

OAKLAND LOCAL

Location: Oakland, CA
Founded: October 2009
web: <http://oaklandlocal.com>
twitter: @oaklandlocal

PARTICIPANT AT MONDAY'S MEETING

Susan Mernit

PART 1: OVERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is the purpose and focus of your organization?

Oakland Local is an independent, nonprofit community news and information hub, connecting community and news that launched on October 19, 2009. Our site combines original investigative and feature reporting with community news and information from 35 Oakland non-profit organizations and community groups and many engaged citizens. We are a voice of independent journalism and community service for a city where too many people go unheard, too many issues uncovered and we train community organizations and nonprofits to tell their stories.

2. How are you different from "traditional" media online?

Centered on topics including environmental justice, food distribution, transportation, development & housing, and gender & identity, Oakland Local publishes information from local non-profits and community organizations within a range of Oakland neighborhoods

Oakland Local has over 35 local nonprofit and community partners. Our partners contribute community news and events to the site on behalf of their organizations we help these groups improve both their news literacy and their social media skills through informal, free, hands-on trainings and brown bags. We also support individuals who come to the site to post community news, blog, share events, participate in our forums and comment.

3. What is your financial sustainability plan?

We are 7 months old and started without an operating budget. However, we all have lots of business experience and we are building a revenue portfolio that will include advertising, sponsorships, donor/members, merchandise, and training, along with grants & fund-raising.

4. What are your most reliable sources of revenue?

Advertising and training.

5. What are two technological innovations - or services made possible by recent technological innovation - that you've introduced in the delivery of news and information to your readers?

We are mobile first and doing development work and research to improve delivery and interaction on "crappy cell phones." We integrate seamlessly with Twitter and Facebook and other social media tools. We also have an innovative tool for porting in partner newsletters in Drupal (yes, that is three.)

6. How effective are you in getting your content to people?

Very. We are 7 months old, had an budget of \$17,000 in 2009, and reach 45,000 local people a month via our site, 2,800 via Facebook. 10-30% growth every month.

7. How do you measure your success?

Set goals through metrics, also measure interaction and diversity--we want to represent all of

Oakland, including low-income and people of color communities.

8. What do you hope to learn or get out of the Austin meeting?

Best practices for revenue-building and sustainability and a network to work on projects with to improve economic viability.

PART 2: DETAILS ABOUT YOUR ORGANIZATION

1. What is your technology platform?

Drupal.

2. Do you share technology platforms and costs with other organizations?

We are not on a platform with anyone else; we share knowledge freely.

3. How many full-time journalists (journalists or editors) do you have?

None, everyone is volunteer, up to 3/4 time.

4. How many part-time journalists or freelancers do you retain?

We have 3 core founders, and about 8 core staffers, along with another 15 regular writers and non-profit posters.

5. What is the percentage breakdown of revenue by sources? (users/viewer donors, ads, foundations, high-networth donations, ancillary products, charging)

This is N/A for us because we have not implemented most of these programs yet, just starting.

6. Without foundation support, what would your organization look like?

We use our foundation support right now to pay writers and editorial support, mostly (calendaring, database); We'd have less new content and a smaller team. Foundation support has helped us jump start and have an impact we could never have had, but we don't have anything--yet--going to an operating budget, which is a mixed blessing.