

Content Analysis + Strategy:

Nonprofit Overcomes Content Overload

Client: Georgia Municipal Association

Report Type: Case Study

Industries: Government, Nonprofit



The Client



Created in 1933, the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) represents municipal governments in Georgia by providing legislative advocacy, educational, employee benefit, and technical consulting services to its members. GMA's membership currently totals 521 municipal governments, accounting for more than 99% of the state's municipal population. Governed by city officials who comprise its 63-member Board of Directors, GMA implements all programs through its Executive Director and staff of 91 full-time employees.

As the primary advocate for Georgia municipal governments, GMA literally runs on content. The organization serves as a publishing vehicle through its daily curated news stories, Georgia Cities newspaper, educational services content, training materials, legislative information, directories, and many other important municipal resources. To meet the ongoing and increasing demands from GMA members for fresh, timely website content to help stay informed about a wide range of topics, GMA began exploring ways of rethinking its content focus, structure, and architecture to help make overall content creation, delivery, and management more streamlined and efficient.

In this case study, learn about GMA's situation, our solution, and the results.

The Situation

As the leading organization advocating for and advising Georgia cities, the Georgia Municipal Association is in the business of expert content. Its vision is to offer its members the right content for their complex decisions and professional development at the right time. As a result, GMA realized it needed to evolve its content strategy and content capabilities.

GMA's strengths are traditionally grounded in the one-to-one personal connections that the organization creates with municipal officials and administrators. The strength of these personal relationships is rare for a 21st century organization, and those bonds create intense brand loyalty. But GMA acknowledges the reality that despite face-to-face conversations and phone calls, more and more people expect websites to answer questions, provide self-service, and educate through a variety of easy-to-find, easy-to-consume content. Even the most rural city officials use tablet and smartphones, and they access the web—including GMA's website—through high-speed Internet connections at the office, at home, or on the go.

GMA produces a lot of great content, but its audience often complained that it was hard to find. Plus, the content did not clearly and explicitly connect with GMA's vision of Advocacy, Service, and Innovation. To bring its vision of providing quality, useful content to life, GMA wanted to ensure its audiences could easily find content, discover new content or services, and appear as an expert, trusted advisor to cities throughout the entire website.

The Situation *continued*

Because GMA was considering a new content management system, the timing offered the perfect opportunity to take a fresh, higher-level look at its content. As a result, GMA turned to us for strategic content analysis and recommendations, defining a core content architecture, and developing new services content to showcase some of our recommendations in practice—all of which would help guide the organization during this exciting transition.

The GMA Website Offered More Content Than Users Could Handle

The screenshot displays the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) website interface. The top navigation bar includes 'HOME', 'SERVICES', 'TRAINING', 'POLICY CENTER', 'RESOURCES', 'DIRECTORY', 'NEWS', and 'EVENTS'. A search bar is prominently featured. The main content area is divided into several sections:

- FEATURED ITEMS:** A bar chart titled 'Mid-Wage Industries Comprise Largest Share of Recession Losses, Smallest Share of Recovery's Gains' showing data for 2007-2009 and 2009-2012.
- TOP STORIES:** A list of recent news items, including '13 Georgia Cities Receive Awards for Outstanding Achievement' and 'Members Appointed to Legislative Policy Council'.
- CITIES IN THE NEWS:** A section highlighting local news, such as 'Athens' newest brewery slated to open in May' and 'Augusta residents surveyed want more power for mayor, consider garbage service good'.
- GMA SERVICES:** A section detailing various services like 'Insurance & Retirement Services', 'Life & Health', and 'Workers' Compensation'.
- POLICY CENTER:** A section for legislative updates, including 'Weapons in Georgia's Cities: 2014 Update' and 'Governance is a Team Sport'.
- TRAINING:** A section for professional development, mentioning 'Municipal Training Institute'.
- SLIDESHOWS:** A section for visual content, featuring a '2014 Annual Convention' slide.
- CALENDAR OF EVENTS:** A section for upcoming events, such as the 'Mayors/Motorcade Golf Tournament'.

On the right side, there is a 'CONTACT INFORMATION' section with phone numbers for Steve Durden, George Van Leuven, and Eileen Thomas. Below that is a 'MORE INFORMATION' section with links to various reports and forms. A video player for 'Workers' Compensation' is also visible, showing a video titled 'GMA Workers' Compensation Service'.

CONTENT ANALYSIS + STRATEGY.
NONPROFIT OVERCOMES CONTENT OVERLOAD



Our Solution

We worked with GMA to assess their situation and agreed upon some core needs:

- **Efficiently preparing content** for migration into a new CMS.
- **Aligning stakeholders** around a common vision for content and the steps necessary to achieve it.
- **Potentially reducing the amount of content** and its associated maintenance costs.
- **Ensuring GMA gets maximum value** out of an investment in a new CMS.
- **Establishing repeatable processes and reusable templates** that give GMA value lasting well beyond this one-time engagement.

Starting with GMA's vision, as well as our experience and expertise in developing content strategy for large organizations, we started with analysis.

Analysis

Our consulting engagement began by talking extensively with GMA's core team.

Our goal? To develop a strategy and recommendations to help the organization implement a content strategy that helped reimagine its website content, architecture, and governance.

Our Solution *continued*

This analysis and investigation included



- **Conducting interviews** with GMA team members.
- **Reviewing existing documentation** such as past surveys, research, and analytics.
- **Conducting user surveys** through **ContentWRX**, our patent-pending system that usefully and reliably evaluates content effectiveness.
- **Performing a qualitative content audit.**

Our analysis verified the pain points initially identified by GMA, uncovered some important nuances about those needs, and suggested some additional needs. This analysis informed the content recommendations as well as influencing our content rewriting.

While GMA had experienced much content success by building an audience through offering useful, relevant content, they also faced a meaningful opportunity to take its content approach to the next level of impact.

Recommendations

As a consultancy, we rarely offer analysis and recommendations at the same time.

Strategic recommendations take deep thought. We don't simply spout off best practices as recommendations. Why? Because a collection of best practices is not a strategy. GMA came to us for advice on how to make content work for their unique situation, not a cookie-cutter solution.

Our Solution *continued*

So, we synthesized our analysis findings with GMA's vision, with research-based best practices, and with our own experience to offer a set of strategic recommendations. We also discussed tactics, examples, and concepts for applying those recommendations. More specifically, we made recommendations to change GMA's approach to its website content such as

- **Structure:** We outlined a different website structure for gmanet.com and recommended microsites to address other user needs.
- **Organization:** We recommended a more focused website organization to prevent users from feeling overwhelmed with too much content—and to help the existing content fit the user's perspective.
- **Presentation:** We suggested that GMA use more consistent templates, sections, and modules populated with content that's easy to read and scan.
- **Discovery:** We advised that GMA use copy, metadata, and tagging best practices to help with SEO, along with centralizing and consolidating content.
- **Findability:** We advised on using better navigation, improved information architecture, predictive text, sorting, and filtering best practices to help users search for and find content on the website.
- **Influence:** We recommended that GMA use more storytelling, plain language, and visual content to help users understand the content and to speak more in terms of benefits and next steps.
- **Mobile:** We advised on mobile optimization for GMA's core sites and microsites.

Our Solution *continued*

Amy Henderson, Director of Communications & Marketing, said,

“Each individual stakeholder tends to want only what they want without looking at the big picture. The recommendations helped them see how each of their slices fits into the big picture. They better understood what we’re trying to do with the website and that we needed the right kind of content to provide to our membership and website users.”

Brian Wallace, Deputy Director, Communications, added,

“The recommendations also helped stakeholders see how the CMS plays into how the search box and menus work (or don’t work). They clearly saw that it’s not just content; it’s how it’s organized and how the technology supports that organization.”

After we agreed on the strategy, GMA sought our help with implementing it.

Our Solution *continued*

Content Development and Rewriting

To help guide content creation, we developed and rewrote content for GMA's Insurance and Retirement services to illustrate many of our key recommendations. For example, we crafted a new version of GMA's Workers' Compensation Service page.

Henderson emphasizes the importance of these concrete deliverables when she said,


"Being able to show these rewrites to our Deputy Executive Director of Risk Management and Employee Benefits made the strategy and recommendations concrete for him. Many stakeholders often need to see how things are going to look before getting completely on board. Instead of just describing a future state, we pointed to the rewrites and said 'This is it!'"

Additionally, we provided GMA with tools such as a site map, wireframes, and templates to create structure around content development and help stakeholders and content creators maintain their content over time.

Our Solution *continued*

The New Version of GMA's Workers' Compensation Service Page

Workers' Compensation Service



"The GMA Workers' Compensation program helped our small town gain vast coverage quickly."

Jane Doe, Adrian, GA

- OVERVIEW
- PARTICIPATING CITIES
- FORMS
- SUCCESS STORIES

At-a-Glance

With a typical insurance provider, you're a number. With GMA, you're a valued member. Our Workers' Compensation Service gives you benefits far beyond basic coverage. Learn how to reduce your costs, minimize your risk, and connect with funding opportunities for workplace safety efforts.

Benefits

Our Workers' Compensation Service features benefits we customized based on more than 30 years of feedback from members like you.

- **Minimize lawsuits through statutory coverage.** With statutory coverage, injured employees receive basic remuneration to cover a wide variety of workplace incidents without any legal fault to you. That means you don't go through the pain of costly lawsuits or appear to the public that you're avoiding responsibility.
- **Enjoy a GMA-member owned and controlled fund.** You're not an anonymous member of a giant insurance pool. Instead, feel peace of mind knowing that Georgia municipalities, municipal authorities and commissions, housing authorities, regional commissions, and municipal school districts own and control the fund.
- **Prevent employee accidents before they happen.** We offer proactive safety and risk control services including:
 - Loss control field service and individual member problem analysis to help you create safer work environments and take a look at your specific problems.
 - Onsite and regional training to help communicate the basics of safety and risk control to your staff while also talking about the latest developments in workers' compensation law and practices.
 - Plenty of research and resources including a video lending library, periodic safety and risk control publications, and other communication materials.
- **Communicate easily about claims.** We offer an online portal, a toll-free telephone number, or fax number for submitting claims. Whatever's easiest for you.
- **Take advantage of grant opportunities to help fund worker safety initiatives.** Our Safety and Liability Management Grant Fund offers opportunities for you to fund the purchase of equipment, receive training, and give you the ability to tackle expensive worker safety and liability initiatives.

Costs

Your contributions are based on:

- **Individual loss experience.** We compare your past workers' compensation experiences to state averages to calculate your insurance contribution.
- **Underwriting.** A risk assessment makes sure you're eligible for workers' compensation, and for how much.

Am I Eligible?

You are eligible for GMA's Workers' Compensation Service if you're a:

TAKE THE NEXT STEP

If you're not insured with GMA's Workers' Compensation Service, call us today. You can reach out to

- Steve Durden (678) 686-6259
- Eileen Thomas (678) 686-6232
- **Outside Atlanta?** Call toll-free in Georgia at (888) 488-4462

NEED A FORM?

If you're already using this service, get all the forms you need here.

[Find + Download Forms >](#)

WHY GMA?

- We have **30 years of experience** with workers' compensation insurance.
- We administer all workers' compensation claims **in-house**.
- Our fund results in **\$28 million in dividends** (or renewal credits), which significantly reduces your cost of coverage.

RELATED SERVICES

- [Life & Health Insurance](#)
- [Property & Liability Insurance](#)
- [Loss Control Services](#)

The Results

After we helped develop and implement GMA's content recommendations, the organization gained some results immediately.

First, the stakeholders felt they had a clear plan and direction. Henderson said, "Most of what we learned wasn't a great surprise. The analysis and recommendations mostly validated some of our suspicions, challenged some assumptions, and gave greater credibility to our business case. Content Science helped us say, 'Yes, these are the areas where improvement is needed or where things need to change.' Now we know that we're not wasting time doing things that aren't getting us where we need to go."

Second, users noted that the new content helped:

- **Answer key questions** faster and easier.
- **Increase understandability** through direct, on-brand language.
- **Provide better access** to relevant and related content.

Third, the content strategy, recommendations, and implementation led to important long-term results such as:

- **Providing a roadmap** for enhancing the usability, findability, and comprehension of GMA's web content across all devices (mobile phone, tablet, desktop, laptop).
- **Strengthening GMA's "brand" position and competitive differentiation** as an expert on Georgia cities and municipalities.
- **Deepening and expanding GMA's reach** with current and new audiences.

The Results *continued*

Henderson says that GMA is following the recommendations, building upon them, and measuring progress as the organization transitions to a new CMS. With such a major change in a large organization, it was important that participants felt comfortable with the notion that their content processes, potentially including roles and supporting tools, would change. Our analysis and recommendations were a critical part of GMA's change management as the organization made this major transition.

In short, our recommendations continue to help GMA not only with its services content but also by modeling content best practices for other sections of GMA's website. Over time, as GMA's audience performs their jobs more efficiently by accessing GMA content informed by our content strategy, the organization expects improved member productivity and satisfaction.

Now aligned around a common set of strategic recommendations and best practices, GMA's stakeholders clearly see the content possibilities that await.

Why Partner With Us

If you're experiencing problems with your website and think content might be the cause, we can help you find out for sure, then advise you on how to solve those problems. Partnering with the Georgia Municipal Association was a success because it transformed not only their services content but also the team and processes that produce it. Plus, we were able to navigate through the complexities of a large nonprofit organization to get all the players on the same page and taking concrete steps toward a common vision.

Henderson said,

“There’s a sense that Content Science gets what we’re trying to do, even when we may not know what we’re trying to do—and they know how to get us where we need to go. Content Science gave us the science behind what we knew on a gut level. Plus, it’s also important to challenge your assumptions. To have gone through Content Science’s process, talking to stakeholders, completing the ContentWRX survey, and going through everything step by step, I don’t feel that any assumptions were left unchallenged. We now have a well-documented and supported business case along with best practices that get us to where we want to be.”

Why Partner With Us *continued*

If you work with us to take a fresh look at your content like GMA, you could gain benefits such as

- ✓ An analytical—not knee-jerk—approach to improving content.
- ✓ A credible outside perspective that overcomes internal resistance to change.
- ✓ A clear understanding of your current content situation, including the challenges and opportunities.
- ✓ More efficient internal processes for producing searchable, understandable, and actionable content.
- ✓ Fewer customer service calls.
- ✓ A framework for evaluating content performance.
- ✓ A strategy that works immediately and for the long haul.

About Content Science



We're an award-winning consultancy in Atlanta, GA advising Fortune 500 companies, startups, institutions, and government agencies around the globe on digital content strategy. Our services include consulting, research, and training.

We named our company Content Science because content is, indeed, a science. We study what works well – and what doesn't – so companies can make informed decisions about content.

Our principal, Colleen Jones, is the author of the top-selling book *Clout: The Art and Science of Influential Web Content* (New Riders Dec 2010), *Does Your Content Work?* (New Riders Feb 2014), and a contributor to countless past and upcoming reputable publications. She is also the owner and CEO of ContentWRX, which helps organizations overcome content evaluation challenges by automating the collection, analysis, and interpretation of content feedback

Want to make your content work for your organization? We can help.

Contact us to find out how.

content-science.com/about-us/contact-us

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