



AGENDA REPORT TO BOARD OF DIRECTORS

MEETING DATE: JANUARY 16TH, 2015

Item:	Gazette Publishing Committee: Report #2
Author:	Iain Boekhoff, Editor in Chief, The Gazette Scott Courtice, Managing Director, Government Services
Purpose of Report:	For Information
Item #:	7a)

Recommendation:

That the Board of Directors receive this report for information.

Report:

The Gazette Publishing Committee held its second meeting of the year on Friday, December 5th, 2014. The committee spent the majority of its meeting discussing major themes for long-term Gazette Business Planning, and for the 2015-16 budget.

The Editor in Chief presented the committee with a number of challenges that The Gazette must address over the coming years:

Volunteers

- There aren't enough volunteers to keep pace with the rigours of the 4-day a week print deadline. This adds pressure to section editors to write content for their sections and on Front Office (Editor in Chief, Deputy Editor, Managing Editor) to run and edit sections. The current situation isn't sustainable.
- The volunteer experience isn't of a high quality due to inconsistent training, not enough opportunities for advancements, and poor volunteer recognition practices.

Training

- Gazette operations are far too reliant on institution memory rather than documented procedures and formalized training.
- There has been high turnover in recent years, so knowledge and past experience has been lost.
- Volunteers and staff should be exposed to modern day journalism skills; The Gazette, as a print-first product, isn't allowing volunteers to develop skills that are needed in the modern marketplace.

Digital

- The Gazette has a digital presence, but it does not have a fully flushed out digital product. A pre-eminent institution like The Gazette should be at the cutting edge of student journalism, but unfortunately it lags far behind.

The Publishing Committee provided the following advice to the Editor in Chief:

- The EIC was encouraged to lead a community conversation – including Gazette alumni, current volunteers, and students at large – about the future of The Gazette. The Gazette needs to evolve and should do so in an open way that relies on the experiences and opinions of the Western community.
- The committee felt that the 4-day a week print schedule was putting a strain on volunteers and impacting the quality of the publication. The committee wasn't unanimous on changing the print schedule, but felt that it should be a key consideration of the engagement process with alumni, volunteers and students.
- Training must be an immediate priority. A good program could rely on Gazette alumni willing to donate their time, but should also include paid presenters. Tapping into faculty and the journalism school would also be wise.
- A transformation to a 'digital first' philosophy for The Gazette is necessary – it may require the publisher to hire a "Manager, Digital Transformation" on a contract basis (2-years) to manage the transition. This has been done at other student publications that have made the shift. The Gazette should also tap alumni who are innovators in digital journalism, such as Stuart A. Thompson, former EIC, who is the Senior Interactive Graphics Editor at the Wall Street Journal.
- Capital costs of digital transformation should be included in The Gazette's 3-year budget; to support a transition to a 'digital first' publication, a re-organization of Front Office and newsroom volunteers should also be undertaken immediately, as should changes to compensation that move away from 'per issue' honorarium.





The upcoming budget and Business Plan will incorporate Publishing Committee recommendations, as well as strategies based on industry research that was undertaken by the Editor in Chief.

Later in this meeting the Board will receive a presentation from the Editor-in-Chief regarding elements being considered during Business Planning that should remain confidential at this point.

Next Steps:

- 2015-16 Budget will include elements of Digital Transformation and immediate priorities such as training.
- Outreach to volunteers, alumni, and students will be undertaken to build a community consensus re: future direction for *The Gazette*. This will be followed by a Business Plan.

Sign-Offs:

General Manager Review:	Cathy Clarke	
Editor in Chief:	Iain Boekhoff	
Managing Director Review:	Scott Courtice	
Financial Review:	Carrie Passi	
Board Chairperson Review:	Isaac Jacobi	