

# MARKETING PLAN



*Where Innovation Meets Opportunity*



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	Introduction . . . . .	.2
II.	Target Audiences . . . . .	.2
	• Primary Audiences . . . . .	.2
	• Additional Audiences . . . . .	.2
III.	Situation Analysis . . . . .	3
	• About Crossroads Coalition . . . . .	3
	• SWOT Analysis . . . . .	3
IV.	Marketing Plan . . . . .	4
	i. Create an Image . . . . .	5
	• Branding . . . . .	5
	• Quality of Life Opportunities . . . . .	.7
	ii. Establish Credible Authority . . . . .	8
	• Perception Survey . . . . .	8
	• Viability Studies . . . . .	8
	iii. Share the Image . . . . .	9
	• Paid Media . . . . .	9
	iv. Tell the Story . . . . .	11
	• Earned Media . . . . .	11
	• Business Executive Ambassador Program . . . . .	12
	• Virtual Round Tables . . . . .	13
	• Trade Show Participation and Email Marketing . . . . .	13
	• Social Media . . . . .	13
	• Website . . . . .	15
V.	Measuring Outcomes . . . . .	15
	• Short-Term Outcomes . . . . .	15
	• Intermediate-Term Outcomes . . . . .	15
	• Long-Term Outcomes . . . . .	15



## I. INTRODUCTION

In 2012, Cranford Johnson Robinson Woods was chosen as Crossroads Coalition's marketing partner. CJRW was asked to provide marketing and branding services. The spectrum of the services includes branding the organization as a business-friendly ally for new and existing business partners in East Arkansas. Under the main branding umbrella developed for Crossroads Coalition, CJRW also branded the coalition's business retention and expansion program, now called Business Forward East Arkansas. The new brand image was also utilized in the development of a website and collateral materials.

CJRW's deliverables also included facilitating a regional marketing summit in Wynne, Arkansas. Feedback from this summit was critical in the development of this marketing plan. Crossroads Coalition coordinated outreach to different stakeholders in the eight-county region. The marketing summit provided a venue to discuss short-, intermediate-, and long-term marketing strategies. The team evaluated strengths and weaknesses for the region, and how these attributes should frame the communication strategy for East Arkansas's economic development efforts. Attendees were also asked to provide input on major economic development opportunities and quality of life selling points for their respective areas.

The marketing plan also includes best practices for communication efforts in economic development. Recommendations will highlight different aspects of the marketing process, including: research, branding, paid media, earned media, social media, and digital communications.

## II. TARGET AUDIENCES

### Primary Audiences

- Location consultants
- C-suite executives in manufacturing, distribution logistics, aviation, and food processing
- Entrepreneurs

### Additional Audiences

- Economic development partners
- State, regional, and local political leaders



### III. SITUATION ANALYSIS

#### About Crossroads Coalition

Crossroads Coalition is a state-approved, eight-county regional economic development partnership working to cultivate opportunities for growth and progress in eastern Arkansas. The Crossroads Coalition region includes Crittenden, Cross, Lee, Monroe, Phillips, Poinsett, St. Francis, and Woodruff counties.

The mission of Crossroads Coalition is as follows:

To promote broad-based development through education and workforce, community, leadership, and economic development.

The vision of Crossroads Coalition is as follows:

To be a catalyst for continuing improvement of prosperity, opportunity, and other quality of life considerations (such as employment, housing, education, health care and recreation) in the region.

#### SWOT Analysis

The current strategic blueprint for Crossroads Coalition includes a comprehensive SWOT analysis for the eight-county region. During the marketing summit, members of the Crossroads Coalition economic development team worked together on a SWOT analysis focused on a communication strategy. The following analysis provides key attributes and threats that must be considered in an integrated communication strategy.

#### Strengths

- Low cost of labor
- Low cost of land
- World-class workforce training through community colleges
- Business-friendly regulations
- Strength of state and local governments with a balanced budget for the past four years
- Geographic location with easy access and prime position for distribution logistics

#### Weaknesses

- Limited economic development resources
- Limited volunteer teams for economic development efforts
- Perception of low-skilled workforce
- Issues in K-12 education in certain school districts
- Limited of broadband internet access and cell coverage in some areas
- Slow adaptation of 21st century lifestyle
- Lack of personal responsibility in community improvement



### ***Opportunities***

- Unique ADTEC program, unlike any other in the country
- Undervalued stock
- Strong state economy and manageable economic growth
- Lowest property tax in the area, and one of the lowest in the nation
- Availability of natural gas and low cost of energy
- New companies coming to the area have the ability to impact communities and make a difference through job creation and social engagement
- Local, state and regional leadership development programs
- Muscadine and table grape growing for juice and wine production
- Regional economic development team

### ***Threats***

- Limited entertainment and cultural amenities
- Limited community involvement
- Local and regional thinking
- No junior achievement-like initiative for high schools
- Steep competition from northern Mississippi's strong state economic development policies.
- Lack of local incentives in some cities

## **IV. MARKETING PLAN**

In 2009, Governor Mike Beebe unveiled his Strategic Plan for Economic Development. One of the key components of this plan is the transition to regionally based economic development. This approach has proven beneficial for rural communities with declining populations. Many of these communities lack the infrastructure to compete in a global marketplace.

The eight counties in the Crossroads region exhibit many of the issues described above. This marketing plan provides strategic recommendations that Crossroads Coalition can facilitate. However, successful implementation of these strategies will depend on the active participation of economic developers in each county. The relevance and footprint of the tactics recommended will have a bigger impact when implemented as a region. Additionally, opportunity costs will decrease when pursued as a joint effort. As a result, the region will achieve synergy from referrals and cohesive messaging for East Arkansas.

The following marketing plan outlines specific marketing recommendations for Crossroads Coalition. The tactics are categorized within four different strategies:

- i. Create an Image
- ii. Establish Credible Authority
- iii. Share the Image
- iv. Tell the Story



The Coalition's staff and other economic development authorities will be able to implement several tactics of the plan. However, certain tactics will require the assistance of a marketing firm.

**i. Create an Image:** Rebuild the image of the region's economic development story by showcasing tangible assets in target industries and quality of life opportunities.

### Branding

In 2013, Crossroads Coalition invested funds in rebranding the organization. The new brand includes a logo and tagline. The logo highlights one of the key aspects of the region: multiple access points via interstate, railroad, air, and river. The combination of the graphics and the name of the organization allows Crossroads Coalition a credible image as a central access point to the state and the nation. These visuals will be a valuable asset on new business efforts in the distribution logistics sector.

When new branding elements are established, it is sometimes challenging to implement the transition and maintain consistency of the new brand elements. The following items provide simple branding guidelines for logo usage.

- The new official colors for Crossroads Coalition are blue, green, and orange. These colors provide a lighter, brighter, and more current representation of the previous logo.
- When working with vendors, the Coalition must provide its official colors when visual elements are needed. Below, are two industry-accepted official color classifications for the Crossroads logo. Vendors and partners will always need to know the PMS colors or the CMYK breakdown of those colors.

	PMS 7704		100 C 25 M 15 Y 5 K
	PMS 7417		0 C 85 M 100 Y 0 K
	PMS 362		71 C 10 M 100 Y 0 K

- The logo design package includes horizontal, vertical, and social media executions. These options will help manage the brand image when partners or vendors need flexibility on how to incorporate the logo with their materials.
- The official logo used in print and online publications may vary in proportional size but cannot otherwise be enhanced or modified in any way.



The Crossroads Coalition includes a large number of partners. In order to maintain a cohesive messaging strategy, it would be ideal if the logos of all partners complemented the design or colors of the Crossroads Coalition brand. Since logo updates require the investment of marketing funds, logo update opportunities should be considered when budget allows.

In addition to the graphic treatment, the branding also includes a new positioning statement. The statement, “Where Innovation Meets Opportunity,” identifies the region as a hub for opportunity and maintains the central location brand element established by the graphic treatment.

While the word innovation provides a powerful brand statement, Crossroads Coalition will need facts and success stories that validate this statement. There are many negative perceptions associated with the Arkansas Delta, and the word innovation is meant to break through the clutter of those preconceived notions. In order to gain credibility, the statement would need supporting information highlighting innovation in the region. Many associate innovation with complex technology. However, innovation for the Crossroads region can be defined by other success measurements including an entrepreneurial spirit, innovation in classrooms, or improvements on day-to-day business methods within the coalition’s target industries.

The color palette used in the new branding should be incorporated organically through all communication efforts. The new brand colors are already part of the branding identity of other coalition programs such as the Business Forward East Arkansas and Delta Young Professionals.

Moving forward, the coalition should focus on a messaging strategy driven by target industries. This strategy will help Crossroads Coalition become a thought leader in industries with existing success stories. By doing this, site selectors will think of the Crossroads region when recruiting within those target industries.

Crossroads Coalition should also focus on fact-driven messaging. Ideally, these facts would be rankings or assessments from third-party validators. These assessments could be reputable business publications, research and development organizations, industry associations, or statewide economic development entities such as AEDC. Statements from these organizations provide a higher level of credibility. Many times, that credible message is the first barrier before companies consider a region as a viable option for relocation.

Finally, Crossroads Coalition should leverage its relationships with companies currently doing business in the area. These companies are living case studies of success achieved in the eight-county region. However, these partnerships need to be approached tactfully to avoid a perception that Crossroads Coalition is recruiting competing companies. The Coalition and its partners should have cohesive messaging when requesting testimonials. Business owners should understand the value of a region with economic stability. All talking points should address how regional economic growth can be beneficial to their company and their employees without risking cannibalization of the current workforce.



### **Quality of Life Opportunities**

Although tourism growth is not one of the main responsibilities of Crossroads Coalition, quality of life issues play an important role when companies decide where to relocate. Since Crossroads Coalition will need a fundraising effort in order to implement a marketing strategy, this plan prioritizes economic development initiatives. However, there are opportunities and partnerships the coalition can take advantage of without incurring additional expenses.

**Earned Media:** Crossroads Coalition should explore working closely with the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism travel writer assigned to the east Arkansas Delta, Kim Williams. The coalition could verify that the latest attractions for the region are being properly highlighted, and that the region is properly represented when promoting Arkansas as a travel destination. Crossroads Coalition should also explore a partnership with *Oxford American*. In this partnership, Crossroads Coalition could discuss a regular feature on the eastern Arkansas region. Many stories in *OA* already highlight parts of the Crossroads region, but this series would be packaged as a year of Southern culture in the eastern Arkansas Delta. The Coalition and *OA* would discuss the most strategic way to partner in the development of content and visuals. The angle of each feature should complement the editorial calendar for the magazine. For example, for the music issue, Crossroads could pitch the music scene rich in Southern flavor found in the region. The next issue could highlight how Southern culture is experienced at its best in the area through food rich in local tradition. Each feature should highlight the eight counties in the region, but at the same time successfully represent *OA's* editorial goals. *Oxford American* publishes four issues every year.

**Messaging:** While most messaging elements will focus on target industries, included will be quality of life highlights such as the unique and rich-in-history attractions located in the east Arkansas Delta. Additionally, companies need to know their employees' families will have access to academically driven education options such as key public school districts, charter schools, and private schools.

**Creative:** The Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism developed a regional tourism book for the Arkansas Delta. This book has not been updated in a few years. The Crossroads region could be missing an opportunity to promote new attractions in the area, or newly restored historical attractions. Crossroads Coalition should explore a partnership with Parks and Tourism to update the book and develop a fiscally responsible plan to keep the book updated. At the same time, both entities should discuss strategies to bring that content to the interactive world through website content, a social media content strategy, and blogger outreach initiatives.

**Online:** The Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism offers a media portal where partners can access quality photography by region. Crossroads Coalition should utilize this tool to enhance its new website without incurring additional photography expenses. By doing this, the coalition can prioritize its funds in gathering photography that highlights its target industries.



**ii. Establish Credible Authority:** Gather support, insight, and testimonials from partners and prospects

### **Perception Survey**

The east Arkansas Delta region has in-state perception issues known to most Arkansans. However, these issues might not be the same ones site selection consultants are evaluating. Site selection consultants are the gateway to many new business opportunities. The coalition should benchmark what site selectors currently know about the Crossroads region, and what type of messaging is needed for recruitment materials in order to address those issues. Ultimately, site selection consultants report to C-level executives who make decisions based on recommendations provided. Crossroads Coalition should also assess the key benefits these executives want to read about in any literature provided or hear about in development meetings.

In order to manage the cost of this type of research study, Crossroads Coalition could establish a partnership with local higher education institutions focused on research. The study could include interviews with site selectors who have formerly visited the area, in order to understand their firsthand experience. The survey should measure more than purely business-related issues. The survey could target the quality of life misperceptions Crossroads should address in future communication.

A viable option for this partnership is utilizing the practicum project that students from the Clinton School of Public Service conduct in the region. The study would help Crossroads Coalition gain access to necessary information to move forward with research-based communication strategies. At the same time, students from the Clinton School would gain insight into the challenges of economic development in the eastern Arkansas Delta.

### **Viability Studies**

During the marketing summit, economic development partners for the Crossroads region agreed on two different groups of industries. One of these is industries currently doing business in the region from which Crossroads Coalition can claim as success stories. There are also industries listed in the Strategic Blueprint as industries with potential in the region, but the market has not been tapped. The following are industries currently operating in the eight-county region:

- Manufacturing, with many success stories in steel production and chemical plants
- Distribution logistics, accentuated by the accessibility of the region and proximity to FedEx distribution center in Memphis
- Food manufacturing, with impressive credentials in the rice production segment
- Aviation—maintenance and repair, distribution and manufacturing

Studies on these industries would provide Crossroads Coalition with a rich communication strategy containing success stories and benchmark studies from a reputable research entity. However, viability studies for underdeveloped industries with potential should take priority in order to maximize any available budget. Additionally, without further delay, Crossroads Coalition should move forward in business recruitment efforts in the well-established industries for the region.

Viability studies should be a priority for the following industries:

- Biotechnology
- Information Technology
- Agriculture Technology



**iii. Share the Image:** Implement highly targeted outreach in strategic media channels to raise awareness of the region and drive target audience members to deeper sources of information.

### **Paid Media**

Once research studies are completed, Crossroads Coalition should develop a comprehensive advertising campaign. The core messaging strategy for this initiative should include the branding elements established as the main assets for the region and feedback from perception surveys and viability studies. The success of this campaign would rely heavily on the communication channels used to propagate the message. The following provides a suggested paid media strategy outline for Crossroads Coalition.

Crossroads should maximize exposure of the advertising message promoting economic development opportunities in the eight-county region by implementing a multi-tiered media mix consisting of the following media.

- 1) Industry trade magazines
  - 2) Industry trade websites
  - 3) Site selection consultant magazines
  - 4) Site selection consultant websites
  - 5) Local business publications
- This recommendation is based on Mediamark Research & Intelligence (MRI) media usage data. Print and online index the highest against an executive audience age 55+ with \$250K household income:

o Newspaper	255
o Internet	175
o Outdoor	139
o Magazine	136
o TV	70
o Radio	59
  - Of the top indexing media above, Crossroads Coalition should concentrate all advertising support in print and online for the following reasons:
    - o Concentrating media support in these two media will allow Crossroads to have a much stronger presence in each medium.
    - o General local business, C-level specific, site selection, and industry-specific publications will allow the coalition to target decision makers in key opportunity markets, within an environment that they turn to in order to seek out news and information.
    - o General local business, C-level specific, site selection, and industry-specific websites will allow us to reach the same audience while they are searching for information online.
    - o The Forbes/Google 2009 Insight Study “The Rise of the Digital C-Suite: How Executives Locate and Filter Business Information” states that:
      - Generation PC executives (ages 40 to 50) who are now assuming leadership positions, access information online more frequently than older executives.
      - Internet is the C-suites top information sources, finding it to be more valuable than other media.
      - Members of the C-suite search for information themselves online as opposed to delegating.
      - Executives in IT are the most prevalent users of the Internet.



- o While newspaper indexes high against the target audience, a strong newspaper presence across the region will be cost-prohibitive.
- o Outdoor also indexes well but there would be too much waste in terms of reaching consumers outside of the primary target audience. The cost to provide sufficient coverage of each market would also be cost-prohibitive.
- In order to change current perception, Crossroads Coalition should concentrate advertising support in Arkansas as well as in key states and cities within the region where business is able and willing to relocate to the Crossroads region. These markets will be narrowed based on potential new business markets provided by the coalition.
  - o Arkansas
  - o Texas - Dallas
  - o Louisiana - Shreveport, Monroe
  - o Tennessee - Memphis, Nashville
  - o Mississippi - Jackson
  - o Missouri - St. Louis, Kansas City, Springfield
  - o Oklahoma - Oklahoma City, Tulsa
- Providing advertising support for majority of the year will keep the Crossroads region top of mind to key decision makers. In order to achieve this, staggering the advertising support by medium is recommended in order to cost-effectively achieve this on-going presence.
- A mix of industry trade magazines and websites such as those listed below will reach C-suite executives, business decision makers, and thought leaders in key industries.
  - o Manufacturing - *Industry Week*, *Manufacturing Engineering*, [Manufacturing.net](http://Manufacturing.net)
  - o Agriculture - [Agriculture.com](http://Agriculture.com)
  - o Distribution - *Industrial Distribution*, [inndist.com](http://inndist.com)
  - o Food Processing - *Food Technology*, *Food Business News*, [FoodProcessing.com](http://FoodProcessing.com)
  - o Technology Manufacturing - *Manufacturing Engineering*, *Bio IT World*, [sme.org/manufacturingengineering](http://sme.org/manufacturingengineering)

This list will be expanded depending on discoveries from the different industry viability studies.

- The following types of site selection magazines and websites are recommended to target site selection consultants who work with industry decision makers to locate (or relocate) the best site for their company.
  - o *Site Selection Magazine*, [SiteNet.com](http://SiteNet.com)
  - o *Business Facilities*, [BusinessFacilities.com](http://BusinessFacilities.com)
  - o *Area Development*, [FastFacility.com](http://FastFacility.com), [FacilityLocations.com](http://FacilityLocations.com)
  - o *Expansion Solutions*, [ExpansionSolutionsMagazine.com](http://ExpansionSolutionsMagazine.com)
  - o Expansion Management Site Selection Newsletter (from Industry Week)



- Local business publications and websites in Arkansas and the key target markets will also be considered to reach business leaders and decision makers.
  - *Arkansas Business*
  - *Northwest Arkansas Business Journal*
  - *Memphis Business Journal*, [bizjournals.com/Memphis](http://bizjournals.com/Memphis)
  - *St. Louis Business Journal*, [bizjournals.com/St. Louis](http://bizjournals.com/St.Louis)
  - *OKC Journal Record*, [journalrecord.com](http://journalrecord.com)
  - *Dallas Business Journal*, [bizjournals.com/Dallas](http://bizjournals.com/Dallas)
  - *Mississippi Business Journal*, [MSBusiness.com](http://MSBusiness.com)
- As the budget allows, Crossroads Coalition should also consider utilizing online ad networks that will allow targeted advertising presence on national websites. Geographic parameters will be established based on markets with companies within the coalition’s target industries. Online ad networks also provide the ability to specifically reach the C-level executives and business decision makers in key markets. This would allow the coalition to advertise locally on websites such as:
  - Forbes
  - Fortune
  - Money
  - MSNBC
  - CNN
  - CEO

In order to finalize a detailed media plan, Crossroads Coalition would need to provide budget parameters based on available funding. Budget parameters are the best way to prioritize between the strategies suggested in this plan.

Media expenses can be sizeable. In order to minimize financial burden, Crossroads Coalition could explore media placement opportunities as a co-op approach between economic development officials within the region. Sometimes this approach can be challenging from a messaging strategy point of view. It is important to have clear understanding of the approved messaging strategy for the region.

**iv. Tell the Story:** Improve the image of the Crossroads region by securing partners willing to tell the East Arkansas business story. Strengthen deeper sources of information.

### **Earned Media**

The success of the tactical execution of an earned media strategy will rely heavily on a regional approach. It could prove challenging to achieve media coverage with a pitch that has a narrow angle. While a story on a specific city or county might not be broad enough, talking about the region’s leadership in steel manufacturing, for example, would provide an attractive and comprehensive angle for a reporter. This type of approach would require extensive collaboration between economic development officials and business owners. From an execution point of view, seamless implementation can be challenging. The 24-hour news cycle many times requires additional efforts to meet a reporter’s timeline. In order to improve effectiveness, the earned



media strategy should be managed by one entity with collaboration from relevant partners. Crossroads Coalition, or a public relations firm representing the region, should facilitate efforts with the media.

Crossroads Coalition's earned media program should include the following activities:

- Create a steady stream of news to increase the visibility for the Crossroads region, its targeted industries, and programs that foster entrepreneurship and innovation in the area.
- Pursue placements in planned editorial opportunities related to targeted industries, economic development, job growth strategies and other topics.
- Leverage exclusives, advances and day-of news pitching and bundling of announcements together to maximize results.
- Develop a calendar of announcements around news and topics of importance.
- Continually manage and update a comprehensive database of targeted reporters and editors at regional, local, and industry levels.
- Facilitate media interviews.

Using the themes developed for outreach to traditional media, Crossroads Coalition could identify key bloggers important in relevant sectors. The following list provides a few examples of relevant blogs.

- Site Selection Group
- Business Facilities Blog
- Economic Development Division
- CEOs for Cities Blog
- EDPro Weblog

### **Business Executive Ambassador Program**

With more than to 500 companies already doing business in the Crossroads region, there are executives who can share what it's like to succeed in business in the east Arkansas Delta. As an ambassador for their individual business and industry, executives of successful companies within the eight-county region know the attributes that drive success. Crossroads Coalition should formalize a Business Executive Ambassador Program. This program would foster relationships that leverage the coalition's business retention and expansion program, Business Forward East Arkansas.

This program would also be an ideal match for the Delta Young Professionals group. Working with members of the young professionals team will help current and future companies know there is young, innovative, and qualified talent in the region.

Building a team of business executives who are proud to do business in the Crossroads region will create an atmosphere of collegiality and support. This approach would position the region as an open and thriving business environment.



### **Virtual Round Tables**

At times, site selectors need additional discovery opportunities with economic development officials before considering a search trip. Crossroads Coalition should consider implementing an annual virtual roundtable targeted to location consultants within the target industries.

The panelists could include AEDC representatives, other regional economic development professionals, companies that have located in the Crossroads regions, and relevant elected officials. Location consultants would join an online telecast, set up almost as a TV show, and they would be able to ask questions and receive live answers via phone, chat or email. Depending on participation of the first virtual round table, Crossroads Coalition could consider expanding the program to a bi-annually or quarterly event.

### **Trade Show Participation and Email Marketing**

Once Crossroads Coalitions starts implementing an industry-driven communication strategy, it will be important to have a presence in industry events. However, participation in these events should be thoroughly supported by marketing materials relevant to those industries.

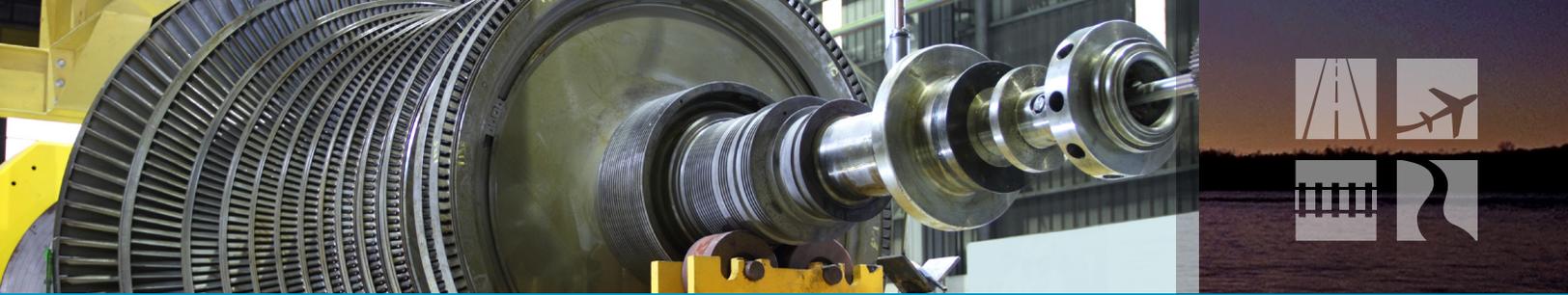
In addition to providing contacts for immediate new business opportunities, the shows provide networking opportunities that result in new contacts for email marketing. This marketing strategy can be used in a future industry-specific enewsletter program. The enewsletter can be a follow-up communication tool with answers to frequently asked questions received at the trade show. After that, the enewsletter can become a way to deliver the latest news in each of the Crossroads' target industries. It will be important to create a cohesive database that allows the coalition to send newsletters by industry. The email system should allow system-wide distribution when a topic, such as a new incentive program, is relevant to all businesses.

Preparing and attending trade shows can be a financial challenge. When possible, local economic developers within the Crossroads region should allocate line item budgets in order to participate in these domestic trade missions. Crossroads Coalition should also explore attending these shows in partnership with AEDC.

### **Social Media**

A recent survey of business-to-business marketers by the Content Marketing Institute (CMI) and MarketingProfs found that nine out of 10 are using "content marketing" to deliver their messages. Content marketing is defined as "a marketing technique of creating and distributing relevant and valuable content to attract, acquire, and engage a clearly defined and understood target audience." In other words, it is the act of producing, distributing, and sharing materials related to an organization or its industry in order to attract customers and business partners, and to drive "real-world" business results. According to the CMI and MarketingProfs survey, social media is the most popular form of content marketing.

Crossroads Coalition is currently active in social media, but much more could be done. The official Crossroads Coalition Facebook page has 108 followers and the official Twitter feed has 120 followers (as of June 20, 2013). Both social network feeds are regularly updated and the content is appropriately relevant to the region, though it is occasionally broad in scope. There does not appear to be an official organization/company page for Crossroads Coalition on LinkedIn or an official channel on YouTube.



Data supports the use of Facebook as a primary social media outlet. It is well known that Facebook is the dominant social network with the largest and deepest membership and participation. Marketing research studies have also shown that Facebook is the leading source of referred social media traffic to websites, meaning that it has become a critical way to get consumers to visit official business websites for more information. Facebook also happens to be the most popular social network in Arkansas:

### **Arkansas General Facebook Info**

Total Facebook Users:	1,321,080
Penetration of population:	45.72%
Penetration of online population:	
Facebook Male Users:	42.74%
Facebook Female Users:	57.26%

Experience and research also show that LinkedIn is an ideal social media outlet for an organization such as Crossroads Coalition. LinkedIn is a business-focused, professional network with 200 million members around the globe. Almost 80 percent of LinkedIn members are 35 years old. The majority of members have college degrees and leadership positions within their businesses or fields. According to a study by BtoB Magazine, LinkedIn is the channel most used by business-to-business marketers, with 80 percent of respondents engaged in the professional profile site.

While this sort of data proves that it is clearly important that coalition messaging be delivered through social media platforms, it is even more critical that the social media efforts be guided by a solid digital public relations strategy and include high-quality, visually oriented content. Social media sites such as Facebook are increasingly assigning more importance and providing more exposure to visual content (images, graphics, videos, etc.). A survey of business marketers conducted by Matter Communications in December of 2012 found that 96.7 percent believe that visual content engages best on social media.

Crossroad Coalition should implement strategies and tactics designed to accomplish specific program goals and build a larger, more engaged community. In order to grow the coalition's footprint on social media platforms, Crossroads Coalition should follow these steps:

- 1) **Content Audit and Strategy** - Conduct a full audit and analysis of all existing and potential social media and interactive content in order to determine what content is engaging and what is not. This process will be critical in developing a content strategy that aligns with coalition goals and the expectations of target audiences.
- 2) **LinkedIn Setup and Support** - Create and provide content for an official Crossroads Coalition LinkedIn Company Page, identify important groups for the organization to connect with, and important channels to follow for business development and site selection, and other relevant topics.
- 3) **Content Development for Social and Web** - Crossroads Coalition should develop a social media editorial calendar outlining production of specific content, from designated social network posts to general topics and blog posts.
- 4) **Visual Content Support** - Develop attention-grabbing visual elements - infographics, promotional photos, informative videos, etc. - that can be delivered to target audiences via social media and other digital platforms.
- 5) **Propagation Plan Creation** - Create a calendar of social media posts (including goals and objectives for each) that will provide guidance for posting on various platforms. This plan can be updated easily moving forward.



- 6) **Strategic Sponsored Posts** – Develop particular Facebook posts that will serve as affordable paid advertisements to very targeted audiences. These will help to build a stronger following.

### **Website**

It is important that the Crossroads Coalition takes full advantage of its new online presence. The new website is built on the flexible Wordpress platform, allowing for quick and consistent content management. Crossroads Coalition needs to continue to add new and engaging content, with a focus on the most important information for its visitors. To efficiently update content, the Crossroads Coalition should keep the most dynamic sections of the site constantly updated. These sections include the news and events. Having these sections updated keeps continuous new content present on the homepage, and keeps the new site climbing in search rankings due to the consistently fresh content.

To continue growing the helpfulness and effectiveness of the new website, Crossroads Coalition will need to continue building content throughout the site, including new homepage slider images and extensive information within their main site sections. It is also suggested that all marketing efforts are backed up with content on the site, with a focus of driving individuals who are interested back to your website to learn more. Crossroads Coalition will need to make sure that adequate information is available to help educate these visitors once they arrive.

## **V. MEASURING OUTCOMES**

Any effective marketing plan should establish well-defined success measurements. The following section provides short-, intermediate-, and long-term success measurements that the coalition can use to track progress.

### **Short-Term Outcomes: One Year**

- Increase in brand awareness – measured with research pre- and post-awareness studies
- Increase in Web traffic – measured with Google Analytics
- Increase engagement of partners in marketing tasks implementation
- Increase following in existing and new social media sites
- Increase number of enewsletter subscribers
- Successful research outcome on viability studies for new industries

### **Intermediate-Term Outcomes: Two to Three Years**

- Increase number of inquiries, RFIs, and on-site visits
- Increase engagement of local businesses in economic development efforts
- Increase earned media coverage
- Change perception and improve local image, specifically from Arkansas public and AEDC representatives
- Positive interaction with site selection consultants
- Establish Crossroads Coalition’s authority in target industries

### **Long-Term Outcomes: Three Plus Years**

- Number of jobs created in the region from existing business
- Number of industries relocating to the Crossroads region
- Stronger presence in new industries, such as biotechnology and information technology