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Wing-Nut: A Mobile Political Magazine for Millennials

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***Wing-Nut*: A Mobile Political Magazine for Millennials**

A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the Renée Crown University Honors Program at
Syracuse University

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and Renée Crown University Honors
May 2014

Honors Capstone Project in [Your Field]

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Date: [May 6]

Abstract

Wing-Nut is a mobile based political magazine/news outlet for millennials. It is one of the first magazines designed specifically for mobile devices in an attempt to better appeal to the tech obsessed, smartphone addicted millennial generation. The magazine was designed to engage 18-to-25-year olds and make them think about political issues and how politics affect their everyday lives. The overall goal of the media outlet is to get the political discussion or conversation started between millennials: get them informed and get them involved.

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Executive Summary

Wing-Nut is a mobile based political magazine for millennials. It is one of the first magazines designed specifically for mobile devices in an attempt to better appeal to the tech obsessed, smartphone addicted millennial generation. The magazine was designed to engage 18-to-25-year olds and make them think about political issues and how politics affect their everyday lives. The magazine uses a combination of humor and serious reporting to keep things light because many times politics can be too dense and turns off readers.

While *Wing-Nut* may not be completely objective, it tries and critiques both parties equally and discusses the dysfunction of the overall political system. The current version of *Wing-Nut* is a prototype that was designed using HTML5 or a web based coding program. The website is basically a more advanced WordPress blog that is optimized for mobile use.

Process:

The first step was to determine what platform would best appeal and be easily accessible to millennials. At first a tablet based app was considered and at one point even a print magazine, but after further research it was determined young people frequently use their smartphones to read news and the medium has one of the fastest growing audiences. During this stage a lot of research was conducted using the Pew Research Center's data on news consumption and the rise in popularity to consume news or read articles on smartphones and tablet devices.

The next step was to determine what the message of the magazine or news outlet would be. Would it be partisan? Would it be strictly satirical? After talking

with many millennials it was determined to use humorous and critical coverage of the political system, similar to *The Daily Show* or *Colbert Report*, but talk about specific issues millennials care about. This involved a lot of interviews with millennials and one of the problems that occurred was the millennials who were were interested in politics had an extremely wide range of interests. Some want to have coverage that focuses on the economy, while others want coverage that focuses solely on international politics.

The next step was to find contributors. Over 10 people originally agreed to write articles, do design work, or help with the coding of the site, but in the end only four people ended up contributing. At this stage they were asked what political issues they were personally interested in and would want to write about. Writers pitched most of the articles and it was believed that people would write better articles about topics they are personally invested or interested in. At this time an early February deadline was set for all the articles, but only one was turned in before this date.

At the same time another question raised was what type of articles or media should *Wing-Nut* produce to best appeal to millennials. After doing research again using various Pew studies it was determined that most smartphone users read fairly short articles on their phones or watch short videos. It was then decided to focus the content on these two different mediums.

Then the construction of the site began. This process involved a lot of trial and error with various designs and content management systems. One of the problems was there is not a lot of literature or advice on how to design a website to be primarily used for mobile devices. The site was designed and then

continually reworked. One of the first problems was the fact that a user interface or design of the website could be produced in photoshop, but when it was uploaded to the site it would not work extremely well and when accessed on mobile devices looked very cluttered or cramped. Technical issues such as the site not adjusting to the different screen sizes of various mobile devices and the design appearing different in various web browsers were eventually worked out and the current prototype was formed.

The next step involved writing the business plan to map out the various business strategies to help continue to expand the brand. This was difficult for the fact that none of the magazine classes taught in Newhouse really teach students about developing a startup. Even with four contributors, no one really knew how to go about to find an advertising plan or how to properly promote and market a small web startup. Many professors were consulted about how to start a media company and they gave the advice to consult advertising and business majors. After talking with fellow students and reviewing other magazines' mission statements a clear business plan was finally formed.

The final step was to actually create the domain for the website, meaning purchase the URL wing-nut.com and hosting service where all the data is stored. Then it was time to make the website live and release the content. After this was done many people including professors and fellow students were shown the website and asked to critique the idea or design. The articles were edited and certain design aspects, such as font size were continually adjusted.

Once the articles were edited and all the content was posted various marketing or promotional strategies were used to increase traffic or views of the

website. First the website was just spread through word-of-mouth. Then it was promoted using the social media sites Facebook and Twitter. Finally, the site was put on various search engines with the use of meta tags and meta keywords. These are keywords and descriptions of the various articles and posts that search engines use to direct readers to the website.

Significance:

Whether or not the magazine will be continued after the various contributors graduate is still uncertain. For now there is still some video content being created and more articles written that will be posted in the near future. Overall, the goal of the project was to do something different then what is normally done in the magazine industry. The project was meant to be something completely new compared to the past magazine or web startups capstone projects. It was also a chance to spend over a year working on an extremely unconventional idea.

Wing-Nut is one of the first magazines designed primarily for mobile use. It is also one of the only political news outlets that attempts to appeal to the millennial generation. This age group is not very politically active and many times forgotten about as a target demographic for the media. The project was meant to push how people think about magazines and the platforms news is presented on. It was also meant to show how sometimes the medium in which news is presented can make it very accessible to an audience that does not normally consume it.

Reflective Essay/ Bussiness Plan

Mission Statement: *Wing-Nut* is a mobile-based political magazine/news outlet

that pokes fun at both left and right wing political nutcases. It is created by

millennials for millennials, to rip them out of their apathetic political slumber. It

provides no-holds-barred political coverage, with a little humor because nothing

in life—especially politics—should be taken too seriously. *Wing-Nut* appeals to the smartphone addicted, social media obsessed millennial generation as one of the only magazines designed specifically for mobile devices.

Goal: *Wing-Nut* doesn't sit on either end of the political aisle. It critiques both liberals and conservatives and examines the government as a whole or the dysfunction of the entire political system. The content is meant to make readers evaluate their own political beliefs, if they have any, and make them examine what they like and dislike about the current political system. The overall goal of the media outlet is to get the political discussion or conversation started between millennials: get them informed and get them involved.

Audience: The target demographics for *Wing-Nut* is 18-to-25-year olds. The publication is geared toward millennials, specifically anyone interested or curious about politics and the government. Besides age there isn't a specific gender, race, or income bracket targeted. Most 18-to-25-year olds are very tech-savvy and glued to their smartphones. This is one of the main reasons the magazine is a mobile first medium. It appeals to the tech obsessed, now, now, now millennial lifestyle.

Methodology:

Why Target Mobile Devices:

The site was designed to target mobile devices because it is one of the fasting growing platforms people read and access news on. According to Pew's "State of

the News Media 2014" report, in 2013 over 58 percent of American adults and over 83 percent of 18 to 29-year-olds own a smartphone. The same study also found that 60 percent of smartphone users access the internet from their phones. While most traditional magazines focus on tablet applications, only 42 percent of American adults own a tablet computer ("State of the Media", pp. 2-3). A *Media Bistro* study found smartphone users spend 163 minutes on their phones during the weekend (Friday through Sunday) and 87 minutes on their phone during the week (Monday through Thursday) (Stadd, para. 12). The same study also found that 89 percent of 18 to 24-year-old smartphones users checked their phones within 15 minutes of waking up every morning (Stadd, para. 1)**.** One of the other factors for the mobile design was the use of social media to read, share, and like articles. According to Reuter's Jennifer Saba, sites like *Business Insider* and *Buzz Feed* receive around 75 percent of their traffic from social media (Saba, para. 3-8). In 2013 the Pew Center found that 70 percent of 18-to-24-year-olds use Facebook's mobile app and 61 percent use it multiple times per day ("Social Networking Fact Sheet," p. 1). So if people read articles on their phones that are posted or shared via social media, it would make sense to create a news outlet that is designed for this growing platform and specific use.

**Technology:** During the development of the publication the main question asked was what is the best way to present *Wing-Nut*, so it is easily accessible and successfully appeals to millennials. At first the publication was going to be created through the app store and designed as a traditional tablet magazine using Adobe InDesign, but after further contemplation it was decided to use an HTML5

or web based system. This allows anyone with an internet connection to be able to access the site and two separate versions do not have to be designed (one for Apple IOS and one for Andriod). It also lowers costs. If the app was released through the Itunes store it would have costs $99 a year and if it was distributed through Google Play, the Android version of the app store, it would have cost a one-time fee of $25 dollars (Mackenzie, para. 2-3). Even if these distribution costs were manageable both app stores take around a 30 percent cut of the sales. In 2011 *The Financial Times* removed its app from ITunes to avoid these costs and take the middleman out of the equation. In early 2012 the HTML5 web based *Financial Times* app was released to users (Kafka, 2011, para 1-5). The current design of the *Wing-Nut* prototype is not strictly an HTML5 based website or native IPhone or Android app, traits of both types of styles were adopted to form more of a hybrid version. The scrolling and look are similar to a native based app, but the responsive design and article tagging system are similar to an HTML5 website.

Traditional Computer View
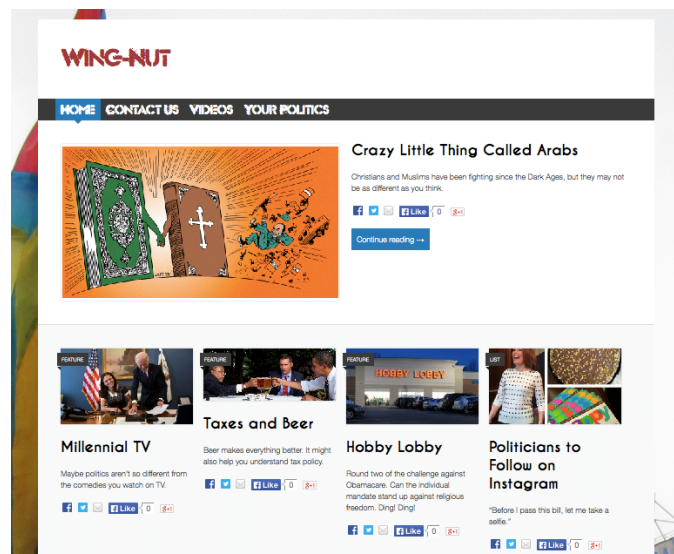
Mobile View
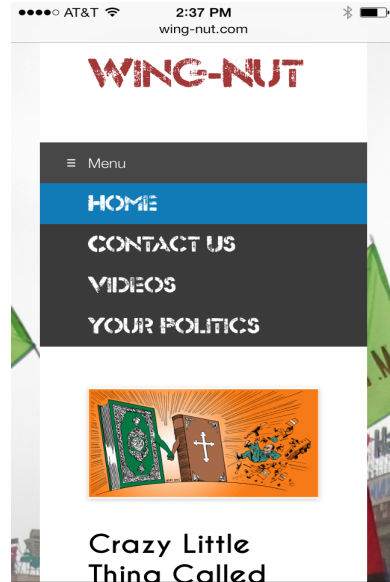
Content Management System: The next decision was to decide which content management system would be used for the construction of the site. The decision was between Drupal, WordPress, and just using HTML5 in a text document. Eventually, after speaking with various S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications staff members such as Aileen Gallagher, an Assistant Magazine Professor and Jason Kohlbrenner, Supervisor of Production Operations and thinking about what CMS potential contributors would be familiar with it was decided to use WordPress. WordPress is easy to update and with added coding/programing has ability to fit or mimic almost any design imaginable. It is free and accessible to use for a potential contributor who may not have any web journalism experience. It is also one of the most frequently used content management systems, according to *Forbes* magazine's J.J. Colao, over 60 million websites use WordPress as their main CMS (Colao, para. 3).

User Interface: The user interface was designed to be extremely simple and easy to use. The main reason for this simplicity was the fact that the site is intended to be used on mobile or tablet devices. When using these devices, everything needs to be able to be tapped and touched. With this in mind, most of the content and interactive buttons had to be very spaced out because on tablets and phones users do not have the precision to click and navigate with a mouse. The mobile menu drops down and is responsive to any screen size and any orientation (landscape and portrait). Users can navigate to any page on the site with one tap of the menu bar. With this simple user interface the site was also designed with infinite scrolling capabilities. Users can search for articles by name, by type, by author, or by tag, which makes finding content extremely easy.

Design: The design of the site was meant to be clean and sleek, again to keep the spacing of different features in mind. The graphics and text are meant to be easy to read on any device. The style or overall tone of the site was inspired by street artists Banksy and Shepard Fairey and the overall design of *Esquire* magazine. Street art is very popular among the millennial generation. Countless college students have Banksy or Fairey prints hanging up in their rooms, but the images are also politically motivated. The rough style reflects the fact that *Wing-Nut* is not the average political news outlet. The background images of protests in front of the White House and logo that resembles a spray paint stencil or tag, reflects the disenchantment of the American political system many millennails feel or relate to.

Verticals/ Table of Contents
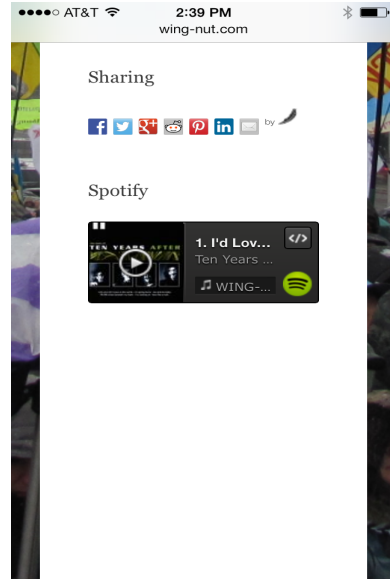
Home: The homepage is the main content page. All of the latest articles are posted and the five most recent are located in the featured articles bar. The homepage features infinite scrolling, so the articles could potentially go on and on. One of the other benefits of infinite scrolling is the simple navigation because users do not have to click to other pages, which can sometimes be difficult on smartphones. This is where most of the content will be located. Hopefully, when more contributors are recruited there will be about six or seven new articles everyday. There is also a built-in Spotify player that allows users to listen to *Wing-Nut* playlists while navigating the site. All of the songs relate to politics and the feel or questioning tone of the publication. An example of this would be Ten Years After's song "I'd Love to Change the World." The song was originally released in the 1960s about the wanting to change the American political system, but not knowing how to do it or what to change. The music is just another feature to add to the overall user experience and create a connection with users on multiple mediums at the same time.
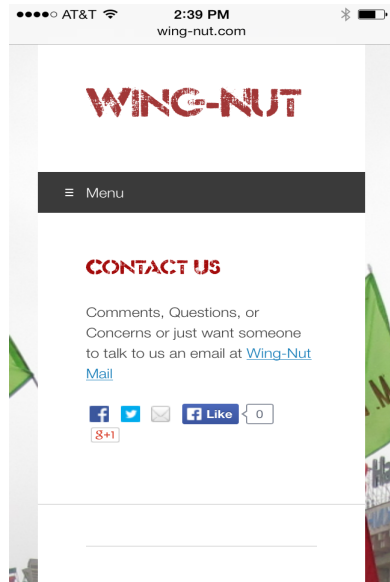
Contact Us: The contact us section is one of the tabs that directs users to the site's basic contact information. They can directly leave a comment or send the *Wing-Nut* Staff an email. There are also links to all of *Wing-Nut*'s social media platforms, so if users prefer to contact the magazine or comment/complain about the content they can use social media to do so.
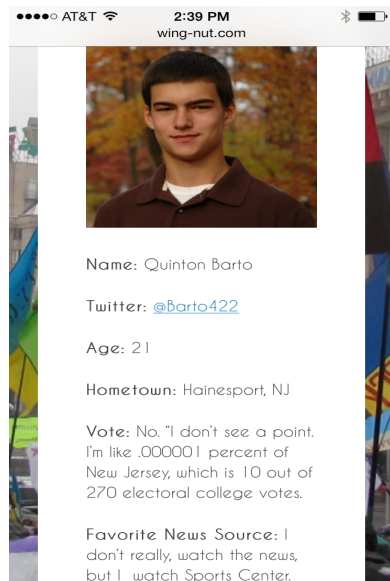
Your Politics: The your politics section is a collection or database of Q and A's with members of the millennial generation. The questions range from who do you

think should be president to what is the most important political issue. This section is meant for users to examine the various posts and see what other people think about politics and compare the answers to their own beliefs. All of the respondents' Twitter handles are listed, so if a reader wants to discuss or even argue an answer they can tweet at them. The main purpose of this section is to get a dialogue about politics started between milliennials. Whether the conversation happens in person, over social media, or even by snail mail is up to them. Readers can submit their own answers to *Wing-Nut* and they will be added to the ever growing database.

Multimedia: No original content has been created for the multimedia section yet. Some of the current ideas are roundtable discussions with millennials about politics, and video supplements to feature stories. These videos will be kept short to keep in mind the majority of readers will access the content on mobile devices. The tone of the videos will match the written content and the length will vary. Most of the content will be quick videos between two and five-minutes long. In 2012, 33 percent of the most watched videos of the year on YouTube fell in this time realm. The length allows videos to provide viewers with a good amount of information, but is not too long for them to lose interest ("Video Length," p. 1). Other potential ideas include man-on-the street videos that ask millennials questions about basic political terms and if they know what they mean. Some of the potential words could be filibuster, gerrymander, and pork barrel. The current video posted in the video section was written and directed by contributor Ian Ludd for an online documentary competition (Ludd is working on original content

for the site, it is not currently finished). The video was posted because it talks

about political issues such as immigration and citizen displacement, but tells the

story through a personal narrative. The future video content will mirror this

format and style. Another potential idea for the multimedia section is the

development of a podcast. Podcasts are extremely popular and are another

potential revenue source through advertisments and on-air commericals.

Types of Articles:

3. @ObamaDrinks

> Drunk Obama @ObamaDrinks · Feb 6
> Tequila Thursday in the White House! Let's get weird 🍸
> #WhereTheHoesAt

The leader of the free world didn't make the top of our list, but here is his drunk Twitter persona. Apparently, the White House has an open bar policy.

2. @DiamondJoeBiden

> Diamond Joe @DiamondJoeBiden · Sep 24
> Little known fact: American citizens have the right to eat one Bald Eagle every year, provided you track it and kill it with bare hands.
> ← Reply

Diamond Joe wins the most creative tweets award. From his conversations with the real vice president to interaction with followers, Diamond Joe is definitely a vice-President for the people created by the people.

1. @PimpBillClinton

> Pimp B. Clinton @PimpBillClinton · 15h
> I guess Kevin Hart had some shit to do tonight... #NickCannonsOnLudes #DunkContest
> ← Reply

The pimp persona of 42nd President of the United States has nearly 300,000 followers. With Hilary's potential run for Pres in 2016, Bill might have to put the mack-game on hold to help the campaign. Even after a decade after his presidency, Bill's pimp hand is still strong.

Lists: These are short quick articles that mimic the success of the *BuzzFeed* style

list. The lists are meant to be for readers to quickly skim and find some interesting

information or links. Some of the current lists range from "The Richest Members

of Congress" to "Five Millennial Politicians to Follow on Twitter." Eventually

when more contributors are recruited the lists will eventually become longer.

Right now they range from five to 10 items. Another potential addition to the list

style articles is the creation of quizzes. Some potential ideas include, how partisan are you or what politician is your soul mate.
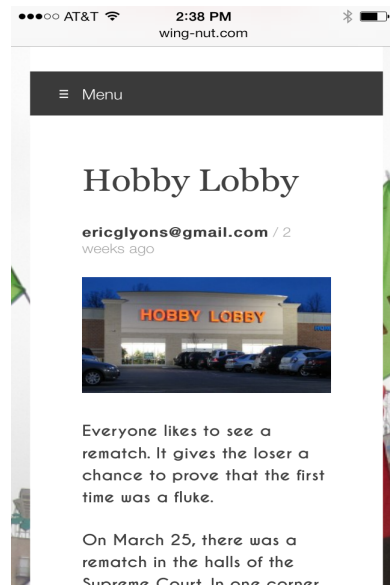
Feature Stories: The features are around 600 words and shorter compared to most print magazine articles. According to a 2012 Pew report, only 11 percent of smartphone users read long form articles on their devices, but over 60 percent read the news ("Mobile Technology Fact Sheet," p. 2). With this in mind the articles tend to be on the shorter side to appeal to mobile readers, but there are some longer articles that might suit users who access the site from a tablet or traditional computer. This was another question that was brought up during the creation of the platform. Recently magazine sites/apps like *The Atavist* and *Brooklynr* have had success with the use of long form journalism. Even sites like *AOL*, *Business Insider*, and *BuzzFeed* recently started long form departments, but the overall success of the style has not been concretely proven on mobile.

Competition:

*VICE***:** *VICE* originally started as a Canadian based print newsmagazine and has expanded to one of the largest online media sites and even an HBO series. In 2013 *VICE* was nominated for 11 Webby awards, which are online journalism awards ("We'd Like More Webbys!"). *VICE*'s style or swagger is like no other media outlet. It goes to the places other people are afraid of and talks about the issues others don't want to. While *VICE* is one of the inspirations for *Wing-Nut*, the brand's content has more of an international focus and appeals to an older or more politically active demographic.

*BuzzFeed***:** *BuzzFeed* started as a website in 2006 and now branched off into a mobile/tablet app and cultural phenomenon. The site is known for its list style articles on pop culture, but began to cover serious political stories when Ben Smith came over from *Politico (*Quenqua, para 2-6). *BuzzFeed*'s political section offers long forms features, short-lists, and quizzes, but the content is not directly targeted toward millennials. *BuzzFeed* is one of the first media sites to successfully utilize social media as a source for hits and clicks and a medium to expand the brand's audience exponentially.

*Elite Daily***:** *Elite Daily* is *Wing-Nut*'s main competition. It is a website that is designed to "stimulate and engage" discussion amongst Generation-Y ("About Elite Daily," para. 1-3). The website has articles and posts on everything from the best deals at Chipotle to what members of Congress receive a copy of *Hustler* magazine every month. Most of the content consists of longer articles (over 1000 words), curated lists, or videos. The website was founded by investor Gerard

Adams after he felt like traditional news media dictated the stories rather than

allowing readership to dictate the content ("About Elite Daily," para. 1). The

website is similar to a *Business Insider* with a younger demographic and larger

focus on culture/lifestyle. *Elite Daily* does not really make itself standout from its

competitors. It does not have the style or voice of *Vice*, the market on list style

articles like *BuzzFeed*, or the social media presence of *Business Insider*. While the

content is very interesting the generic branding and design of the website holds it

back.

Readership: So far the site has averaged about 10 unique views per day. Over the

past couple months the various forms of marketing and promotion have been

systematically altered or adapted. At first the articles were released without any

SEO (search engine optimization) links or social media posts. Traffic was

generated by word of mouth among people involved and family and friends.

Unique views of the page were extremely low (under five per day) and length of

stay on the site was under 30 seconds except for the internet spam bots. In the

second phase, articles were released and promoted on social media. This

increased readership to about 10 unique views a day. Some of the articles received

two or three likes on Facebook, but non-of the articles were retweeted or favorited

on Twitter. The third phase added imbedded SEO links into the articles. Meta-

tags were also added in this phase (Meta-tags identify the keywords on the page

and provide a general description. Search engines scan for these tags and use them

to identify sites that people are looking for). This did not increase likes, shares, or

retweets on social media, but it did increase overall page views to a one day high

of 18 (on April 3), but many of these were spam bots as seen in the comments

section, which was littered with advertising. The low traffic for the site was

expected. *Jerk* Magazine, a campus publication, which has over 10 online

contributors and a social media staff only receives around 50 uniques a day.

Besides advertisements in the print magazine, *Jerk* only promotes the website via

social media and word of mouth.

Advertising plan: As far as finding advertisers, *Wing-Nut* plans to use the

Google AdSense program. AdSense allows websites to generate revenue by

placing targeted text ads in the sidebar and footer of the site. Google searches for

keywords on the site and matches advertisers based on the findings. The ads are

from businesses that pay Google to use the Adsense service. Adsense is free and

pays sites based on the number of clicks the ads recieve. The program is more

cost efficient for a small start-up like *Wing-Nut* because the site does not need to

hire any additional staff members and is very time efficient because the ads are

designed and placed by Google (Gehl, para. 5-7).

Another source of advertisements would be short commercials before the

video content also known as pre-roll advertising. If the video content was

managed through YouTube and receives enough views, the publications will

eventually receive royalty fees. According to *Business Insider*, most YouTube

channels make up to $7.60 per 1,000 ad views. These YouTube ads are also

generated by Google's Adsense program (Edwards, para. 1-5). Again this

program is free and cost/time efficient, plus it is one of the easiest ways to

generate revenue.

Social Media: One of the best social media strategies is to expand editorial

content and give readers a behind-the-scenes look at the publication. An example

of this may be to offer content on social media that does not directly appear on the

website. *Wing-Nut*'s social media presence will provide readers with teasers of

upcoming stories or behind-the-scenes photos/videos of articles or photo shoots.

Another goal is to get readers to interact or just react to content. Some discussion

questions will be posted on social media to encourage a dialog with readers or

critics. Some questions could be about daily news stories or ask large political

questions like should there be limits on campaign spending or should politicians

only be allowed to serve a limited amount of terms. The main goal with social

media is to expand the audience. It has not been decided whether this will try and

be accomplished by the volume of posts, similar to what *Business Insider* does or

more of a targeted campaign, which tweets about trending topics and uses specific

hash tags.

Brand Extensions: If *Wing-Nut* continues to grow one of the potential brand

extensions might be a seminar or conference series, similar to political scientist

Eric Liu's Citizen's University, a yearly conference that promotes active

citizenship and political participation, but with a millennial demographic. The

conferences would be held at various college campuses and try to get students

more engaged or interested in politics. Various speakers could be brought and the

location could rotate every couple of months. Another brand extension could be a

print magazine or a PDF magazine similar to what *VICE* currently does. This

could expand the opportunities for advertisers and vastly expand the audience of

the brand if the magazine is sold at major retailers. While the magazine industry

has recovered since its economic downturn in the mid 2000s, politically focused

magazine such as *Time*, *The Economist*, and *The Week* have lost ad revenue in

2013 and the beginning of 2014 (Edmonds, para. 7). If this decrease in ad revenue

for political magazines continues then *Wing-Nut* will probably remain an online

publication.

Revenue/Finance Plan: To get more funding for the project a few different

revenue streams have been considered. The first would be to get outside investors

and be able to hire a full-time staff. While this would be the fastest way to expand

the company, the investors would have a say over the direction of the brand.

Another problem with this is the fact that most millennials do not have the capital

to invest in a small startup. If a baby boomer invested the money it would

contradict the notion that the publication is by millennials for millennials. The

second revenue stream would be to continue to rely on pro-bono work and just

slowly build up revenue with the use of advertisers. The second is the more

favorable because it keeps the brand's startup/grassroots feel. It also takes out any

outside influence that may change the direction of the company and ensures the site is run by millennials.

Obstacles: Over the course of the development of *Wing-Nut* the biggest obstacles have been acquiring the skills to design and structure a website and successfully recruit contributors, who possess a strong voice and can write concisely about politics. The project was originally started by a student with some coding and web design skills, but coding a WordPress site to work for mobile devices was a tough process. The number of times a homepage was designed and then thrown out because the various CSS or design would not scale for different types of devices was extremely frustrating. Another issue was finding the correct HTML5 code that responded to multiple web browsers. Many designs were discarded because they looked one way in Safari and then did not scale correctly in Firefox or vice versa. Another issue was trying to be different or find a unique voice for the brand in the endless sea of online news sources. Many great ideas were thrown out because they were already produced by other magazines or news outlets. Director of Product for *Epicurious* Eric Gillin, who is also the former editor of Esquire.com was consulted about being different. His advice was don't rely on a gimmick; just have content that is better than everyone else's. One of the ideas to be different was suggested by Professor Gallagher. She had the idea to make the site similar to the popular millennial dating app Tinder. Users would like or dislike articles and they would eventually build a unique user profile. This idea was extremely promising, the only problem was the construction and coding of

the site would be nearly impossible for any of the contributors and would take an estimated six months to create.

Future: In the future the first goal would be continue to refine the current prototype and recruit more contributors. The next step would be to get the multimedia section up and running and start generating original daily news coverage. With a steady stream of content and a strong social media presence the audience will hopefully grow. An eventual goal would be around 1,000,00 unique page views per month, but this would not be expected for 12 to 18 months. If there is a good response from readers, *Wing-Nut* may expand to international politics and possibly to more cultural oriented news coverage, such as music, film, and art. If the brand expands to international politics, there may be new individual sites for different nations similar to *VICE*'s structure. Viewers from the UK would visit Wing-Nut.uk instead of the American version Wing-Nut.com. This would keep costs low because it would prevent reporters from having to travel around the world for a story. There would already be a *Wing-Nut* correspondent in the region.

Staff:

Eric Lyons

Founder/ Editor-in-Chief

Eric Lyons once loved politics, but now like many millennials has become disenchanted with the American political system. He is a senior magazine journalism and political science major at Syracuse University. During high school he spent most of his free time interning for the GOP and Christie campaign with

aspirations of one day becoming the next John Roberts, but four years later he fell in love with writing and wants to become a journalist. Some of the stories he plans to write may or may not involve politics.

Mike Downes

IT Consultant

Mike Downes is a senior information technology major at Syracuse University. He is not specifically interested in politics—he knows it is something his parents talk a lot about at the dinner table, but cares about the economy because he is looking for a job after graduation. The Onedia, New York, native is interested in the development of social media and the future of digital music sites and download services. Downes helped with the methodology of the design and answered various technical or coding questions.

Ian Ludd

Video Contributor

Ludd is a television, radio, and film graduate student in the Newhouse School and has an undergraduate degree in political science from SU as well. He loves Aaron Sorkin and wants to be a screenwriter. When he isn't going on political rants about how conservatives are the devil, he likes to write jokes and plans to make his standup comedy debut in the summer. Ludd helped develop what millennials want in political news and is planning on creating original video content for the site.

Stephen Sydor

Contributor

Sydor is a senior international relations and economics major at Syracuse University. He spent the fall in Washington D.C. working as a media specialist for the General Delegation of Palestinian Liberation Organization and last spring in Irbid, Jordan. He is a self-admitted Ayn Rand acolyte and is a hardcore libertarian. Growing up in a small homogenous town outside of Buffalo, NY definitely helped shape his political interests, but he wants to travel the world to study international politics and political economics. His interests include international relations, economic policy, and individual freedoms.

Brysan Brown

Contributor

Brown is a senior political science and communications and rhetorical studies major at Syracuse University. He originally wanted to become a journalist after interning at *Rolling Stone* a couple of years ago, but now wants to pursue a career in public policy. Next year, Brown will be joining the New York City Urban Fellows Program, a fellowship in the mayor's office and other city agencies with a supplementary seminar series that explores inner-city issues that affect government policy. Brown is about as liberal as they get, but says sometimes common sense is more useful than political ideology.

Letter from the Editor

Even after four years of studying political science and being a self-described political junkie for most of my adult life, I really don't understand what politics are or even mean. Yes, the word politics comes from the Greek word 'politika' meaning affairs of state, but today politics are more than just what the state does. A statement can be political. The brand of cereal you buy can be interpreted as a political decision—*you better buy something made in the USA or you're a commie.* I was once obsessed with politics, no matter what they may be. I

would read two newspapers every morning just for the political coverage and spend the rest of the day talking, debating, and thinking about rights, freedoms, and court decisions. I thought my life was dictated by politics. They controlled how fast I drove, what time I went to school, and what I could/couldn't drink.

Every couple years when a new candidate or even the incumbent would run for election, they would promise change or improvement to the current system. *I will lower your taxes, make your schools better*….the list goes on and on. At the end of the day I started to realize nothing changes. No matter who is elected, what party is in control of Congress, over and over again policymaking and change gets shutdown by dysfunction and lack of cooperation. For a while, I looked at government as a waste. Not a waste of money or media coverage: a waste of my time. I could think about policy all day, but no matter what, this dysfunctional system will continue the sub-par statuesque.

When I came to college I realized a lot of people felt the same way I did. They didn't care about government because they weren't interested. They were just turnoffed by the never-ending arguments and lack of cooperation. I may not be able to completely change the political system right now, but I can try and get people my age who want and hope for a better system, more informed and more engaged. Young people may not even be allowed to hold office today, but they can vote, they can participate, and they can debate. The better informed and more engaged we are today, the brighter the future will be tomorrow.

Thanks,

E.G. Lyons

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