

TEXAS TRIBUNE

location: Texas

founded: 2009

web: <http://www.texastribune.org>

twitter: @texastribune

PARTICIPANTS AT MONDAY'S MEETING

Evan Smith, CEO

John Thornton, Chairman

Higinio Maycotte, Director of Technology

Michael Sherrod, Publisher

PART 1: OVERVIEW QUESTIONS

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

TT exists to help the people of Texas make more informed decisions in their civic lives and to help people outside Texas better understand Texas issues that have national significance.

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

We have taken great pains to not simply reconstruct a newspaper on line. We believe the list is long, but it is headlined with the depth of our multimedia content and our data products. The result has been engagement (pages per visit) which is 40-60% above the average newspaper site.

3. What is your financial sustainability plan?

Two parallel efforts. The first is to build the balance sheet by raising \$4-5mm in major gifts (foundations and wealthy individuals above \$5k) over the next three years. The second is to build an income statement which has three roughly equivalent pieces: membership, corporate sponsorships, and specialty publications. We target getting each of these to a \$1m business within the next 3-4 years.

4. What are your most reliable sources of revenue?

Currently, our most reliable source is major giving. On the three business lines mentioned above, we are anywhere from 15-35% of our target after 26 weeks of publication.

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 believe our data products are unique in the industry. 29 databases, keyword searchable, 10GB, growing rapidly. We also believe that the technology we've developed in election coverage is groundbreaking, we are the only outlet in the state that presents live election results in a way that is easily digestible by the readers (for example, providing live county by county results graphically and making the content embed-able by others).

Additionally we are working on a variety projects that include a real time video analysis platform focused on the upcoming legislative session, searchable by keywords and synchronized with change analysis of the physical bills themselves.

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

Our destination site traffic has far exceeded our expectations: 200k uniques in March vs. a target of 150k in December. Our syndication and secondary distribution efforts have been very successful, although credible metrics for this are harder to come by. We recently had a very successful collaboration with Newsweek, in which we controlled the cover story (and they agreed to do the cover in TT yellow!) Our collaboration efforts with the major Texas dailies are making progress, but we've been regarded with an abundance of caution.

7. How do you measure your success?

This is the most difficult question, and this format limits detailed discussion. But three categories: consequential, innovative content; robust, growing, engaged readership; and rapid progress toward financial stability which does not require major giving to sustain.

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

We're relatively new on the block. We're primarily interested in learning about other organizations' success particularly in revenue generation.

PART 2: DETAILS ABOUT YOUR ORGANIZATION

1. What is your technology platform?

Our primary technology bet is Django + Python, all open source and hosted on Amazon's EC2 where we leverage S3 and other cloud based services to manage our media assets. The management of all of these services is centralized through RightScale. We use Java based Solr to drive search.

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

We are in discussions about sharing tech costs with other organizations, but have not consummated anything. We have actually shared code now with one other non-profit news organization and are in discussions with a second. We are intending on co-developing a public release of this code to other news organizations (regardless of size) as an open source platform for disseminating news.

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

We have 12 full-time journalists

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

We have 6 part-time/freelance journalists/videographers/photographers

5. What is the percentage breakdown of revenue by sources?

This year (our first) 2/3 of revenue will come from major donors. Roughly 15% specialty pubs and 10% each corporate sponsorships and memberships. Long term goal is 0% major giving for base expenses, with an equal split between the other 3.

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

Without foundation support, our efforts to build our balance sheet would have to rely entirely on wealthy families.