Developing a Singular Content Voice from Many Voices

A Case Study with John Somnez, Simple Programmer

SP SIMPLE PROGRAMMER

Moving from a single blogging voice to 15+ contributors for a programmer's blogsite would require a comprehensive customized editorial and content development solution from CYC.

Every organization, from the smallest business to the largest multinational corporation relies on software in all aspects of business. The young software developers who build and maintain these all important software solutions are part of a generation that seeks to achieve a good life/work balance, while honing their craft and advancing their careers.

For programmer, author, blogger, and entrepreneur John Sonmez, the challenge of inspiring and encouraging countless programmers across the globe is one he takes seriously.

Today, Sonmez is a highly sought after consultant and speaker on software development and programming as well as the author of the book *Soft Skills: The Software Developer's Life Manual*. The driving force behind the site Simple Programmer, his vision is to create a home for software developers to not only learn about their craft and find success in the field, but also to build healthy lives inside and outside of the office.

The holistic approach to helping other young software developers in all aspects of programming, software development, and creating a successful and fulfilling life has kept him tirelessly blogging to produce the necessary content. As the site and its community grew, he realized that he needed a staple of contributing writers to create consistent content for his growing readership.

The challenge was how to manage and edit all of that diverse content from the pool of writers he works with, while ensuring that their work met his guidelines and conformed to the voice and tone of the site.

"I needed a team to get writers, manage the editorial content for my blog … provide proofing and quality control of all of that writing," explained Sonmez. "It seemed like this job would require multiple people, and I had no idea how to find or hire them."

Finding the Simple Programmer Content Solution

As a software developer and programmer to his core, Sonmez took a methodical approach to finding content editing, writer recruitment/management, and overall ongoing content management support. The mixture of the highly technical and broad life issues of his blogger's posts made the challenge even more daunting. While he found content editors that could fulfill one or two of his needs, he couldn't find the whole package in a single provider with a defined and proven delivery approach.

His search soon led him to Craft Your Content (CYC), which, to his amazement, met all of his criteria.

As a team of forward thinking professional writers, editors, marketers, and PR specialists, CYC offered an expert team that could see his vision and meet his need for a holistic overarching solution.

"Craft Your Content provided a turn-key, customized solution" said Sonmez, they gave me the "reassurance that they could handle everything with minimal involvement from me. That was exactly what I needed to provide the peace of mind that would let me focus on other areas of my business."

As per their proven editorial process, CYC, led by company founder Elisa Doucette, met virtually with Sonmez to discuss his needs and his vision. With confirmation that CYC was the ideal fit for Sonmez's needs, Elisa had him fill out their proprietary Voice and Vision Questionnaire. The document provided CYC's writers and editors with a detailed breakdowns of Sonmez's business model, profile, and needs of his audience.

The deeper voice and vision aspects of the questionnaire would outline details of the human aspects of what is important to Sonmez and the tone he strikes when speaking to his readers needs and concerns.

CYC was up to the challenge of creating an editorial plan that respected the voices of Sonmez's contributors, while representing the signature issues and tone of Sonmez's larger message. According to Elisa, the creation of a customized Voice and Vision profile for Sonmez needed to be highly detailed yet streamlined to meet his broader needs:

> "We immediately saw the bigger picture after talking with John, reading his site, and garnering all the details from the questionnaire. While Simple Programmer is his site, it was pivotal that we be able to make sure that the content from a plethora of writers would fall within a singular voice and style framework without overshadowing their individuality.
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> That required us to also make sure that every article adhered to the agreed upon style guidelines while not delivering incorrect or juxtaposing information. John, fortunately, loves a good fired up post, so he's happy to have contributors who disagree with him — as long as readers are not left confused and put-off by the different ideas."

One Content Process to Rule Them All

In June of 2015, CYC and Sonmez began managing the 15+ contributors, developing the editorial calendar, and assigning the CYC editors and proofreaders to the content. The team also created the guidelines and processes that would coordinate the CYC editing and content creation team with Sonmez's cadre of graphic developers and fact checkers.

A month later, CYC and Sonmez had a process that they all recognized as functional, efficient, and adaptable to future changing needs.

The process relied on an online word processing collaboration platform (Google Docs) for article submission and collaboratively working on each piece. This would ensure that updates and

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conversations could be done in real time while providing a transparent framework. "This highly collaborative process gives everyone a voice while still enabling us to consistently publish highly polished and focused content," said Elisa. The goal was realizing John's vision of making Simple Programmer one of the BEST sites out there for programmers looking to improve and change their personal and professional lives."

By August of 2015, the process of regularly publishing posts and articles that were exclusively overseen by the CYC team had enabled Sonmez to step back from writing and concentrate on other areas of his business and personal life just a month later. The process was operating like a well-oiled machine, where the system was an integral part of everyone's workflow.

The Simply Amazing Results

According to Sonmez, the results have been nothing short of amazing. The CYC Team utilizes Google Analytics monitoring to track the success of the site in terms of readership. While the website and its large and growing audience has been built on the singular voice of Sonmez, the transition to a 15+ contributor model has been able to successfully maintain the unified voice while still expanding the audience.

Normally, going from a singular voice to multiple voices would mean a massive reduction in readership, but the process put in place by CYC resulted in just a small drop in readership, which was only short term. Within 90 days, traffic had bounced back and actually increased.

Sonmez is completely satisfied with the results of his relationship with CYC:

"I now have a flawless system in place for onboarding good writers, scheduling content, and coordinating with my staff to get everything out on time," said Sonmez. "CYC has made it possible for me to take a step back from my writing to focus on other parts of the business, and still see my traffic go up over time. This was huge since before, I was the only blogger for my blog. Also, the professionalism that CYC provides has helped my writers improve as it provides an environment where they want to keep contributing."

Programming the Future Content Path

As a website and blog based on supporting other programmers, the contributing writers see big benefits from working with Sonmez, and particularly with CYC. "One of the biggest perks, IMO, is the editing staff. Having that to make my content shiny is fantastic" says Simple Programmer Contributor Jason Lowenthal. "I agree," notes contributor Rob Whitcomb. "Tools like *Hemingway* and *Grammarly* are good, but nothing can beat the well trained eye of a great editor."

Currently, the CYC team has added an additional editing round for Sonmez' contributing writers. This has further increased the content quality and provided additional coaching and craft development for all of the contributing writers.

The future looks bright for the relationship between Sonmez and CYC as they have made plans to further develop the strategy of the blogging site. Increasingly, the site will include higher level technical articles as well as long-form personal development articles for programmers.

"I'm excited about the progress that we've made and what lies ahead with CYC," said Sonmez. "I couldn't wish for more than working with professionals that are always communicating as they deliver results that show greater and greater improvement."

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- John Sonmez