

Redesigning a Component Publication

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SUMMARY

AIA California Council managed a major redesign of its professional journal, *arcCA*. The journal had been produced primarily via membership dues; it is now a self-supporting publication.

CHANGE FOR THE FUTURE

For 20 years, AIA California Council (AIACC) published its professional journal, *Architecture California*, (*arcCA*) as an in-house effort primarily supported by membership dues. The scholarly journal profiled articles of interest to the profession and consistently presented articles that were diverse and provocative, challenging common preconceptions about design and practice issues. The journal served as one of the component's primary modes of communication with its membership.

In 2000, AIACC redesigned its journal. Component leadership sought to make the journal a self-supporting program by offsetting many of AIACC's upfront publishing costs and reducing the amount of funds needed from membership dues. The component also initiated a graphic redesign of the journal to make it more compelling to read, to attract more advertisers, and to create strong newsstand appeal to expand its distribution.

The resulting publication, *arcCA*, received an overwhelmingly positive response from the membership and others outside the profession. The component now has an exciting and sustainable design for the publication that meets and exceeds its original objectives.

FOUR STEPS TO A NEW AND IMPROVED PUBLICATION

Phase 1: Create an alliance agreement. To establish a publication that does not rely on dues revenue, forge an alliance agreement with an outside publisher to sell advertising space to product manufacturers, thereby reducing publishing costs. The publisher assumes the costs for printing and mailing the publication. Such agreements can

provide the publisher an opportunity to reach desired new audiences.

Phase 2: Obtain professional editing services.

The demands of a publication such as a quarterly journal require the services of a full-time editor. In addition to writing and editing responsibilities, the editor must act as a liaison with the graphic designer, the publisher, and the component staff to ensure that the respective needs for all parties are met.

Phase 3: Create new graphic design. Identify the elements to incorporate in the overall design, such as dimensions, type of paper, editorial-to-advertisement ratio, graphic standards, and a strong nameplate. Retaining the services of a graphic designer with excellent skills in design and typography is essential in branding a publication. A good graphic designer will be able to establish an identity for a publication with the use of color, logos, and typographic features.

Phase 4: Set editorial calendar. A module system is an effective approach to establishing an editorial routine. For a quarterly publication, select four basic models for theme development for each publication throughout the first several years. Such themes might include life and practice (looking inward at issues of design and practice); architect and society (looking outward at the profession's role and impact); design awards (in-depth analysis of selected projects, clients, and processes); and making the product (building types, construction, and implementation).

For More Information

Contact Paul W. Welch Jr., Hon. AIA, the executive vice president of AIA California Council, pwelch@aiacc.org, or go to www.aiacc.org.

RESOURCES

More Best Practices

The following AIA Best Practices provide additional information related to this topic:

22.01.02 Web Site Updating

- 21.01.05 Communication Plan of AIA Louisiana
- 21.04.01 Creating a Brochure that Attracts New Members

Feedback

The AIA welcomes member feedback on Best Practice articles. To provide feedback on this article, please contact bestpractices@aia.org.

Key Terms

- Leadership
- Associations
- Design associations
- The American Institute of Architects
- AIA components
- Publications