

London's Favourite Little Gems Contest

Final Report

September 9, 2013

An Overview

Starting June 8, 2013 citizens shared the things about their neighbourhoods that make them unique and special as part of *London's Favourite Little Gem Contest*.

Citizens posted public places, businesses, events and individuals who make their neighbourhoods great places to live, work & play to NeighbourGoodGuide.ca. In addition to sharing these elements, individuals showed their affection through the use of 'Likes' and the posting of comments on individual gems.

London's Favourite Little Gem Contest closed on August 31, 2013. Throughout the duration of the contest NeighbourGoodGuide.ca saw an influx of users. During the last month of the contest there was a higher volume of users creating accounts to 'Like' and comment on their favourite Little Gems.

Winning Gem

At the close of the contest the following Little Gems had the greatest number of likes:

NAME	LIKES
Lorne Avenue Public School	639
Family Centre Carling-Thames	555
Femme Force Fitness	72
Boyle Memorial Community Centre	32
LUSO Community Services	31

Based on the information provided above, **the winner of London's Favourite Little Gem Contest was Lorne Avenue Public School** with a total of 639 likes. A close runner up was Family Centre Carling-Thames with 555 likes.

Starting on August 7th, 2013 and continuing until the end of the contest, both Lorne Avenue Public School and Family Centre Carling-Thames exchanged the place holding the lead many times as they each rallied their communities and neighbourhoods around their favourite Little Gem.

Statistics

Two forms of statistics are available regarding the NeighbourGood Guide in terms of *London's Favourite Little Gem Contest*. Those based on the actual content on the site and those based on the traffic to the site (provided by Google Analytics). These two segments have been broken down for easier interpretation.

Content Analysis

Reviewing the published content from NeighbourGood Guide from before and after the contest reveals the following information:

- the number of 'Likes' on the website increased 800%
- the amount of published content (posts, gems and neighbourhoods) increased by 20%
- the number of users creating content (posts, gems and neighbourhoods) increased by 56%
- content created by those directly associated with the NeighbourGood Guide decreased from over 80% to about 65% of the total content
- new content created during the contest included: 55 gems, 6 neighbourhoods and 3 posts

Traffic Analysis

Google Analytics were looked at to better understand the traffic patterns of NeighbourGoodGuide.ca. Two time periods were compared: the contest period (June 8, 2013 - August 31, 2013) and a comparable period just prior to the contest (Mar 15, 2013 - June 7, 2013). All of the following comments are regarding the contest period compared to the prior period:

- people were spending more than twice as long on the site
- people were viewing nearly twice as much content
- people were viewing nearly twice as many pages
- people were actively navigating the entire website not just visiting the page they initially travel to
- people were accessing the website mainly from Windows based computers and iOS based mobile devices
- fewer new visitors were coming to the site **HOWEVER** visitors were returning on a

more regular basis

In order to better understand if *London's Favourite Little Gems* Contest has had an influence on the overall, every day use of NeighbourGoodGuide.ca, it is suggested that these same indicators (content & traffic) be reviewed and compared after 3, 6 and 12 months following the contest.

Reviewing these indicators at the times specified will allow to be seen if people are continuing to use NeighbourGoodGuide.ca and if so, to what frequency and extent. As of now we only have the data available to compare the pre-contest and contest periods.

Lessons Learned

Now that *London's Favourite Little Gems* has come to a close there has been time for reflection based on how the contest unfolded. There are a number of lessons learned and takeaways that should be considered if another contest or similar type initiative is held in the future. These lessons learned have been divided into two sections: *Contest Specific* and *General Project Management*

Contest Specific

- More Thorough Contest Terms - it is suggested, based on lessons learned, that if another similar contest is held the Terms of the contest be updated to reflect things such as: tied winners, contest cancellation, fraudulent usage, site downtime and what constitutes as 'inappropriate' use of the website. Each of these elements presented themselves during *London's Favourite Little Gems* and while they did not lead to any large issues they could have potentially been troublesome. Having language in the contest Terms could help to deal with any issues that may arise.
- **Multiple Prizes** - as was suggested prior to the start of *London's Favourite Little Gems Contest*, it would better suit a contest of this nature, one grounded in neighbourhood & community pride, to have multiple prizes and/or 'winners'. Some participants expressed concerned over the 'popularity contest' nature of *London's Favourite Little Gems Contest* and 'pitting' one gem/neighbourhood against another. While this feeling is hard to avoid given the nature of this contest, some of concerns generated could be alleviated if there were multiple prizes. Prizes for the

top 2-3 gems is one option, while a different approach that could be taken would be to identify the favourite Little Gem in each neighbourhood, although it is understood that this type of contest would have its own limitations and challenges.

- **'On Call' Staff** - while a single staff member who is 'on call' for the duration of the contest is most likely all that is needed, individuals and organizations tasked with specific elements of the contest should be willing to deal with issues as they arise in a proper manner even if it does not fit their typical schedule. Expectations need to be set prior to a contest starting so that key contact staff/people are accessible and able to complete critical work to see that the contest runs smoothly.

General Project Management

- **Project Work Plan** - a project work plan should be crafted & approved early on to provide direction and a point of reference for the remainder of the project. This plan should provide enough detail to allow for the project to move ahead as needed but be flexible enough to allow for deviations from it as needed. Once approved this plan should not drastically change.
- **Timeline** - during the development of the Project Work Plan a timeline should be agreed upon by all interested parties. This timeline should have hard start & end dates but allow for flexibility for the work to be done in between. This time frame should not be changed once agreed upon and worked into the Project Work Plan. As a time frame is developed it should be taken into consideration when the greatest number of people from across demographics will be able to be engaged given the available resources. It is suggested that a project that requires a great deal of citizen engagement should not be scheduled during a period of time when many people are typically away from their neighbourhoods and city.
- **Resources** - early on in the project planning stages the available resources should be identified. This includes but is not limited to financial, people, service & material related resources. It isn't practical to plan a large scale project without knowing what resources, if any, are available. Trying to plan a project, such as a contest, without the knowledge of what resources may or may not be available leads to, as we have experienced, a great deal of wasted time, energy, effort and skills on the part of those tasked with executing the project. It would better serve everyone involved in the project, and ultimately the project itself, if available resources can be defined as early on in the planning process as possible.

- **Functional Assets** - it would be beneficial when planning & executing a project, such as the Little Gems Contest that relies so heavily on a single asset (neighbourgoodguide.ca), to ensure that the asset in question is in good working order & stable prior to the project beginning. If the primary asset does not allow for the greatest amount of engagement from its users it is hard to rely on it to deliver what is outlined in the Project Work Plan. In addition, it is essential to have service providers that can effectively manage such assets ensuring that they are stable, fully functioning and without foreseen issues prior to and during the contest period.
- **Communication** - it is essential when executing any project to have a clear & open line of communication among those tasked with executing various portions of the project. Modes of communication, direct reporting, timelines for feedback and mixed messaging from all involved are things that need to be effectively managed to ensure that they do not impede the project from unfolding as best as possible. It is suggested that when working on similar projects in the future that clearer communication channels are utilized and that expectations from all parties involved are not only stated but documented.

Website Issues & Resolutions

Likes

During the final days of the contest, NeighbourGoodGuide.ca ran into some issues with the process of, and displaying of 'Likes' on the website. These issues were unknown at the time and were next to impossible to predict before having a large number of users accessing the site 'Liking' gems within a short period of time. *London's Favourite Little Gems Contest* presented the first time that this number of users were accessing and engaging with the site at one time.

Thread Development, the agency tasked with managing and administering NeighbourGoodGuide.ca, was able to identify, address and resolve the issues within a very short time frame restoring the website and its functions to the original state. Contest participants were kept up to date via email and social media as to the status of work being done and those who responded regarding the issues were more than pleased with the timely resolution.

Images

An additional issue, one that hindered NeighbourGoodGuide.ca and *London's Favourite Little Gems Contest*, pertained to the uploading and displaying on images on the site. Although this was a known issue, had obtainable solutions and was brought to the attention of the site administrators on a number of occasions, it failed to be address in a timely manner and at the end of the contest it still remained unresolved. Numerous ongoing complaints were received from users of the site regarding this issue throughout the contest period.

Fraud Complaints

Nearing the end of the contest there were multiple complaints from those who appeared to be supporters of Lorne Avenue Public School. The complaints centred around the thought that someone was 'hacking' NeighbourGoodGuide.ca, creating fake user accounts and 'Liking' Family Centre Carling-Thames. These claims were made based on the fact that those making the claims could not see any visible online promotion of this gem and they assumed that something fraud related must have been taking place. There were 3-4 similar complaints.

After careful review of the user accounts, website activity and after talking to those promoting the Little Gem in question it was determined that no fraud was taking place.

People chose to to approach the contest & the promotion of Little Gems it in different ways. What worked for one neighbourhood, community and/or gem was not necessarily appropriate for the others. We were in contact with those involved with the promotion of many of the Little Gems to gain a better understanding of their promotion 'tactics' to help inform the determination that there was no fraudulent activity taking place.

This overview report of *London's Favourite Little Gems Contest* has been submitted to the London Fuse New Media Collective Board of Directors on September 9, 2013 by:

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