	841 (32.74%)	65.28%	549 (31.81%)	58.38%	2.27	00:02:0
2. (direct) / (none)	453 (17.63%)	69.32%	314 (18.19%)	69.09%	1.89	00:01:3
3. sustaincharlotte / email	345 (13.43%)	54.78%	189 (10.95%)	75.07%	1.68	00:01:1
4. m.facebook.com / referral	275 (10.70%)	84.36%	232 (13.44%)	89.09%	1.19	00:00:1
5. facebook.com / referral	119 (4.63%)	56.30%	67 (3.88%)	68.91%	1.66	00:02:0
6. charlottestories.com / referral	71 (2.76%)	88.73%	63 (3.65%)	77.46%	1.46	00:01:1
7. t.co / referral	65 (2.53%)	55.38%	36 (2.09%)	67.69%	1.77	00:01:5
8. bing / organic	55 (2.14%)	45.45%	25 (1.45%)	38.18%	2.91	00:03:2
9. sustaincharlotte.org / referral	53 (2.06%)	66.04%	35 (2.03%)	73.58%	1.49	00:00:4
0. l.instagram.com / referral	33 (1.28%)	66.67%	22 (1.27%)	51.52%	2.42	00:02:1

Google Analytics

Two Campaign Goals

During the initial telephone interview, Ms. Calegar noted that Sustain Charlotte is eager to increase its membership in the Charlotte community who have an active interest in sustainability and policy work, and who are seeking to participate in local events. When asked what the organization would specifically like to accomplish in the coming year, she responded with a goal to position Sustain Charlotte as the foremost voice in bicycle advocacy. These strategic goals suggest a need for brand awareness. But before setting goals to accomplish this, Hubspot warns that it is vital the organization decides what "awareness" means, as it can be interpreted a variety of ways (Saracino, 2015). For Sustain Charlotte, this likely comes down to an increase in membership and newsletter sign-up, both of which are existing goals in Google Analytics. The organization has also further distinguished the membership goals by new members and returning members. These goals are certainly pertinent to the organization's desires to drive membership and awareness, and in the month spanning June 28 through July 28, 2016, the organization has exceeded its membership goals, but the newsletter signup has not seen any conversions. We recommend that the organization maintain these Analytics goals, but it should implement some "fine-tuning" practices on its website to help increase the number of conversions taking place.

Membership Conversions

- Important KPIs: Higher conversion rate, More pages/session, lower abandonment rate

- Reducing the number of call-to-action buttons from four to two and placing them prominently at the top of the page (Suleman, 2012).

- Make the CtA buttons "visually striking" with two-word "copy that compels you to click the offer" (Hubspot Academy, 2016).

- Eliminating the middle-man "Become a Member" page would reduce the number of steps necessary for the user to take to complete the conversion. Instead, the "Become a Member" link on the homepage should lead directly to the membership form (currently on the "Sustaining Membership" page).

- On the Sustaining Membership page, placing the form above the fold rather than below the copy. We suggest placing the form on the left side of the page with brief, bulleted/ numbered instructions on the right side.

Google Analytics

Newsletter Sign-up

- Important KPIs: Higher conversion rate,% Returning Visitors, Session duration
- Eliminating the "Read our Newsletter" button, which could potentially drive away potential conversions by prompting visitors to read the blog instead. Instead, renaming the link "Blog" and placing it in the navigation would likely help remove any distractions and encourage them to a specific call-to-action (Gal-Oz, 2015).

New Goal #1

As a nonprofit organization, Sustain Charlotte relies on membership fees and donations to operate. While much attention has been given to the membership call-to-action, the Donate page blends in with the rest of the navigation. As there is a dedicated Donate page with a donation form, **we recommend setting a goal within Analytics to track the number of donations through form submission** (Eichler, 2014)**.**
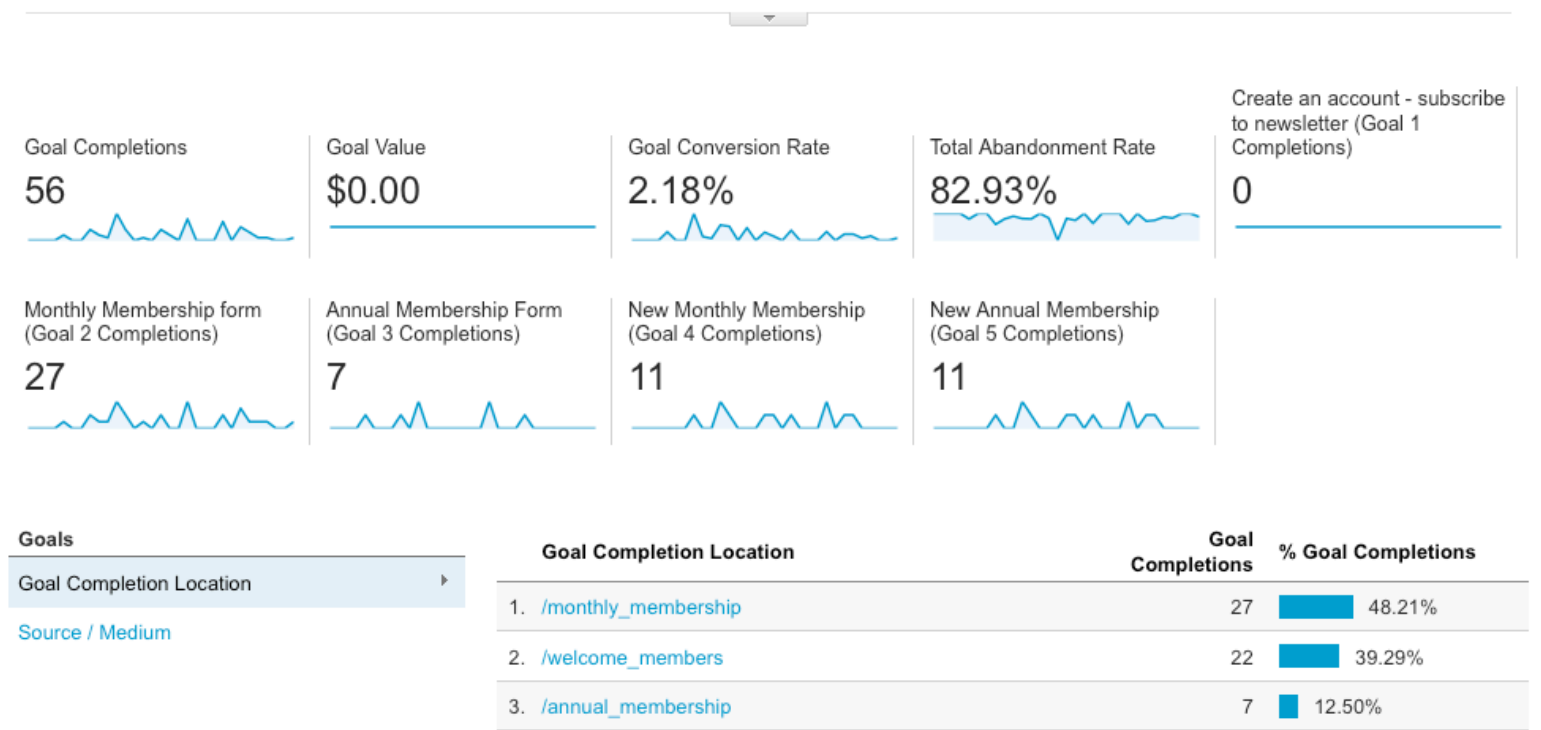
- Important KPIs: Visitor-to-donor conversion ratio, abandonment rate (O'Malley, 2009).

New Goal #2

The Events page features an excellent opportunity for tracking engagement and participation via the RSVP button. **We recommend setting a goal to track the number of RSVP sign-up completions.**

- Important KPIs: New: returning Visitors ratio, bounce rate, conversion ratio (WebSEO, 2011).

Goals & Conversions Overview

	Goal Completions	Goal Value	Goal Conversion Rate	Total Abandonment Rate	Create an account - subscribe to newsletter (Goal 1 Completions)
	56	$0.00	2.18%	82.93%	0

Monthly Membership form (Goal 2 Completions)	Annual Membership Form (Goal 3 Completions)	New Monthly Membership (Goal 4 Completions)	New Annual Membership (Goal 5 Completions)
27	7	11	11

Goals

Goal Completion Location ►

Source / Medium

Goal Completion Location	Goal Completions	% Goal Completions
1. /monthly_membership	27	48.21%
2. /welcome_members	22	39.29%
3. /annual_membership	7	12.50%

Attribution Sources

MCF Channel Grouping ?	Last Interaction Conversions ? ↓
1. Referral	27.00
2. Direct	21.00
3. Email	4.00
4. Organic Search	4.00
5. Social Network	—

Organic SEO
Inbound Links

Uptowncycles Charlotte
(uptowncyclescharlotte.com)

Uptowncycles Charlotte is a bicycle store located in the Uptown area of Charlotte, where a portion of Sustain Charlotte's target public resides. Uptowncycles sells to a variety of customers, from triathletes to town commuters. In addition to selling bicycles, this store also offers a service center, daily rental program, and certified fitting. With Sustain Charlotte's desire to become a leading voice in bicycle advocacy, it would seem beneficial to partner with a bicycle store -- especially one within walking distance of the target audience.

UNC Charlotte | **The Infrastructure, Design, Environment & Sustainability Center** | The William States Lee College of Engineering
(ideas.uncc.edu/)

The UNC Charlotte IDEAS Center is already a partner of Sustain Charlotte, and Sustain Charlotte features this institution's logo on the Partners page of their website. Sustain Charlotte could ask the center to "return the favor" by placing a link to Sustain Charlotte on its "Useful Links" page. A nearby college serves as a perfect recruiting center, especially when the area of study directly relates to Sustain Charlotte's mission. Ms. Calegar has stated that there has been a noticeable increase in interest and event participation among millennials, so featuring Sustain Charlotte's link on UNC Charlotte's site could be beneficial to both parties -- Sustain Charlotte could gain

Website Content

The current Home page is crowded with content that makes it hard for the visitor to decide where to look or read first. Additionally, the image slider with changing sizes can frustrate users trying to read the introduction copy directly below it. In addition to making the banner image static and cushioning the introductory copy with more white space, below is an example of a possible rewrite containing keyword phrases meant to resonate with the audience members and search engines. Potential keywords have been placed in bold.

Revised...

Sustain Charlotte is a **nonprofit organization** located in the city of **Charlotte, North Carolina**. We are a **grassroots advocacy** group dedicated to educating, engaging and uniting members of our **community** to solve Charlotte's growing need for **sustainability solutions**. As Charlotte's leading voice in safe **alternative transportation,** we aim to effectively change the way **commuters** get from Point A to Point B by advocating for **policy** on behalf of **bicyclists**, **pedestrians**, and **public transportation**.

We offer **membership** and **volunteer opportunities** as well as fun **events** for anyone looking to make a positive impact on their city. See how you can help Charlotte Grow Smarter!

Website Content

The Get Involved page is a valuable resource for educating visitors on ways to engage with the organization; however, it is very text-heavy and given the relatively short attention span rate of Internet users (Weatherhead, 2014), condensing the content into a brief introduction would help relieve the effort a user must commit to read the page. Each involvement opportunity should stand out visually, and the description should be condensed into brief bullet points. To resonate more with millennials, the copy should be less formal and more personal. Potential keywords are listed in bold.

Revised...

Sustainability is a **community**-wide effort. Together, we can make **Charlotte** a healthier and more vibrant place to live. Here's how you can get involved:

Membership

Join our growing network of Charlotte citizens looking to make a sustainable impact on the community.

- Discount on ticketed events
- Free Sustain Charlotte T-Shirt
- Website recognition
- Swag

Corporate Partnership

Showcase your company's leadership in the business community by committing to a sustainable future. In return for your support, you can expect:

- Year-round brand exposure & company spotlight in newsletters/ at events.
- Free sustainability consultation
- Website referral links
- Business development opportunities
- Tickets to special events

Event Sponsorship

Our popular annual events like Biketoberfest and Earth Day Celebration are always a hit, and draw crowds from all over the city. Here are some of the advantages of becoming a sponsor:

- Brand exposure
- Stage booth
- Distribution and displaying of promotional material
- Newsletter shout-out

Volunteer

Whether you're passionate about policy work, looking to engage with members of your community, or simply need a resume booster, we've got a way for you to get involved with us. Here's a few of our volunteer services:

- Event planning
- Community outreach
- Digital marketing
- Community & member relations
- Grant writing

Keyword Strategy

As Sustain Charlotte is a fairly niche organization, users who are searching for terms related to the organization would most likely emphasize sustainability, advocacy, and nonprofits. Also, being a regionally focused organization means that users will likely specify their location by adding geographic keywords either before or after the main search phrase, or perhaps the user would simply type in the organization's name directly. It should be noted that many SEO resources, such as WordStream and Search Engine Journal, believe that meta keywords have become less important, as Google has stopped including meta keywords in its search ranking algorithms because of frequent misuse (WordStream, N.A.) (Smarty, N.A.). One strategy for overcoming this apparently obsolete meta tag is by instead incorporating keywords into the meta description. However, it certainly couldn't hurt to include a meta keyword list for the sake of "second and third tier search engines" that might still consider their worth (Smarty, N.A.).

For the site description, the Search Engine Journal blog post argues that the description, which is displayed below the hyperlink on the SERPs page, should be no more than 160 characters, be as compelling as possible and feature a call-to-action (Smarty, N.A.).

Meta Descriptions

Join Sustain Charlotte as we advocate for sustainability solutions in our growing Charlotte, NC community. Become a member today!

Did you know we're fighting for bicycle safety rights in your Charlotte, NC community? Learn more about our policy work by visiting our page.

How is Sustain Charlotte advocating for your sustainable future in Charlotte, NC? Sign up for our newsletter to find out!

Keywords

Sustainability charlotte • sustain charlotte • community nonprofit organization • nonprofits charlotte nc • charlotte transportation • sustainable transportation charlotte • charlotte bike lanes • charlotte air quality • charlotte events • volunteer opportunities charlotte nc • sustainability news charlotte • sustainability plans charlotte

Landing Page

Sustain Charlotte's main landing page is the home page, which could benefit from a face lift to maximize organic SEO and reduce the bounce rate. Forbes SEO contributor Jayson DeMers says that simple design, compelling copy and incentive are all important qualities looked for in a landing page (DeMers, 2015). Sustain Charlotte's biggest weakness at the moment seems to be simplicity: a busy background image, difficult navigation and a surplus of calls-to-action. Much of the copy is spent on blog post previews that detract from the main introductory copy of the site. These characteristics could potentially be responsible for the relatively high bounce rate, but the good news is that with the planned reconstruction of the website, there is great potential for improving usability.

The home page features many practices for optimizing organic SEO. For instance, the site is responsively designed and features a variety of meta properties within its HTML head tag, including meta title, description, url, site name, etc. The site does not include meta keywords, but this could be a deliberate decision by the developer given Google's exclusion of keywords in search ranking algorithms. In the body content, the site makes good use of headings, which Google bots scan for keywords.

Sustain Charlotte has two campaign-related landing pages: One for #ibikeCLT and another for the Transportation Choices Alliance campaign. However, Ms. Calegar has noted that the TCA campaign is no longer active. This could be problematic because the image link is still quite visible on the header of the main website. Clicking this image will take the user away from Sustain Charlotte's site to a custom campaign site. For the active #ibikeCLT campaign, however, the only link is a
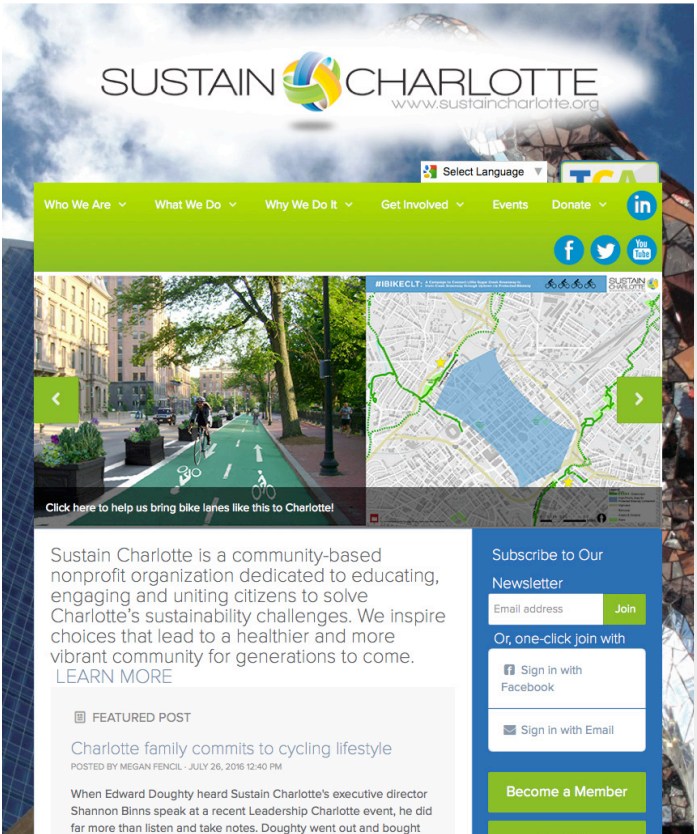
banner image within the rotating slider. Users may not understand that the image is a link, and the automated rotation lessens their chances to click on it. We recommend eliminating the hyperlinked TCA logo with the #ibikeCLT logo to better improve traffic to this landing page from the home page.

The #ibikeCLT landing page is simple in design, but it lacks some critical content for SEO. It should utilize headings to organize/prioritize content and incorporate keywords. There is also no navigation (besides the linked logo), so users may not understand how to continue to the main site or social media. Again, this could be problematic in terms of bounce rate. The meta properties could also be improved by incorporating a longer description of the campaign with relevant keywords.

Social Media Campaign

Social channels account for the second highest source of traffic to Sustain Charlotte's website, with Facebook accounting for approximately 80 percent of the socially driven traffic during the past month. Twitter follows with just over 10 percent of the social traffic and Instagram accounts for just over 5 percent.

However, upon examination of their current posting practices it is clear that they could have even more traffic from social channels if they would share links to their website in their posts. Currently social media visitors would have to click the "About" tab on Facebook to find the link to the website, or scroll through the page to find a link to the website from a post. For Twitter and Instagram, users will have to go to the nonprofit's profile. Instagram only allows for click-able links in paid advertisements and in profiles, so adding links to Instagram posts would be pointless (Griffin, 2015). However, Facebook and Twitter each allow for links in posts, and this is a great way to direct more traffic to a website by simply making it easier for users to find more information.

While asking the page's followers to share the page with their friends (with or without a reward through a contest) is a simple way to organically gain followers and increase awareness, another way to do so is to encourage engagement on posts. When a Facebook user comments on or likes a post, that post shows up in the news feed of their friends. Engagement could be encouraged through the use of a hyper-local campaign that would appeal to cyclists in Charlotte, such as one that would test their local knowledge. This campaign would coincide with the social media posts the nonprofit is already making on their social channels. One such idea would be **#WhereAmIWednesday**. Cyclists would take a photo with their bike in the foreground and the city skyline, or a monument or landmark, for example, in the background. The post would encourage people to guess where the picture was taken. To encourage visits to the website, it would include a link to the website where the location is revealed. To make the use of the link to the website even more enticing, the post could mention that there is more content for cyclists available on the site.

For example, a post for #WhereAmIWednesday could state the following:

> **It's time for #WhereAmIWednesday? Here's a hint - this bridge is one of only a few in Charlotte that has a protected bike lane. Post your guess below! The answer will be posted here tomorrow, or visit our #ibikeCLT page at bit.ly/ibikeclt for the answer & tips on better biking Charlotte!**

As you can see, this post not only encourages users to post their guess in the comments but to visit the #IBikeCLT page for the answer and for more information on cycling in Charlotte.

A post that appears on a certain day each week can encourage visitors to check back weekly and ideally will inspire users to look forward to the content and interact on a regular basis. Building brand loyalty can only help with increased awareness of the Sustain Charlotte brand and their initiatives over time.

#ibikeCLT Contest!

Why
To encourage the sustainable use of bicycles while also increasing awareness about the popularity of bicycling for enjoyment and sustainability. To increase awareness of Sustain Charlotte as the bicycle advocacy organization in Charlotte.

When
This contest can be held during a national #30DaysOfBiking challenge or at a time considered key to governmental support of protected bike lanes. With the momentum currently felt thanks to recent support from Charlotte City Council, adopting this campaign soon while proposed protected bike lanes are being considered in the transportation committee would be ideal.

What
Ask users to take part in #30DaysOfBiking challenge and post videos to Instagram, Facebook and Twitter with the hashtag #ibikeCLT. Promote benefits of bicycling to bike-friendly businesses who take part in the #BikeBenefits program by encouraging bicyclists to stop by these businesses for discounts on merchandise. Each photo or video posted to one of the social media channels listed will get one entry into the month-long contest. Multiple entries are encouraged. The winner will receive a gift basket filled with a new helmet, bicycle seat and bike basket (or whatever items can be donated to the cause.)

Note
Users should be encouraged to change the privacy settings on Facebook to public for the contest posts. This will allow them to be viewed by anyone search the hashtag, and may also be required to feed to the website landing page.

How
Posts using the hashtag, which has already been adopted by Sustain Charlotte, would feed to a website landing page that currently exists and is housed on Sustain Charlotte's website (http://www.sustaincharlotte.org/ibikeclt) so that visitors and government officials can see the popularity of biking in Charlotte. This could be performed using an app such as ShortStack, or through other coding methods. The fresh content will improve organic SEO rankings.

Regular posts on social media about the contest will also drive traffic to the website/landing page with the help of links included in each post. If funds are available, promoting a Facebook post/ad about the hashtag contest to increase more awareness and participation is recommended. A budget of $5/day would equate to a spend of $150 over a month and would reach thousands of individuals. A cover photo can also be adopted during the contest period encouraging users to visit the website landing page.

This landing page would remain live after the 30 day contest period and simply feed more content about biking in Charlotte through the use of the hashtag. It would also include links to other media and websites that are talking about the campaign. To pick the winner, it is important to narrow down the hashtag posts to the contest period and to choose a random winner from those entries.

(supports existing campaign)

Petition Updates
It is also advised that Sustain Charlotte host updates about their petition to Charlotte City Council for protected bike lanes on their own domain instead of sending traffic to their cause.org website. The need for hosting the petition on cause.org is apparent, and updates should be made there for website traffic that originates there. However, by posting updates on the #ibikeclt landing page, that will keep traffic on their own site longer.

Non-Organic SEO • Sample Ads

Mobile ad

Become a Member - Sustain Charlotte
Ad www.sustaincharlotte.org/membership

Together, we can make Charlotte a sustainable community. Become a member today!

Desktop ad

Become a Member - Sustain Charlotte
Ad www.sustaincharlotte.org/membership
Together, we can make Charlotte a sustainable community. Become a member today!

Mobile ad

Community Events - Sustain Charlotte
Ad www.sustaincharlotte.org/calendar

Make Charlotte sustainable. Have fun while doing it. RSVP to our events today!

Desktop ad

Community Events - Sustain Charlotte
Ad www.sustaincharlotte.org/calendar
Make Charlotte sustainable. Have fun while doing it. RSVP to our events today!

Keywords

These keywords were chosen with the help of the keyword planner tool from Google. The keywords with the highest monthly searches are prioritized at the top.

- environmental sustainability 14800-low-2.33
- sustainability issues 1600-low-2.12
- sustainable environment 2400-low-2.26
- ecological sustainability 1600-low-2.76
- pollution problems 1600-low-1.66
- sustain energy
- problems with pollution
- sustainability efforts
- environmental advocate
- charlotte sustainability
- environmental advocacies
- sustainability of life
- sustainability charlotte
- sustain charlotte
- community nonprofit organization
- nonprofits charlotte nc
- charlotte transportation
- sustainable transportation charlotte
- charlotte bike lanes
- charlotte air quality
- charlotte events
- volunteer opportunities charlotte nc
- sustainability news charlotte
- sustainability plans charlotte
- charlotte water supply

Bid Strategy:
Target Cost-Per-Acquisition

Because the ads are aimed at driving conversions, we picked the Target CPA (Cost-Per-Acquisition) bidding strategy. This strategy will help to increase traffic to the site that Google optimizes for a higher conversion rate. While each ad's cost is based on click-throughs, this strategy is a win-win for brand awareness campaigns with an action-oriented goal because it not only drives traffic to your site but places your ad in front of a more relevant, action-oriented target audience. Google makes the case that this is actually a more cost-efficient approach to bidding for websites because you get more conversions at a lower cost-per-click (Google, N.A.) To best utilize this strategy (in fact, Google requires it), you must set up AdWord's version of conversion tracking. Because keyword bidding can get costly, Search Engine Land recommends keeping the keyword to a manageable list to avoid going over budget, as well as creating a negative keyword list to eliminate irrelevant keywords (Geddes, 2013).

Benefits & Anticipated Results

Realistically, an AdWords campaign cannot solve the high bounce rate or relatively low conversions. However, the action-oriented PPC ads along with a CPA bidding strategy should boost traffic and conversions in a shorter time than it would take organic efforts to do so. This campaign is meant to supplement the long-term organic SEO efforts by providing more immediate results.

Expected Results

Organic/Inorganic

Sustain Charlotte's goals of increasing membership and event participation is certainly attainable with a few tweaks to their current online efforts. In general, their rankings on SERPs are solid, consistently landing above the fold with niche long tail phrases like "sustainability events charlotte nc." More generic long-tail phrases like "volunteer opportunities charlotte nc" do not produce as favorable of results, but since these broader terms are often more competitive in terms of bidding, they should be added directly into the website copy for better results. Most of the on-page SEO improvement will come with adding meta descriptions, keywords naturally seeded (especially in headings) throughout the page, and the planned site redesign to increase usability.

While the organic efforts will likely take some time to produce noticeable results, the nonorganic efforts should provide a fairly immediate boost in web traffic and, ideally, conversions. Since these are paid ads that require a budget, they may be most useful for specific time frames.

Final Recommendations

To really put this plan into practice in a way that will produce results, we suggest **beginning with the site redesign** and the changes to the landing page as suggested in this report. No matter how much traffic Google can bring to the website via paid ads, if the visitors do not understand how to use the site they will have a difficult time making the conversions. Additionally, a lower quality score could have an impact on your keyword budget or how often your ad gets placed (WordStream, N.A.).

The redesign is also a great opportunity for **rewording copy to include keywords, adding meta descriptions, and sewing other organic SEO content into the website.** Once the changes are made, pay-per-click ads created through AdWords will generate optimized traffic.

Works Cited

Bloomberg. (2016, June 2). Snapchat Passes Twitter in Daily Usage. Retrieved June 12, 2016, from http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-06-02/snapchat-passes-twitter-indaily-usage

Clifford, C. (2015, November 10). Instagram Is Crushing Twitter and Facebook on Brand Engagement. Retrieved July 30, 2016, from https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/253838

DeMers, J. (2015, January 7). How To Build The Perfect Landing Page For SEO Or PPC. Web. Accessed July 31, 2016 at http://www.forbes.com/sites/jaysondemers/2015/01/07/how-to-build-the-perfect-landing-page-for-seo-or-ppc/3/#385b09e8eb10

De Valk, J. (2016, May 03). How to choose the perfect focus keyword. Web. Accessed July 30, 2016 from https://yoast.com/focus-keyword/

Eichler, E. (2014, January 14). How to Integrate Google Analytics with Your Donation Page. Web. Accessed August 1, 2016 at https://www.techsoupcanada.ca/en/community/blog/how-to-integrate-google-analytics-with-your-donation-page

Gal-Oz, N. (2015). Registration Form Optimization: 9 Best Practices for Increasing Sign-ups. Web. Accessed July 30, 2016 from https://www.conversioner.com/blog/9-best-practices-for-increase-registrations/

Geddes, B. (2013, April 15). 4 Simple Lessons To Make CPA Bidding Work For You. Accessed July 31, 2016 at http://searchengineland.com/4-life-lessons-to-help-make-cpa-bidding-work-for-you-152763

Google. (N.A.) Target CPA bidding - AdWords Help. Web. Accessed July 31, 2016 from https://support.google.com/adwords/answer/2390684?hl=en

Griffin, A. (2015, March 5). Instagram rolls out clickable links and 'carousels' – but only for advertisers Retrieved July 30, 2016, from http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/gadgets-and-tech/news/instagram-rolls-out-clickable-links-and-carousels-but-only-for-advertisers-10087605.html

Hubspot Academy. (June 13, 2016). Call-to-Action Best Practices. Web. Accessed July 30, 2016 from https://knowledge.hubspot.com/cta-user-guide-v2/call-to-action-best-practices

O'Malley, J. (2009, January 6). Defining a Nonprofit Website's Google Analytics KPIs (Part 2). Web. Accessed August 2, 2016 at http://www.care2services.com/care2blog/defining-a-nonprofit-websites-google-analytics-kpis-part-2

Saracino, A. (February 17, 2015). 4 Mistakes People Make When Measuring Brand Awareness. Web. Accessed July 29, 2016 from http://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/mistakes-measure-brand-awareness#sm.00008glz2p12eedjfrul3noehpdi2

Smarty, A. (N.A.) Maximizing Your Meta Tags for SEO and CTR. Web. Accessed July 30, 2016 from https://www.searchenginejournal.com/maximizing-your-meta-tags-for-seo-and-ctr/

Suleman, B. (2012). 8 Do's and Don'ts of Effective Web Design. Web. Accessed July 29, 2016 from https://blog.crazyegg.com/2012/04/17/the-dos-and-donts-of-effective-web-design/

Valenzuela, S. (2013). Unpacking the Use of Social Media for Protest Behavior: The Roles of Information, Opinion Expression, and Activism. Web. Accessed July 26, 2016 from https://www.homeworkmarket.com/sites/default/files/qx/15/08/27/07/peer_reviewed_valenzuela_sebastian._unpacking_the_use_of_social_media_for_protest_behavior.pdf

Walters, K. (2015, November 30). Why Video is the Social Media Trend to Watch in 2016. Retrieved July 30, 2016, from https://blog.hootsuite.com/video-social-media-trend-2016/

Weatherhead, R. (February 28, 2014). Say it quick, say it well - the attention span of a modern internet consumer. Web. Accessed July 30, 2016 from https://www.theguardian.com/media-network/media-network-blog/2012/mar/19/attention-span-internet-consumer

WebSEO. (2011, October 18). 20 KPIs you should monitor in Google Analytics. Web. Accessed August 2, 2016 at http://www.webseoanalytics.com/blog/20-kpis-you-should-monitor-in-google-analytics/

WordStream. (N.A.) Meta Tags - How Google Meta Tags Impact SEO. Web. Accessed July 30, 2016 from http://www.wordstream.com/meta-tags

WordStream. (N.A.) Quality Score: What is Quality Score and How Does it Affect PPC? Web. Accessed August 1, 2016 at http://www.wordstream.com/quality-score