

PORTFOLIO #I

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Grant Writing, Ideation, Strategic Planning & Leadership

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Arnoldo Mata is an award-winning writer who has helped his clients with more than \$25M in grant writing success and numerous other projects that involve extensive research and creative and persuasive writing.

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Thank for downloading this first sample of my work.

I know it's hard to know if a writer can do good work until you give them an assignment to work on. So, I decided to start sharing some samples of actual work I've done.

I've included a concept paper, a fundraising letter and a magazine article for your consideration. I will be posting more sets of some of my work, hopefully once a week.

A note on the concept papers. I write these whenever I think I have a really good idea worth sharing with others. Sometimes I try to actually get them implemented. And sometimes, I know that I'm not the best person suited for the idea. I am willing to share them and hope that someone can do something with them. Please feel free to give it a try on anything I share here.

Also, feel free to share this document with anyone you think might benefit from them.

If you have any questions, please contact me at:
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I look forward to getting your feedback.

I appreciate your time.

Thanks

Arnoldo

Internet-based Careers Classes For High School/College Students

This concept paper provides a brief exploration of an idea for a series of classes set at the college level that would provide students with a basic understanding of how to start an Internet-based business or utilize such skills for business development. It does not provide a detailed discussion of all of the potential issues and alternatives but serves merely to introduce the concept and some of its potential benefits.

While the vast majority of businesses continue to be traditional “bricks and mortar” operations, most businesses now have some type of digital/web presence. Currently, all businesses expect employees to be “computer literate,” meaning that they know how to use email, word processing, spread sheets, databases and other basic software, as well as being trainable for job-specific software. However, few businesses now require Internet/content-development skills. Increasingly, these will be critical skills for all employees. Some companies are now starting to push their employees to post content about their company, products, services, customers and team members to create a wider digital footprint. This includes blogs, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube channels, podcasts and other social media outlets. One of the requisites to being able to **JUST APPLY** for work at some of the top companies (Google, FaceBook, Apple, Microsoft, etc.) is having top-notch social media skills. That is now filtering down to other companies, but many companies are experiencing difficulty finding properly trained social media staff¹. Posting funny cat videos or photos from last weekend’s “awesome” party on FaceBook are NOT marketable social media skills.

Traditional computer science and web site development courses have focused on the coding and mechanics of the system, yet few, if any, have focused on the content. But, to quote Bill Gates from his 1996 article², “Content is King,” “Content is where I expect much of the real money will be made on the Internet.” This is the heart of what such a proposed course of study would focus on, the understanding, development, marketing and sharing of content that will attract viewers and visitors to a particular website or to an individual brand (corporate or personal).

Broadly speaking, there are three ways to approach this. The first is to understand the types of businesses someone can start online. The second is to study and practice social media as a way to promote a business or brand. The third is to explore content development as a business/service or as a part of an employee’s job duties. There may certainly be other areas of study not noted here that could also be valuable skills for students to be successful in the workforce.

There would be some common issues to be discussed in these various courses, including website registration, website development, apps development and other related issues. From there, courses might focus on more specific topics. There is likely overlapping of some course content between the three areas.

In the development of an internet business, students might look at various options:

- Sales – Selling or re-selling various items or products through an independent website or on sites such as Ebay, Etsy, Craig’s List, and others. These may be products created and produced by the individual or bought wholesale.
- Affiliate Marketing – Serving as an affiliate sales site for other sales companies.
- Service/Information – Providing an online-accessible data or information service or other services that can be easily provided online.

Social media skills might look at:

- Brand or business promotion and marketing.
- Customer service
- Sales
- Integration of social media use

Content development might look at:

- Blogs
- Video Channels (YouTube and others)
- Podcasts
- Written products
- Downloadable products
- Sharing and dissemination of content

A course of study that integrates all three major segments would clearly provide students with significant marketable skills for entry into any industry. These courses should likely include the development of products in each of the three areas. It is conceivable that some of the students may have created and run their own business by the time they graduate from high school, which would be a significant achievement.

Utilizing a Developing a Curriculum (DACUM)³ process will help to identify specific skill sets. The DACUM process uses facilitated discussion groups to provide a thorough understanding of the training, knowledge and day-to-day work requirements of various positions within an industry setting.

Again, this concept paper does not aim to address all of the issues and serves only as a starting point for a discussion. There may be fatal flaws not yet seen.

Notes

Note 1: “Inside The Growing Social Media Skills Gap”, <https://www.fastcompany.com/3055665/the-future-of-work/inside-the-growing-social-media-skills-gap>

Note 2: “Content is king” retrieved from <http://www.craigbailey.net/content-is-king-by-bill-gates/>

Note 3: DACUM, <http://facilitation.eku.edu/what-developing-curriculum-dacum>

This is a magazine article I wrote last year.

DOMINATE!!!!

The first question I ask a group when I get involved in a strategic planning project is: why? Why are you developing a strategic plan?

The answer to that determines what will happen. There are only four general answers people respond with:

1. Crisis – We have a crisis on our hands! We need to do something! We need to take action now!
2. Stay the same/survive – We're okay with where we are, and we want to keep on going the same way.
3. Grow – We want to grow our business and expand. We're tired of being small (size and/or income).
4. Dominate – We want to dominate our sector or niche. We want to be the Amazon of _____.

That's it. There are only four acceptable responses. Your answer may be different. However, once you parse it down to the core issues, it really is one of those four. It may be worded differently, but it is important that organizations cut out all verbage and boil it down to the essential point. This provides greater clarity about what they want to achieve.

The crisis one is probably the hardest to work with because it generally means that some very painful decisions lie ahead for the organization. A quick look at the numbers (income, expenses, trends, etc.) can tell you whether it can be saved. Most organizations can survive, even if it's in a very reduced or changed form. The leadership of this organization has already seen some of the problems and faced some hard decisions and have likely chosen not to take the hard path. They're looking for a way to escape the fire without anybody getting burned. Sometimes, you just can't do that.

The Number Two company doesn't really want to change. That's their choice. For whatever reason, the owners are comfortable where they are. In this type of situation, the focus is on making sure no unseen problems are under the surface. This tends to look more at threats that may be coming up soon. The most challenging part of this is trying to see the unseen. This is a defensive position. It is something that even successful companies need to keep doing.

The approach to the third company will depend on why they want to grow. Is it that the competition in their field is getting more difficult or that they see an opportunity no one is going after? In the first case, the company has to figure out how to deal with both its strengths and weaknesses. This requires an extensive look at everything within and outside the company. This may be a long, tedious process, but it yields results if the process is done well. The the second situation, when the company sees an opportunity, the focus is more on the strengths already present and speed. Opportunities rarely stay hidden. Once you see it, someone else will see it eventually. The first to enter the market is likely the one to win. However, you need to enter a new opportunity fully prepared. Too many companies enter a new market thinking that being first is enough. Remember Friendster, Netscape, or the Palm PDA? They may have been first, but Friendster wasn't really ready to handle the technical side of the product. They had great vision but very weak execution. Planning to enter a new market requires thinking the process all the way through, not just the first sale.

The most challenging one is number 4. That's the one I REALLY REALLY want to work on. Wouldn't you? This is a tremendous vision. I want to be part of this kind of enterprise. This kind of strategic planning is the most challenging. It requires a great amount of exploration and taking a multi-dimensional approach to growth. It means that every part of the company has to improve and become stronger. It requires a buy-in from everyone, from the leader to the janitor. They have to put their career and income on the line because it can fail dramati-

cally. But, before you get to all that, you have to ask why. Why do they want to be at that level? What has driven them to that point? There has to be a vision behind that why. Once they can answer that question, the work can start.

Arnoldo Mata heads Leadership Resource Group, specializing in Leadership and Management Training, Grant Writing, and Strategic Planning, with more than 25 years working with non-profit organizations, community organizations, local governments and private businesses. He can be contacted at arnoldo.mata@hotmail.com.

Note: This is a fundraising letter I wrote for a group that was raising funds for a program. It was sent to a group of program graduates. The financial response was about 50% more than they expected. All identifying information has been removed.

NAME LAST

ADDRESS

CITY STATE ZIP

Dear NAME,

Do you remember all those nights and weekends we spent studying for the XXXXXX exam? I know the intense pressure we all felt at the thought of not passing that exam. The score was going to determine which XXXXXX program we would be accepted into – or even if we would get into a XXXXXX program at all!

Like you, I was quite fortunate that we had those prep seminars with Mr. XXXXXX. His seminars really prepared all of us for the test. His way of teaching and dedication helped me learn the essential concepts and many of the fine points of the test. He was patient and instilled confidence in our own abilities to handle the test. Looking back, now I can see that that was the most important thing he taught us – to trust our own strengths and go from there.

NAME, I really don't know if I would have made it through XXXXXX school, let alone the XXXXXX test, if it were not for Mr. XXXXXX. Like you, Mr. XXXXXX had a lot to do with the success I now enjoy. I've kept in touch with him over the years, and he continues to teach his prep courses. He doesn't have to. He could easily have retired a number of years ago, but his commitment and dedication keep him going.

The demand for getting into Mr. XXXXXX's seminars is growing. The school wants to expand the program to more students like you and me. We know how competitive and challenging our work is. We also know how competitive getting into XXXXXX school has become. There are many students just like us who are facing an even more challenging environment. As you know, getting more students from our region into this field is critical.

A group of Mr. XXXXXX former students are working on setting up a fund named after him. The funds will help to cover the costs of class materials and the test for students. As you remember, he often bought materials from his own pocket and found other ways to help us. We think it's time we gave back to this program that made a tremendous impact on us.

NAME, I am asking you to make a commitment to help support this critical program. I have enclosed a form for you to make your donation. We want to make this an annual campaign. Please call me if you have any questions or if you can help us in some other ways. My personal cell phone is xxx-xxx-xxxx or email me at James.xxxxx@xxxxxxx.com. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

James XXXXXX

PS: Erica XXXXXX and a couple of other program graduates are getting together in the DFW area next month. I'll ask her to contact you. However, if you want to reach out to that group, please email her at exxxxxxx@gmail.com. Thanks.