

The Queen's Journal Advisory Board Meeting | October 5th, 2016

Attendance: *Andrew, Victoria, Jane, Jacob, Renee, Jasmit, Max G., Max M., Dave, Mike, Taylor*

Andrew:

Motion #1 – Approval of the Agenda

Approved, passed

Motion #2 – Approval of the Minutes

Approved, passed

Chair's Business

Journal Reports

Editors in Chief

Jane:

- We have been collecting pickup rates and we want to get a better picture before changing pickup locations
- Parallel with last year
 - Obviously want to do better but this is looking promising because we they did last year
 - Social media – we are doing better than last year
 - Consistent traffic
- Views for long form page
 - Increasingly important
 - overed the tragically hip
 - Some of the most impressive views out of all the long forms we've done
 - Important cause we're streamlining and trying to become more cohesive
 - So far we've worked with 56 contributors – huge step forward
 - Sidewalk sale was great
- Training
 - Had contributor training day this weekday
 - Salaried staff will be doing training on the 12th
- Coming up
 - Making improvements to the QJ site
 - Adding in ways to advertise how to contribute
 - Putting out surveys for staff
 - At least once per term

Mike:

- Pick up rates, who is doing this?

Jacob:

- Andrey is doing them every week because having a week to week basis makes it more reliable - the way it was in the past wasn't really giving us any info – can't do anything with 1 or 2 weeks of pick up rates
- Once we get this month's numbers we'll asses them

Mike:

- What's the timeline for action in moving the stands once you have the numbers?

Jane:

- We aren't sure entirely what our assessment and action will involve - e.g. the Journal stand in BioSci is very bad – so we aren't sure if we should move the stand or scrap it all together
- Could just be needing better signage

Max:

- We pay the university for these stands – PPS. Don't know how much we pay but will look into it
 - Clarification: Some of the places aren't actual stands and we just stick them on top of radiators which are obviously comes at no cost to us

Dave:

- I image the QC has good pick up rates?

Jacob:

- For now were looking at 50% pick up rate
 - But sometimes we don't know some are 100% pickup rate but we don't know how legit that is because a janitor could be throwing it out
- In the QC the stand closest to us (the AMS boardroom) were at 50% but the 2 in the food court aren't the greatest

Max M.:

- JDUC outside of Khao: past issue was 60%, one before that was 68%, 1st issue was 39%, and August 2nd was 100%

Andrew:

- What's your pickup rate goal?

Jacob:

- Above 50%+

Jane:

- Keep in mind we didn't have the data before so we just want to improve on it

Business Manager

- Total sales revenue for Sept. is \$1603.40
 - Bit lower than we had budgeted for: \$2300
 - Didn't anticipate how much deterioration we've had with the business companies
 - A lot of people are coming back for discounts – Amey's is around \$2K, restaurants like Windmills is 50% of rate
- Another problem we faced with new position transition – Renee's position
 - Took the month of September to figure it out
 - Communication issues on both parts but we're good now
- Operational gaps and needs
 - I personally didn't have formal training, only got a transition manual
 - Training from past business manager, which is learn as you go, is fine but we may need to put into place a training process

- Worth hiring early on in 2nd term to help with the transition of predecessor to successor
- Have JB board train incoming person
- Formal training for entire business staff – just so they have a foundation to build off of
- What I would like this role to be going forward
 - Snapchat geofilters
 - On Fridays have a geo filter and have something to do with the issue
 - Pinpoint heavily populated places on campus
 - Diff places have diff \$\$
 - We can even have the filters sponsored: ‘brought to you by..’

Dave:

- Thought: the need for your position to be here for the summer, go to Toronto meet people in newspaper and then coming back and putting that training in place
- Last 3 years the position hasn't been here so let's talk about this at another time and critically look into it

Mike:

- Sept – November makes or breaks in the first few months – they usually make most of their revenue in this time which determines the situation because this makes or breaks the business in the first few months

Jane:

- Something that can be put into place this year is recommendations to the EIC on what should be put in place for next year and solve problems since we have a loss of institutional memory – not leave it until Apr. 30th

Victoria:

- PS what's happening with the web advertisements? Some of them are trashy and do not align with the serious tone we go from

Max M./Jane:

- The trashy ads were from Viscus(?)/Google Ads – Jane disabled them the day before this meeting

Jacob:

- Going back to what Mike just said - it may be true businesses make or break in this time but personally our production picks up halfway through the year so maybe this doesn't apply to us
 - If we look at our Google Analytics, we pick up around Nov/Dec and then maybe Jan/Feb
 - If we market ourselves during this time, then we are okay

Dave:

- Agreed - I think ultimately Mike means that being around in the summer is a valuable period for back development so that when Sept. comes you guys can hit the ground running and make the most of Sept.

Mike:

- I realize we are comparing two different businesses if we are talking about Tricolour and QJ but presumably for the Journal if you had the majority of your advertising contracts (for the people you know who will be using ad spaces throughout the course of the year) for when students show up then that will help you with budgeting and how hard you'll need to work to meet your budget
- When students show up is when advertisers want their ads in the papers, right?

Andrew:

- We can talk about that later on in the year (training and smoother transitions)

Max M.:

- It should be codified if that's the expectation, we should change that moving forward
- Past few years it's been implied you can work from home so the contract should definitely reflect these changes

Everyone:

- Agreed, something we will change for next year

AMS Reports

Dave & Mike:

- No changes and nothing to add

Question Period

- nothing

Old Business

- nothing

New Business

- nothing

Discussion Period

Review of Summer End Financials

Mike:

- Do you know of any accounting irregularities/delays that would have skewed these numbers?
 - For example, the 0s under the 'national advertising revenue: budgeted \$2000, reported \$0' has it just not been booked quite yet? Can you please provide and accurate picture for this 0?

Max M.:

- So it's accounted for when it's received. They should be coming soon. It is unearned revenue

Mike:

- So maybe if there is a disruption, account for it in the future so you have a better sense of your cash-flow moving forward

Andrew:

- Is the shortfall in the local revenue tied to in-kind deals?

Max M.:

- Yes

Salary for WIG Internships

Mike:

- What's going on here? Why was it almost doubled?

Dave:

- That was a communication error on our end – the contract didn't have the time period for WIG internship on it but we didn't think it was morally right to pay for 8 months spread out as opposed to 12 months

Victoria:

- Should note that that should have been figured out earlier in the year because as the person on that contract I didn't get paid for about 1.5-2 months into the summer so..

Dave:

- I don't think anyone was aware that it was a 12 month instead of 8 months
- Emma is going to make a 'what not to do' guide for all services in a transition manual for next year

In-Kind Business Strategy

Dave:

- Any in-kind deals that come in need to be both revenue and expensed against it for CRA purposes because they are taxable
- More so for compromising the integrity of it- we don't want to go down the route of a tax violation
- As well, if we look at this issue alone the deals that are given there's almost a \$3K difference on a deficit of \$30K from last year
- If this holds true for the month, we are close to breaking even
- We need to look into the process of in-kind deals
 - Who's looking into them, who's checking off on them, and why do we have them? No other financially viable ways than relying on old customers?

Max M.:

- Discounts aren't coming from the sales reps- they're coming into the email because they're used to using that email to get in contact with current business manager
- I wouldn't really call them in kind would call them discounted rates – When they ask for discounts based on last year's rates, I don't really feel like I'm in the position to strong arm them especially when they've given QJ business for so long at a specific rate. Not great business practise however I fear we're going to lose them as clients especially with the way the print media industry is

Dave:

- Agreed because having some money is better than no money but now we need to go out and find more ways to advertise

Max M.:

- Yeah the sales team has been going out and not giving out discounted rate

Mike:

- How did you make the rate card then? Maybe look into adjusting it to the market value

- Generally, if you know your rate card won't be realized in the real world then the budget shouldn't be constructed around it because targets will never be reached – there should be more urgency in diversifying the revenue streams if this is the case
- The QJ's issue isn't about the expenses occurred
 - Have done a phenomenal job of cutting expenses in the past few years but main issue is loss of revenue
- Falls on the business team to make enough revenue to cover
- Solution is either find ways to increase print revenue or get the website revenue up
 - One of the reasons we improved the site – that it would be a revenue stream

Andrew:

- The business teams need to audit and take an exterior look at how to keep the relationship alive – it's hard to be like say 'prices are going up this year' and even harder being a student organization
- You alluded to it but tell them – but show them the value added – 'there are rising costs to running a paper however if you want to reach out to students this is how you do it'
 - More about what they think, not what we think of the QJ – we need to show them what their benefits are
 - That would alleviate loss

Mike:

- Back to in-kind strategy
 - When you make a deal with Dominos for example – \$300 goes toward pizza and \$500 goes to local revenue. Where is the \$300 reflected?

Max M:

- \$300 would be reflected in the volunteer appreciation

Andrew:

- What other in-kind deals?

Max:

- Only other one is Black Dog. Real rate is \$565 and we get half of it in gift cards

Mike:

- How do you administrate the use of the gift cards?

Jacob:

- Actually so I have a few and from last year we had contests so we give them out that way, to the public
 - So we use them for promotional purposes
 - Also, we have an end of the year dinner where all the staff go out and its paid for by the Journal through these gift-cards

Victoria:

- Important to note that we can't order alcohol, exercise the same practises as the AMS

Max:

- Last year they were also used for incentives for sales staff

Mike:

- Right now it's not that concerning – non taxable – promotions are all good but then they get weird with like random bonuses and stuff for staff so keep that in mind

Dave:

- In the past there were issues with the Journal staff misusing them – we have been good about this in the past few years but now we're good so let's continue this
- Side note: what happened with the Imaginus piece?

Max:

- I went through old emails and it said \$100 so unsure where the \$500 should have come from (Dave says: from last year's numbers)
- This is my fault then; the issue I'm having is that I need to go through old emails to find rates

Mike:

- We need to start to look at the a more standardized way to get rates. Surfing through emails is helpful however conversations happen outside of emails so then they are rendered useless

Taylor:

- Talk to Lyn Perry
- There's a customer add on where you can keep track of different interactions with people overtime and then you'll have a direct plug in to the accounting software

Andrew:

- Does this make sense?

Max M.:

- Yes

Jacob:

- So from this conversation we come back to our main problem – Journal has no institutional memory
 - We don't have standard pricing, changes year by year with the rate card
 - Training as well
 - As well as relationships - we're just picking them up and our advertisers are telling us what they were paying
- We had a fulltime staff member who was let go and it seems a lot of the issues are arising from that
 - If our issues are arising from that, perhaps a discussion needs to happen about reinstating a full-time staff member to restore this institutional memory. Seems like over the past 5 years we've really struggled so let's see

Mike:

- I am intrigued. Would be more interested in this if there is case that we can positively co-relate the full-time person and the pretty good advertising revenue we used to have
- Not sure how we've managed to shave off almost 95% of on campus advertising revenue from \$72,000 to \$2,000 over 4 years.
 - This could be because of market changes but I think this conversation means we need to bring back a business manager

Dave:

- We benefit a lot from Lyn and her willingness to want to work with the Journal
- We need to leverage that relationship – she is more than willing to help

Andrew:

- Let's address the elephant in the room
 - We don't want come into this office a lot
 - Meet outside of this office – utilize resources that you have the right to use
 - The more the AMS knows – on the business side – won't hurt you editorially
 - Note: the only way having a fulltime person to come in is if your top line and bottom line expand

Victoria:

- In terms of institutional memories: are we uploading these JB meetings? When speaking to others, they don't even know these meetings happen, forget what's discussed in them
 - We can have these conversations and they may bring change this year but it won't continue on next year if we don't attempt to create institutional memory

Jasmit:

- Yeah there's been a lot of fall out but we've been getting better and better, so maybe a fulltime person isn't always necessary – we've made good progress on office admin side

Jane:

- Was in out of Janice and Lyn's office all the time and it is a hurdle that can be overcome. (Max M. isn't part of the editorial process to luckily doesn't care for the whole AMS thing – feels fine using these resources)
- Needs to be an engrained part of our habits

Mike:

- Was interested to see the business and editorial time was delineated
- Max you should have no qualms with the AMS office which you don't which is nice
 - Andrew mentioned AMS for HR purposes for Jane and Jacob

Max:

- With Renee I was focused on a strong eye in the beginning but now we're ready to let Renee take over the team and now I'm here to clean up relationships

Andrew:

- Last thing- for reports please get them in the day before so that I can put them in the agenda

Motion to adjourn

Moved