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STATUS

- Gapers Block Media LLC is a privately held online news publication
- Founded in 2003 by Andrew Huff.
- The website focuses on the inner knowledge of the city and covers topics such as food, art, music, sports, politics and books.
- Gapers Block has approximately 70,000 unique visitors per month, with an average audience age of 24-34 years.

ANALYSIS

Although Gapers Block has over 22,000 Twitter followers and approximately 200,000 page views per month, the company has faced some obstacles with revenue, content, audience, advertisement and support.

Challenges:

- Andrew Huff is managing many aspects of Gapers Block by himself.
- He has 8 volunteer editors and 80 unpaid contributing writers.

- Andrew also has a full-time job and needs help managing the website because he can't continue to do everything on his own.

In order for Gapers Block to rebuild their brand, they need to focus on building revenue, updating their content, increasing the audience, creating partnerships/sponsorships, hiring interns, and increasing their advertising strategies.

Gapers Block also has the opportunity to go non-profit, which will allow the company to focus solely on content and be funded by grants for arts and culture. This will allow Gapers Block to pay some of their writers and to hire someone as a full-time staff member.

Gapers Block also could look into selling the company at an estimate of \$100,000, which seems sufficient for the current audience and Twitter followers that the website has.

EDITORIAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Narrow editorial focus (bigger emphasis on Chicago events applicable to Gapers Block Target audience)
- Seek younger readers
- Implement a "Friday Restaurant for Foodies" weekly event on the website
- Utilize Instagram as a social media platform, which appeals to a younger demographic. This will be used to feature food pictures and the "Friday Restaurant for Foodies"
- Implement a recipe contest, which will lead to a "Best of Gapers Block Recipe Collection" at the end of the year (this could be made into a cookbook for Gapers Block to sell)
- Gain revenue and brand awareness through partnerships

Gapers Block should narrow its focus to set itself apart from other online news sources. We recommend that Gapers Block put a larger emphasis on events in Chicago that appeal to the age demographic of their readers (age 24-34) and to the demographic of younger readers that they would like to attract.

According to a study by Journalism Studies, newspaper editors are in search of young readers to help keep news alive. The study sampled 1200 students between the ages of 16-18 years old. The results of the study indicated that newspapers need to shift their content to offer changes for increasing a young adult audience. The study found that

young adults would be more attracted to read newspapers if there was more attention to local news, extra background information and easier language to help reduce the gap between newspapers and young readers.

The young adults from the study also showed a desire to be treated as mature partners in the communication process and they rejected a innovative or flashy layout.

From this study you can see that it would be beneficial for Gapers Block to focus on local news, including local events, to help grab the attention of a younger audience. This could also lead to potential students/young adults covering news and events for the website.

According to an article in Poynter, in order to attract a younger audience, news outlets and journalists may need to expand their boundaries of what they consider to be news. The article quoted Danah Boyd, a Microsoft researcher and expert in youth media and privacy issues. According to Boyd, young people are deeply engaged in the news of their peers because they usually haven't experienced the world outside of their friends or school , however journalists and news outlets wouldn't generally call this news.

- **Example:** The RedEye is an example of a news outlet that has built content for younger readers. The RedEye defines news by what seems relevant to their audience, not just by what seems important. The RedEye gives attention to stories that their younger audience would find most relevant to their personal lives and experiences.

We recommend that Gapers Block follows the trend that the RedEye has found successful to attract younger readers. Gapers Block should make it's content attractive to a younger audience by tapping into stories or events that they would be interested in and possibly even attend. These events that Gapers Block could cover to attract younger readers could be anything from restaurant openings to festivals to non-profit events.

Gapers Block has an advantage over other online news sources because it has a curated event calendar. If Gapers Block uses this to their advantage they can drive advertisers to the website along with a bigger audience and they can even create potential sponsorships.

For the editorial content we recommend keeping all of Gapers Block's current sections, but reworking them to add stronger material to the website.

- According to Nieman Reports, young readers who are most likely to pick up a newspaper are generally interested in world news, which is why we feel the politics section is beneficial for Gapers Block .But as the study we previously mentioned from Journalism Studies reports, background information and simple language is beneficial for the young readers to be able to understand the content and be engaged.
- We recommend that the politics section highlights public policy issues that affect the community and young adults. For example, the section could cover the current plastic bag ban in the city or the current ban on e-cigarettes in public places.

Food Section:

Under the Food section, Gapers Block can highlight restaurant openings, bar events, weekly food/drink specials, etc.

The website currently does a Friday Foodpic every week, but we suggest to reinvent this idea and create a **Friday Restaurant For Foodies** weekly event where the website features a different restaurant every Friday that Gapers Block suggests for its readers to check out . This can open the door for possible partnerships and/or advertising opportunities with different restaurants that are looking to be featured across multiple news platforms.

- **Restaurants that may be interested in advertising include:**
 - **Nacional 27** - This restaurant has a current banner advertisement on Metromix. Nacional 27 is also a part of Lettuce Entertain You and on June 25th they are hosting a cocktail-making class for \$15 a person, which they might want to advertise for. **Address:** 325 W Huron St, Chicago, IL 60654 **Phone:**(312) 664-2727
 - **Snarf's Sandwiches**- A chain of sandwich shops with four locations in Chicago. They are currently building a location in Lincoln Park on DePaul University's campus. They could be looking to advertise their new location. **Address:** 955 W. Webster, Chicago, IL 606147

- **Spritz Burger-** This restaurant released a new menu item this week, The Collision Burger. They could be looking to advertise their new menu. **Address:**3819 N. Broadway, Chicago, IL 60613 **Phone:** 773-868-9866
- **Three Dots and a Dash-** This restaurant/bar was just named by *Time Out Magazine* as the “Best New Bar and as the “Best New Restaurant Design.” They could be looking to advertise their new restaurant design. They also are the only dedicated tiki bar in the city. **Address:** 435 N Clark St, Chicago, IL **Phone:** 312-610-4220

According to a study published by the Institute of Food Technologists, 76 percent of U.S. adults enjoy talking about new or interesting foods and 54 percent of casual diners are considered foodies because of their desire to always or usually try new menu items when going to a restaurant. When we discussed our recommendation for expanding the food section in class, we asked how many people considered themselves to be foodies. Almost half the class raised their hand, including our teacher.

We feel that attracting readers who are foodies would be beneficial to Gapers Block because the website can use the food section as leverage to gain another audience.

We recommend that Gapers Block create an Instagram account that is dedicated to the weekly **Friday Restaurant For Foodie** event that we previously suggested. This Instagram account can be used to feature the weekly restaurants that Gapers Block showcases, but it also can be used for followers to post their own food pictures using the hashtag **#GBFridayFoodie**.

The Instagram account could also be featured on Gapers Block at the bottom of the homepage, underneath the section for “GB Store” and “About Gapers Block.” There can be a link to follow the Instagram account and pictures from the account showcased on the website. This could help to not only promote the Instagram account, but it also could help attract readers.

Gapers Block could also use this to help promote their other social media platforms. If readers scroll over the pictures of the food they can have an option to post the picture on their Twitter account or their Facebook account, which will lead traffic back to Gapers Block. This can be seen on the Akira’s website, an ecommerce site for a chain of retail stores throughout Chicago.

- **Example:** Akira is a women's retail store that features their pictures from their Instagram account at the bottom of their website. If you scroll over the pictures from the Instagram account on the website, viewers have the option to post the picture to their Twitter or Facebook accounts, which in return leads traffic back to the Akira website. <http://www.shopakira.com/>

According to Search Engine Journal, Instagram has an active 150 million monthly users. Some current Instagram accounts that have a strong following that can be used as an example for Gapers Block include:

Chicago Food Authority (Instagram name: [chicagofoodauthority](#))

- The Instagram account has 28,000 followers and asks people to tag their food pictures using #chicagofoodauthority. The account will repost pictures that followers tag and it tags the location/restaurant where the food in the picture is from.

Chicago Foodie Girl (Instagram name: [chicagofoodiegirl](#))

- The Instagram account has 1,899 followers. The woman who runs the account is a Chicago foodie and blogger who only posts food pictures in Chicago.

Nathan Michael (Instagram name: [nathanmichael](#))

- The Instagram account has 75,000 followers. The man who runs the account is a Chicago photographer who takes photos of food he eats throughout Chicago. Nathan was recently named on BuzzFeed as an Instagram account to follow that makes the Chicago cold look worth it.

<http://www.buzzfeed.com/mackenziekrivant/awesome-chicago-instagram-accounts>

Chicago Food Lord (Instagram name: [chicagofoodlord](#))

- The Instagram account has 14,000 followers. The account is managed by Sam Hoke, the founder of Chicago Food Blog. Sam asks people to tag their food pictures using #chicagofoodlord and he will repost pictures that followers tag. Sam also posts food pictures of recipes that people have made and he posts the link for the recipe.

Recipe Contest:

We also recommend engaging readers by creating a **monthly recipe contest** for the food section on Gapers Block. This could help to further attract potential advertisers in the food industry, including restaurants and grocery stores.

- **Grocery stores that may be interested in advertising include:**
 - **Bari-** An Italian specialty food store that offers catering and an Italian deli. Bari currently is running a banner advertisement on yellowpages.com. The store also has a delivery service that brings groceries to customers. **Address:** 1120 W Grand Ave **Phone:** 312-666-0730
 - **Treasure Island Foods-** A supermarket that provides specialty, imported and domestic products. Treasure Island Foods also has a cooking school that features cooking classes. A calendar of upcoming cooking classes is featured on their website. This could be a good fit for Treasure Island Foods to advertise in the food section to readers interested in food and to readers participating in the recipe contest, who enjoy cooking. **Phone:** 773.880.8880 **Email:** stasi@tifofoods.com
Cooking Class Calendar: <http://tifofoods.com/calendar/>
 - **The Spice House-** A spice store that sells rubs, flavored salts, extracts and Chicago-themed mixes. The Spice House has three locations in Illinois and they feature a recipe section on their website for recipe exchanges and cooking advice. They could be interested in advertising since they are trying to attract foodies to exchange recipes on their website. The Spice House recipe database has over 1,000 recipes submitted by customers, staff, professional chefs and cookbook authors. **Address:** 1512 North Wells Street Chicago, Illinois **Phone:**312-274-0378
<http://www.thespicehouse.com/>
 - **Strack & Van Til-** A full service grocery and fresh food store. Strack & Van Til offers recipes and a meal planner on their website for customers along with cooking videos. They could be interested in advertising and attracting Gapers Block's foodie readers to their stores. **Address:** 2627 N. Elston Ave Chicago, IL **Phone:** 773-252-6400
<http://www.strackandvantil.com>

Recipe Contest Guidelines:

Readers will have until the end of the month to vote on their favorite recipe and the winner will be chosen at the end of each month based on the most amount of votes.

Gapers Block could also partner with some restaurants in Chicago to give away gift certificates as prizes to the winners of the contest. The restaurants who are giving away gift certificates as prizes could also promote the recipe contest to their customers.

Potential advertisers who were previously mentioned, The Spice House and Treasure Island Foods, may also want to give away gift certificates as prizes. These two businesses may also want to promote the recipe contest to their customers since they have a recipe exchange on their website (The Spice House) and cooking classes at their stores (Treasure Island Foods).

To give the recipe contest some structure, Gapers Block could give the contest a different theme each month. For example, last week was national doughnut day. Gapers Block could have featured a doughnut recipe contest in honor of national doughnut day.

Some other possible recipe contest themes include:

- Holiday cookie recipe contest
- BBQ cook off recipe contest
- Pasta recipe contest
- Casserole recipe contest
- Crock pot recipe contest
- Summer salad recipe contest
- Dip recipe contest
- Cupcake recipe contest
- Potato Salad recipe contest
- Burger Battle recipe contest
- Low fat recipe contest

Other recipe contests that have been successful:

<http://www.cuisinart.com/recipes/get-cooking-contest.html>

<http://www.grilledcheeseacademy.com/contest>

<http://www.tasteofhome.com/contests>

<http://resers.com/potatosaladcontest>

Gapers Block Recipe Cookbook:

If the recipe contest proves to be successful, Gapers Block could eventually feature a best of recipe collection at the end of the year showcasing the top recipes from the year.

Gapers Block could try to sell this collection of recipes to a publisher to create a cookbook to sell. For example, this cookbook could be titled, “**Gapers Block Best Loved Recipes 2014.**”

- **Example:** *Taste of Home Magazine* sold a recipe book on their website featuring the 100 best *Taste of Home* recipes. They sold this recipe magazine for \$4.99 and it was available in print or an eBook version.

Gapers Block could sell their collection of recipes for \$4.99 at the end of the year. If they sell the book in December, it could be a good publication that foodies would enjoy and that people could be interested in buying for Christmas gifts. If the recipe collection proves to be successful, Gapers Block could increase the price of the product.

Book Club Section:

We also recommend that Gapers Block builds on its book club section. There are several different community based book clubs and independent bookstores throughout Chicago that can be written about and covered for this section. This can drive readers to the book clubs and bookstores. This also can open the door to attract readers from the book clubs and bookstores to Gapers Block.

The American Booksellers Association reports that the number of independent bookstores has grown in the U.S. from 1,401 stores to 1,567 stores in three years. This shows that independent bookstores are expanding and making money.

We think that Gapers Block could potentially partner with some of these bookstores and/or book clubs to try to receive compensation in return for driving readers to the bookstores.

Benefits of Bookstore Partnerships:

According to an article in Publishers Weekly, many blogs find it relevant to write about bookstores and to utilize the opportunity to interview authors who come to the store.

The article mentioned that some blogs even work to organize store events. The article also used an example of how online blogs can drive in-store sales.

According to the article, an online blog helped to drive readers to an event at a local bookstore in Vermont. The bookstore expected only 10 people to show up, but over 100 people attended because of the book recommendations from an online blog. The event was hosted by the blog to showcase book recommendations and the blog even got some of the authors from the books to attend. The manager of the book store said, "It was also an encouraging reminder that books are still sold person-to-person based on knowledge, credibility, and genuine communication." This is an example of how partnerships with local bookstores can benefit the store and Gapers Block.

We recommend reaching out to the following bookstores to create partnerships and to increase the book club section content for the website:

OpenBooks.org

213 W. Institute Pl.

Chicago, IL 60610

Awards : **Chicago Reader Best of Chicago: Best Charity 2013**

**Chicago Reader Best of Chicago: People's Choice: Best Bookstore
2012**

Contact Info: Press / PR : press@open-books.org 312.475.135 info@open-books.org

Twitter Following 1,013

- Open Books is a non-profit that offers signature literacy programs for students from across Chicago.
- The River North bookstore holds more than 70,000 donated books (including 10,000+ kids' books!) for sale to help support the organization's literacy mission.
- The organization has book drives that businesses and individuals can host and they provide all the materials for free. These book drives help to provide used books for Open Books to donate to schools and sell in their stores for a profit.

- Gapers Block could think about hosting a book drive and they also can look into other events that the organization hosts. Open Books has an event calendar on the website and every Thursday at 10am they host storytelling time at the bookstore in River North. The organization also has a book club that meets once a month at the River North bookstore. The next time that the book club is meeting this summer is July 8th and August 12th.

According to an article by the network, The CEO Refresher, developing a relationship with a non-profit partner can provide your company with the benefit of being more visible within the community. The article also mentions that the public has more of a desire to support companies that back-up social causes.

- We recommend that Gapers Block thinks about partnering with Open Books because it will be supporting a good cause in the community. Since Gapers Block is a Chicago based media outlet, it would make sense for the website to partner with community based organizations.
- The article also mentions that if you partner with a non-profit they should have the same mission or values as your business. Open Books has a mission to transform lives through the power of reading writing and used books. We feel this mission aligns with Gapers Block's goal to have inside knowledge about the city for the readers who love Chicago in spite of its faults. Open Books is an organization that shows some good things Chicago is doing for the love of reading and writing.
- This also could lead to Open Books promoting internships at Gapers Block to its customers, members of the book club and to students at the schools that the organization works with.

The Book Cellar

-4736-38 N Lincoln Ave

Chicago, IL 60625

Contact Info: words@bookcellarinc.com 773 293-2665

Twitter Following 1,035

- The Book Cellar welcomes book clubs looking for an inviting atmosphere and central location to meet and discuss reading selections.
- The organization is celebrating their 10th anniversary on June 11th. Various groups currently meet at The Book Cellar That are always looking members.

These groups include:

- The Book Cellar Book Club
- DesiLit Book Club
- Gapers Block Book Club
- Never Too Old: A YA Book Club for Adults
- The Salon: Classics Book Club
- Sierra Club Environmental Book Group
- North Park Elementary Dads Book Club

- The Old St. Pat's Book Group
- The Book Cellar also sells books on their website and they have a calendar on their website of upcoming events, including book club meetings.
- On July 12th The Book Cellar will be participating in **Chicago Independent Bookstore Day** along with nine other independent bookstores in Chicago, including City Lit Books, which we recommend for Gapers Block to partner with as well (see below).

Chicago Independent Bookstore Day:

- participating bookstores will be handing out special give-aways and puzzle pieces. Customers who collect the puzzle pieces from all the participating bookstores will be able to create a collectable art piece from local graphic artist Lilli Carre.
- Each participating bookstore will also have events that highlight the strength of the store and what they have to offer.
- This event will be the first Chicago Independent Bookstore Day, celebrating community interests and the character of Chicago. This could be a good event for Gapers Block to be apart of since it will promote the community and get the brand recognized by the community.
- This also could be a good event for Gapers Block because the Gapers Block merchandise, especially Gapers Block t-shirts and buttons, would be perfect to sell at this event since this merchandise promotes Chicago and aligns with the mission of the event.
- If Gapers Block couldn't sell merchandise in the stores, it might be a good idea for Gapers Block to provide stickers in the stores to help create a brand awareness of the website to customers and attendees of the event. Gapers Block could simply provide these stickers to be placed on the counter by the register at each store.
- Since this is a first time event, this could be a good opportunity for Gapers Block to even sponsor the event and be one of the first and only sponsor who get recognition.
- **PARTICIPATING BOOKSTORES INCLUDE:**

- 57th Street Books (Hyde Park)
 - Seminary Coop (Hyde Park)
 - US! The Book Cellar (Lincoln Square)
 - City Lit Books (Logan Square)
 - Open Books (River North)
 - Powell's Bookstore (University Village)
 - Sandmeyer's (Printer's Row)
 - Unabridged Books (Lakeview)
 - Women & Children First (Andersonville)
- **Email chicagobookstoreday@gmail.com or visit chicagobookstoreday.com for details.**

City Lit Books

2523 N Kedzie Blvd

Chicago, IL 60647

Twitter Following 1,197

- Time Out Chicago gave City Lit Books a shopping award for the “Opening Worth The Wait”
- Huffington Post named City Lit Books one of the top 12 hottest new stores to shop in Chicago
- City Lit Books has a mission to build a strong community around the written word. The bookstore wants to be the place for customers to meet the next big author and for them to share the appreciation for good writing.
- City Lit Books also has an event calendar on the website and the bookstore features a **book of the month** on their website.
 - We feel that the book of the month is an opportunity for Gapers Block to partner with City Lit Books for potential revenue opportunities.
 - We recommend that Gapers Block sells City Lit’s book of the month on their website for the bookstore to make a profit, almost acting like an Amazon.com or e-commerce book store. In return City Lit Books could sell Gapers Block merchandise in their store. City Lit Books currently sells merchandise in their store besides books and they are working on selling merchandise on their website as well. There currently is a tab on the website for shopping and it says that City Lit merchandise is coming soon.

- City Lit Books currently follows Gapers Block on Twitter, so this could be a good contact to begin with.
Contact Info: (773) 235-2523 teresa@citylitbooks.com

According to data from the *Christian Science Monitor*, the U.S. cities that are the most book crazy (buying the most books and boasting the greatest number of book retailers) are as follows: Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, Boston, Washington DC, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Seattle, San Jose, and San Diego. This data shows that Chicago is the third city in the U.S. that buys the most books and has the most book retailers.

The American Booksellers Association also reports that sales at independent bookstores count for 10% of the market, while sales at Barnes & Noble count for 20% and Amazon for 29%. The association stated that “if sales continue the way they’re going, independent booksellers will capture even more of the market.

EXPERIENCED HELP

- Hire experienced interns in advertising, PR, social media, etc.
- Hire college and experienced high school level writers
- Reach out to people who manage communication internships at Chicago colleges
- Attend job fairs to seek possible unpaid interns interested in boosting their resumes

As of now, Andrew is managing all of Gapers Block by himself (apart from the content aspect). We believe that hiring experienced interns in 6 fields will help Gapers Block gain more stability, and will allow for the website to move in the right direction.

We believe hiring interns for: **advertising, PR/sponsorship, social media, fundraising, contributors, and event planning**. Each intern will be responsible for following the goals of their field. Each internship will last a year and will be available for school credit or possibly minor commission. Hiring interns will allow Andrew to resume his full-time job while also successfully managing Gapers Block.

Acquiring interns will be an easy and free resource that should be utilized.

- Graciela Kenig manages the communications internship program at DePaul University. By contacting her at: gkenig@depaul.edu, she can educate on how interns can be useful, receive school credit, and answer any other questions about using interns. In addition, Graciela can make sure that interns have the proper experience needed to fulfill the duties required. Graciela is a great resource that should definitely be utilized, even if you don’t use interns from DePaul.

- If Gapers Block wanted to help the community and get volunteer content writers, they could reach out to [Columbia Links](#) -- housed at Columbia College-- a non-profit organization specializing in journalism and leadership for teens. Although these teens might not be hugely experienced, Gapers Block could create a partnership with Columbia Links and integrate the teens into the real world journalism experience. According to the Poynter Institute, hiring young people will drive young traffic. It is important that the staff reflect the interests and demographics of the audience. This is their generation, and they think the same as their age demographic/audience. Young writers think differently about context than older writers or audience might. Columbia Links can be contacted via e-mail: columbialinks@colum.edu or phone: 312-369-8993.

In order to find experienced interns in each specific field, we have included links to job fairs and online resume searching:

Loyola University 2014 Job, Internship and Service Fair
September 3rd.

Employer Registration Fee: For Profit/Corporation - \$100; Non-for-Profit - \$25

<http://www.luc.edu/career/events/loyolacareerfairs/>

DePaul Job Fair

October 9th

Job Fair & Events Manager

DePaul University Career Center

Phone: (312) 362-5597

Email: kdalin@depaul.edu

https://depaul.experience.com/stu/cf_details?fhnd=6781

UICcareers.com is accessible by all current students and recent graduates. To recruit alumni who have been out more than a year and/or have more than 2 years of experience, please contact the University of Illinois Alumni Career Center at: careers@uillinois.edu.

In addition, most college campuses have online job posting where employers can post jobs and view resumes for potential interns:

DePaul: <https://careerconnect.depaul.edu/>

Loyola: <http://bit.ly/10027Iu>

University of Chicago: <http://bit.ly/1gZBqej>

University of Illinois: <http://bit.ly/1kqgOLz>

Columbia College: <http://bit.ly/1wUZvHZ>

ADVERTISING REVENUE RECOMMENDATIONS

- Hire individuals experienced with advertising
- In hopes of finding reliable employees, seek to hire multiple advertising people that can all be assigned to seek out different types of advertising
- Cover more ground in a shorter time
- Seek out local advertisers that would be involved with local Chicago-based events, stores, and restaurants

As of now, Gapers Block offers advertising through their newsletter and Textads. They sponsor ads from various websites, but use them as placeholders rather than revenue.

We recommend hiring experienced advertising interns who are familiar with online advertising. Increasing advertising throughout Gapers Block will not only increase revenue, but will also build partnerships. Since Gapers Block will/does focus on local events/content, it is important that advertisements on the page have a local connection.

It would be the job of the interns to create partnerships with local bookstores to promote bookstores/book clubs, and to promote other future events throughout Chicago.

REVENUE RECOMMENDATIONS

Events:

Gapers Block has a few events throughout the year which brings in revenue and increases their reputation. We recommend partnering with local bars or events that offer similar events to help increase revenue and reputation. Gapers Block can draw people to the events and cover the event on their website, which is great advertising for the event. In exchange, Gapers Block could receive a portion of the profits and sell their merchandise at the events.

Gapers Block Criterium-- Four day bike racing series.

Possible partnerships:

- **Naked Bike Ride:** The Naked Bike Ride was designed to support the message that people should use their bikes using the slogan: Less gas more ass. The event is featured all over the country, and needs a local business to partner with. Since Gapers Block does a biking event, they can draw audience by advertising and covering the event on the website. Gapers Block should be allowed to sell their merchandise, and receive a portion of the profits: <http://chicagonakedride.org/about>.

Gapers Block Hot Dog Cook-off: \$20, cash bar, raffle prizes, \$1 per vote

Possible partnerships:

- Moonshine Brewing company hosts the Wicker Park Chili Cook-off: <http://www.moonshinechicago.com/roadhouse/?p=1526>.
- Neuke's Amateur Cook off: This event occurs at Bacon Fest. It would be a great opportunity for Neuke's to partner with a local Chicago business such as Gapers Block: <http://baconfestchicago.com/>.

Gapers Block BBQ Bowl -- \$20, drink bar, raffle.

Possible partnerships:

- Ribfest: While Ribfest already has sponsors, they only have a few that are local. Since Ribfest is known as a local event, it would be good if they had more local sponsors. As a representative of Gapers Block, the winner of the BBQ Bowl could serve samples and give out Gapers Block stickers with twitter and facebook information: <http://www.ribfest-chicago.com/>.
- Windy City BBQ Classic: October 10-11, 2014: Features 40+ BBQ pit masters who must cook in a no gas no electricity competition. Since this competition features pit masters from all over the country, Gapers Block inner city knowledge of Chicago on their website will help the out of town people get around and learn about Chicago: <http://www.windycitybbqclassic.com/>.
- Smoke Daddy restaurant, located in Chicago at 1840 W. Division Street, has been selling smoked meats of all kinds since it opened in 1994. Along with possibly wanting to be a part of Ribfest, they most definitely would likely want to be a part of the BBQ Bowl mentioned previously. They could serve sample of the best

smoked meats and also sample their delicious sauces. Smoke Daddy sells their original sauces and t-shirts online now at www.smokedaddy.com. There is a good chance that if Gapers Block is covering and being involved with these Barbeque events that a local BBQ joint such as Smoke Daddy would want to advertise on Gapers Block's website. This brings added revenue to Gapers Block and also forms a relationship between the two organizations that are both interested in food focused events around the city.

Gapers Block Dance-A-Thon-- \$10, live music, raffles, drink bar.

Possible partnerships:

- Dance Factory Radio: Gapers Block could partner with Dance Factory Radio and co-host the Dance-A-Thon. Dance Factory radio could provide music and draw people to the event, and Gapers Block could promote Dance Factory radio and their DJ's on their website: <http://www.dancefactoryfm.com/>.
- Post Demon-thon: Gapers block could partner with Demonthon to host a post demonthon event at a local bar, where they would get a percentage of revenue from the bar: <http://www.demonthon.org/>.
- Electric run: Electric run is a 5k run with dancing and glow lights. Participants are encouraged to wear costumes and dress up. At the end of the run, there is a dance party with DJs. This event is for all ages. This would be a good event to partner with because Electric run has events all over the country, and to draw locals in, they should partner with a company that will help drive attendance and can promote their event. In exchange Gapers Block could get a percentage of the profit, and can sell their merchandise at the event: http://electricrun.com/about/#ff_s=oTYSk.

We believe that adding more annual events will not only increase revenue, but will draw in more audience and increase their reputation.

A major event we recommend is **Gapers Block Block Parties**. There are so many block parties and festivals around Chicago in the summer and we feel that it may be beneficial to partake in these block parties.

- Eventually, we would like Gapers Block to possibly take ownership of these events (hence the name, Gapers Block Block Parties), but for now we think that we should build off of events that Gapers Block is currently involved in and also

stick to ones that would appeal to the readers, based on demographic information, and also to potential advertisers.

- These events could include Farmer's Markets, block parties, outside concerts, outside food festivals, and many others. By utilizing the Gapers Block name (i.e. block party) in the future (assuming Gaper Block can finance hidden costs within block parties), it would enhance brand recognition and recall while also showing that Gapers Block wants to be where readers go when they want to be in the know and get the latest and greatest information about Chicago-based events that are relevant to Gapers Block's audience.
- If Gapers Block did want to adopt the Gapers Block Block Party idea some suggestions would include being on relevant PR firms lists of news publications to send information about upcoming events to, gaining revenue through selling merchandise in some of the ways we have mentioned (including asking for a \$5 non-mandatory entry fee for events), and forming reliable partnerships that are cohesive and could potentially lead to financially beneficial advertising for the website.
- A block party that has worked in the past was a 312 Chicago (www.312chi.com) where they hosted exclusive 312 events all over Chicago. They had a Run312, Bike312, Tri312, Sail312, and music events. 312 had ownership of these events with affiliate partners and sponsors. For Gapers Block being a small scale sponsor for an event such as this to make their presence more known and in affiliation with Chicago events of interest would be beneficial. This is the first step in eventually reaching that ownership level of exclusive events around Chicago.

Partnership with Geeks who Drink (Trivia company)

- Trivia at bars and restaurants all around the city
- A partnership with them would be good because the events are already planned and both Gapers Block and Geeks who Drink have a similar target audience so a partnership would be mutually beneficial to both parties.
- Gapers Block could utilize these events for content for their website as well as bring their presence to each planned event by bringing stickers, flyers, etc. This creates brand awareness for Gapers Block and also brand cohesiveness between

the two companies. It shows that Gapers Block wants to be present in the areas where their potential target age demographic of readers may be.

- It also seems that people who play trivia weakly may also be very interested in reading news daily and we want Gapers Block to be these individuals go-to for news and entertainment.
- This could possibly lead to potential advertisers from Geeks Who Drink themselves or people attending the events. Geeks who Drink are currently in the media quite often in news publications such as Chicago Sun Times and Chicago Reader, which would extend Gapers Block reach as well.

Sponsor Chicago Sport & Social

- Gapers Block could provide T-shirts for brand awareness, which could potentially turn into a retail venture. This would be beneficial because it enhances brand awareness for Gapers Block since their logo will be on each recreational teams' uniforms.
- There is also a potential to sell t-shirts and other Gapers Block merchandise at Chicago Sport & Social itself, which could lead to substantial amount of revenue or lead to more readership.
- This is also an opportunity to find writers that already participate in recreational leagues to cover content related to sports for the website. This idea ties in nicely with the previous partnership listed with Geeks Who Drink because many rec league teams go to bars after their games. For instance, Durkin's, a bar near Diversey and Halsted, sponsors numerous teams who also participate in Geeks Who Drink trivia.
- We believe that partnering up with Chicago Sport & Social would provide access to even more events because they host Jam Sessions Concerts on rooftops and on their grounds. Gapers Block could "hype" these events in terms of content on the website and through their social media outlets in turn for a presence at the events and also the ability to sell merchandise at a booth at some of the events.

Merchandise:

Gapers Block offers merchandise which can be sold on their website.

Gapers Block products:

Shirts -- \$12-\$15

Buttons -- \$1.50-\$1.75

Stickers – 5/\$2.50

Posters \$10-\$20

In order to increase revenue, we recommend selling merchandise at the bookstores and/or restaurants that Gapers Block creates partnerships with. Gapers Block should also sell their merchandise at events that they sponsor or host.

Once the Gapers Block logo becomes more recognized, they can sell their merchandise in Chicago souvenir stores, at navy pier stores, and local apparel businesses.

COMMUNITY BUILDING RECOMMENDATIONS

Social Media:

- Gapers Block has a large following on Twitter, but a small Facebook following.
- Since Gapers Block readers range in age from 18-44, social media is an important aspect of building audience and reputation. It is also important to build the social media profile since Gapers Block is solely an online company. Increase on social media platforms will drive readers to Gapersblock.com.
- We recommend hiring an experienced social media intern to increase Gapers Block's online presence. Hiring an intern will allow focus on social media platforms, will increase the online audience, and will draw unique visitors into the website. Since Gapers Block has a large Twitter audience, the intern could focus on other social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. Interns could use social media platforms to do giveaways (such as concert ticket giveaways, restaurant gift cards from restaurants Gapers Block partners with or features and book giveaways from bookstores/book clubs that Gapers Block partners with or features), engage readers in Gapers Block content, share pictures, and drive readers to events.
- The intern would also be responsible for live event tweeting and hashtag creations. For example, the intern could do a live tweeting event of a book club meeting, a author speaking at a bookstore, a concert, a restaurant opening, etc.

Sponsorship/PR:

In order to build ties with the community, increase audience, and create local partnerships, we advise Gapers Block to sponsor local events/teams.

Although Gapers Block already has a good reputation throughout the online journalism community, they could always work to build it up.

- If Gapers Block doesn't fix the problems within the company, then one option is to sell the website. However, it will be hard to sell the company unless it is widely recognized throughout Chicago.
- Increasing their reputation and presence throughout the online community and in Chicago will not only help the website get more audience, it will also be useful in case selling becomes an option. In addition, building the company's presence and reputation can help with funding and grants.
- Gapers Block will need to hire an intern who specializes in public relations. The intern will be responsible for setting up sponsorships that are profitable/beneficial to Gapers Block.
- We recommend visiting these links to view what types of events Gapers Block can sponsor, and how to sponsor them:

<http://startupweekend.org/sponsor/>

<https://www.sponsor-my-event.com/>

<http://sponsorchicago.com/>

<https://www.playerssports.net/page/sports>

<http://bit.ly/1kxZRPW>

<http://bit.ly/SoyT1X>

- We recommend visiting this website to learn how to get the best value out of sponsoring events:

<https://sponsorhub.com/how-it-works>

Building Relationships with Public Relations:

In order to reach as many events as possible, it is important that Gapers Block be up to date on things happening throughout the city. In order to do this, they need to build their reputation, but also build relationships with PR firms.

- Gapers Block should reach out to local PR firms and ask to be on their mailing list for newsletters and press releases if they aren't on them already. This can help Gapers Block find content to potentially feature and it could lead to potential partnerships with their clients if Gapers Block sees value in partnering with some of the PR firms clients. This also could lead to potential advertising opportunities.
- MJPR is a Chicago PR and marketing company that specializes in restaurants and hospitality. They currently follow Gapers Block on Twitter and they could be a good contact to start with. They are always looking for their clients to be potentially featured and this could lead to some good content for the food section of the website. Some of their clients might want to even advertise with Gapers Block.
 - For example, one of their clients is Weber Grill who has a grilling competition coming up in the fall. Weber Grill could find it relevant to advertise their grilling event with Gapers Block.
 - MJPR Contact Info: mjpr@mjprchicago.com 847-302-0178

ALTERNATIVES:

Although Gapers Block has been successful so far, Andrew realizes that turning Gapers Block into a non-profit or selling it could be possible options.

Non-Profit options:

Gapers Block also has the potential to become a non-profit entity. If it decided to go that route the best option for it would be to seek out grants that would award Gapers Block money to produce their own content.

- Some of the benefits for going non-profit that were highlighted by our client include:
 - The ability to hire someone full time to aid in running the website,
 - The ability to pay some of his writers to cover specific beats,
 - The ability to get the entire interface of Gapersblock.com overhauled.

- If Gapers Block did become a non-profit, they could provide full-time salary for one person, establish a fund for special projects, and pay monthly stipends to editors.
- Some other news entities that have seen success as non-profit entities include The Texas Tribune, The California Watch and ProPublica. These sites have found success in creating content that drives readers to view their site on a daily basis. This includes more articles focused on the issues of the day/week within their area.

Grants:

- Knight Foundation
 - The Knight Foundation supports transformational ideas that promote quality journalism, advance media innovation, engage communities and foster the arts. We believe that democracy thrives when people and communities are informed and engaged.
<http://www.knightfoundation.org/>
- Scripps Howard Foundation:
 - Grants are provided for education, social service, arts and culture, and health and human services -- aimed at improving the quality of life in the communities we serve.
<http://www.scripps.com/foundation/programs/communityfund/communityfund.html>
- Alphawood Foundation:
 - Have previously given grants to Chicago-based journalism companies.
<http://www.alphawoodfoundation.org/>
- Field Foundation of Illinois:
 - The Foundation awards grants only to institutions and agencies operating in the fields of urban and community affairs, culture, education, community welfare, health, and environment, primarily serving the people of the Chicago and suburban Cook County with a particular focus on socioeconomically disadvantaged populations.
<http://www.fieldfoundation.org/general-guidelines.html>

- Richard H. Driehaus Foundation:
 - The Richard H. Driehaus Foundation seeks to improve the built environment, to enhance the city through the arts, to use investigative reporting to strengthen our democracy, and to ameliorate the effects of low wages.
<http://www.driehausfoundation.org/>
- Reva and David Logan Foundation:
 - Awards grants to entities that are dedicated to enriching the arts, investigative reporting, or developmental teaching.
<http://www.loganfdn.org/about.html>

If turning Gapers Block into a non-profit does become an option:

- Visit the U.S. Small Business Administration website to find out how to start a non-profit.
- It gives details about business plans, research tips, and what tax papers are necessary. <http://1.usa.gov/1eLUfMj>.
- Another important resource is Grant Space's Knowledge Base which gives instructions and provides links to websites which can be helpful in starting a non-profit. They also provide videos and live chat support: <http://bit.ly/1dzkXux>.

Selling option:

Gapers Block has been around for 11 years, has a strong reputation, a loyal base of readers, and a strong twitter following. All of those aspects combined means that Gapers Block could be sold for a reasonable price.

Based on an article written by the NY Times, a small business would typically go for a multiple of the revenue. Based on conversations with Andrew, he agrees that it would be around three to four times annual revenue, which he says would put Gapers Block around \$100,000.

Broker:

A broker will be the best option to help sell the business rather than selling it yourself. You can find a list of business brokers for Cook county here:

http://www.bizbuysell.com/brokerdirectory/SearchResults.aspx?bp_sreg=28&bp_scouty=710

The U.S. Small Business Administration:

provides articles addressing all the steps necessary to sell your business:

<http://1.usa.gov/1n2dUv3>.