...The Art of Doing (More) With Less

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G3: Genes | Genomes | Genetics

GENETICS
The challenge?

How do you meet Board of Directors, Publications Committee, & Editorial Office’s strategic goals (e.g. launch a new journal, new initiatives with current journal, increase revenue, decrease turnaround times), with a static full-time staff of 2 and limited budget?

(all while being self-published & requiring 5.5 hours of sleep each night)?
The GSA seeks to foster a unified science of genetics and to maximize its intellectual and practical impact.

GENETICS – the flagship journal of the GSA since 1916 – has been evolving. Recent strategic changes – and a paradigm shift – included:

- Changing scope statement (emphasize significance and an advance in the field)
- Increase in rejections and RRs, decrease in acceptance rate
- Led to a significant number of unhappy and confused authors
“This is a very important book. In fact, it’s too important to publish.”
Since January 2010

Migrated to Highwire’s H20
Designed new page/article PDFs
Transitioned to new subscription vendor
Developed YeastBook
Went online only
Increased promotion at scientific meetings
Expanded links to model organism databases
Whittled our turnaround time to 34d submission to first decision

plus the usual day-to-day of peer review, manuscript handling, production, publishing, customer service issues...
Why a new journal?

- serve GSA members & genetics community by providing a venue for publishing high-quality, useful data sets, rapid dissemination of information, links to model organism databases from articles
- need for venue to publish GWAS, genetic screens, sequence of novel species, population data (QTL studies), novel mutant collections, genome maps
- open access
- strengthen the position of GENETICS
Getting it done without getting overwhelmed

1. Researched options
2. Determined goals – broke down into timelines, priorities, resource allocations, ties to overall
3. Developed plan
4. Implemented plan
5. Evaluated & regrouped – remain(ed) agile!
   Curve balls appear out of nowhere....
Part of the answer?

Inexpensive labor & low-cost marketing initiatives

- Interns & EIC’s admin – created mailing lists for promotion
- Ad swaps – related journals
- Email blasts to GSA members, GSA meeting attendees, GENETICS authors, editorial board & Board of Directors, labs
- Email blast to ASHG members (as well as discount on page charges), with a targeted appeal
- Created promotional materials for editors to use
- Leverage Open Access community – libraries, PLoS, OA user groups & conferences
- GSA-sponsored incentives like waived page charges in G3 or GENETICS for all editors
**Used best practice & process (then tweaked)**

- Leveraged strengths - model GENETICS’ policies, workflow (including templates), editorial board, the GSA’s membership, reputation and history, author & reviewer loyalty to GENETICS, customer service, editorial office staff experience in marketing, writing, libraries, policy

- Economies of scale - editorial office, vendors, GSA staff, current subscribers (institutional) and markets, style guides and page designs, databases, strategic planning research from GSA related to journals

- Automation - ms workflow/production

- Avoid re-inventing the wheel - what already works? What’s broken?
Some tasks were the same (e.g. mss in review, infrastructure types of processes)
Others were different (or new)

- Marketing materials (logo, branding)
- Mission and scope
- Editorial board recruitment, profiles and training
- Activities of ‘registering’ journal (ISSN, PubMed, CrossRef/DOIs, indexing, authors’ licenses) in OA environs
- Expansion into new author & reader communities – marketing activities & customized ‘mission statements’ targeted to specific niches
Lesson learned #2811: Prioritize

Some items are pricey (time, money, opportunity cost) but deemed worth the investment

- Logo
- BenchPress/Highwire
- Advertising (Science, Cold Spring Harbor Genome Mtg, Newswire sponsorship, Dev Bio Meeting booth)
- Phone calls with each new editor (~70) – training on policy and process
- Mailing list purchases (ISI)
- Press releases (contract science writer)
Duck and cover?

- Tough time finding **the right** EIC (~5 months) – trickle-down effect
- Commitment to launch date early on (sans EIC)
- Schedule delays (deliverables)
- Too many simultaneous projects
- Surprise timesinks (legal, CC license, education....)
- Editors, reviewers not fully understanding G3 scope (in practice) – much discussion for about 75% of the papers – what weren’t we communicating effectively?
- Cultural shift (for au, ed, reviewers, community)
- “I have four papers I could submit to G3”......
- GSA Executive Director left
The Zen of GENETICS and G3:

- stick with schedules and The Plan
- keep GENETICS running smoothly – service levels to authors, editors, reviewers, and institutions
- keep an eye on the budget
- promote the brand – get content found and read
- stay agile – move within the micro- and macro-views with ease
- measure results and re-adjust
- hire part-time person (fall 2011)
‘We just might find....we get what we need...’

“In order to be free I had to make certain adjustments.”