

# Evaluation Report on Clever Magazine's Writing for SEO Training Program

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## Executive Summary

Clever Magazine is an online political magazine. The Publisher’s goal was to bring in at least \$250,000 per quarter in online ad revenue starting in Q3 2018. (See Table 1.) To meet this goal, the company launched a Writing for SEO (Search Engine Optimization) training program. The online course, produced by [Mediabistro](#), shows writers how to craft articles that rank high on a search engine results page.

Kremen Consulting was hired to evaluate training efficacy because the training was deemed mission critical: if the writers did not start writing SEO there was little chance the company would stay in business for another year. To complete the evaluation, Kremen Consulting used an approach known as Kirkpatrick’s New World Model. The model incorporates four levels of evaluation that look at reaction, learning, behavior, and results. In short, the evaluation found that, despite the fact that it was not custom-made for Clever, the Mediabistro training was effective at all levels and allowed the company to exceed its ad revenue target. The full results of the training evaluation are contained in the rest of this report.

Table 1

*Results of Writing for SEO Training Program*

Fiscal Quarter	Average Page Views from Organic Search Per Week	Average Ad Impressions Per Week	Ad Revenue Per Quarter
Q4 2017	4,126	8,230	\$3,000
Q1 2018	41,004	85,505	\$35,000
Q2 2018	180,022	370,211	\$120,000
Q3 2018	410,400	1,014,022	\$255,000
Q4 2018	451,083	1,100,000	\$278,000

Metrics that met or exceeded targets are highlighted in yellow.  
Figures in grey are projections.

## Training and Evaluation Process Summary

After watching the online videos for the MediaBistro training, Clever’s 25 writers completed a survey. It revealed that learners felt training was easy to understand and well organized. The writers also felt confident they could apply what they learned on the job. One week later, learners took a test designed to mimic the work environment and test their Writing for SEO skills. The test involved writing a story based on an invented scenario and applying the long-tail strategies taught in the course. The stories were written in WordPress, where a tool called Yoast was installed. Learners could check many aspects of their work using the Yoast traffic light system. Green lights indicated content optimized for SEO, orange lights indicated that the content needed to be improved, and a red light was used for content that would not rank well. The Administrative Assistant conducted green light checks every other day to track the writers’ progress for two weeks. The writers performed well using the Yoast traffic lights for guidance.

Additional monitoring was also required, particularly for the aspects of the stories that weren’t automatically checked by Yoast. Consequently, the managing editors performed story spot checks. These analyzed by the Senior Managing Editor. One story per writer was checked each week for Yoast-tracked qualities and other aspects of the story. All writers consistently met targets within two months.

During this period, the Senior Managing Editor adopted a new driver to reinforce on-the-job behavior. Each quarter, the writer with the most organic page views is given a trophy mug and a \$100 gift certificate. (The term organic refers to pages viewed by people naturally, as opposed to when they click on a paid advertisement.) This driver created a friendly, competitive ethos and energized the quarterly Zoom staff meetings.

Before the writers took the training course in November 2017, the magazine received an average of just 4,126 page views per week from organic search page results. Once writers were trained in best practices for SEO, that number quickly rose to 400,000 per week in Q3 2018. (See Table 1.) Given that Clever Magazine exclusively uses Google AdSense to deliver paid advertising on their site, the magazine was able to rapidly scale up its paid ad delivery in sync with the increase in page views without requiring additional sales people. Ultimately, the magazine was able to exceed its revenue goal, earning a total of \$255,000 in Q3 2018. Current projects put Q4 2018 revenue at \$278,000.

Having met its financial goals, Clever Magazine can now think about expanding its editorial staff to produce even more content.

## Goals and Scope

### Company Description

Based in New Brunswick, NJ, Clever Magazine launched in January 2017 with a one-time, \$1 million grant from the Knight Foundation. According to the terms of the grant, which was started to increase “an new generation of informed voters”, Clever Magazine agreed to produce political content geared towards women aged 18 – 28.

The company has a Publisher, a Senior Managing Editor, and five Managing Editors. The Senior Managing Editor oversees the Managing Editors. Each Managing Editor oversees ten writers who each generate at least five original articles per week. While the Publisher and Managing Editor share a Manhattan office with the Advertising Manager, the writers work from home offices across the country to provide regional political news. The magazine publishes exclusively online at [CleverMagazine.com](http://CleverMagazine.com).

### Clever Magazine’s Goals

Clever Magazine sought to increase ad revenue to at least \$250,000 per quarter by Q3 2018 by increasing average weekly page views brought in via organic search from 4,126 in Q4 2018 to 410,400 by Q3 2018. The goal of the Writing for SEO training project is to do so by optimizing all articles for the Google search engine.

Over the last two decades, the way search engines rank Web pages has changed considerably. Google’s old ranking system simply counted the number of times a word appeared on a page. The more the word was used, the higher up on the results page its listing appeared. This resulted in a multitude of Web pages that were stuffed with popular search terms but little else. In an effort to reduce the prevalence of these junk sites, Google changed its ranking system to one that looked for the kind of content humans preferred to read. It’s a far more complicated system that penalizes pages stuffed with keywords; instead it searches for well written, well organized content that covers many aspects of a single topic. Other search engines soon followed suit. While most writers know that the keyword stuffing trend is over, they are unsure of how to write content that will rank well.

The company considered hiring an outside firm to improve the Website’s search engine rankings, instead of training their writers. The Publisher realized, however, that this would not be cost effective; Clever would have had to pay the outside firm to improve of the 50 stories generated per week. By training their writers using Mediabistro’s Writing for SEO training program, the company only incurred a small one-time cost of \$100 per writer for the course.

### Course

Clever Magazine’s writers completed an online training program by Mediabistro called Writing for SEO. Unlike sites such as Lynda.com or Udemy, Mediabistro’s content is geared toward journalists. The Writing for SEO course teaches all of the important skills required to achieve high page rankings that are related to written content. These skills largely focus on selecting appropriate keywords to use and how to apply them to headlines, titles, and special text called

meta descriptions. (The latter are written especially for search engines to read, parse, and display on the results page.) There are two types of approaches to selecting keywords. In the fathead approach the target keywords are broad and popular. This approach is best suited to a site that already has a strong following. The other approach is called the long-tail approach, and it uses narrowly focused keywords. These words are less likely to be entered into a search engine but there are also fewer sites catering to those words. It is therefore easier to get a top spot in search word results by using this long-tail approach. Consequently, the long-tail approach chosen by Clever Magazine. It is also the approach taught in the Writing for SEO course.

This training program was also ideal for Clever Magazine because it explains Yoast, the tool that writers and Managing Editors used, post-training, to gauge how successfully each article meets best practices for SEO writing.

The Writing for SEO training program consists of 1 hour and 41 minutes of video lessons. Learners will have two weeks to complete the following two modules:

#### 1. Learning the Basics

- A. Foundations & Principles of SEO
- B. Finding Keywords
- C. Creating Shareable Content & Establishing Metrics
- D. Success Measurement & Analytics

#### 2. Content Optimization and Promotion

- A. Creating Killer SEO-Friendly Headlines
- B. Optimizing On-Page Content
- C. Meta Data, Effective Linking & Taxonomies
- D. Understanding Social Media's Influence on SEO

#### Target Performers

All 10 of Clever Magazine's fulltime writers will be trained to generate stories that are optimized for the Google search engine. These writers range in age from 24 – 30 and are 80 percent female. (Managing Editors were hired in large part due to their experience with modern SEO writing practices and so do not require the training.) Each writer has a highspeed Internet connection in their home office, from which they can access Clever Magazine's WordPress backend and Mediabistro. All current employees have been with Clever Magazine for more than 6 months, so they have experience with the backend of the WordPress site.

#### Additional Stakeholders

Given that the training is intended to impact revenue, all employees are stakeholders; if the company stays afloat, employees are more likely to keep their jobs. This report will focus on the key stakeholders, however, as they are the most involved with the project. This includes the

Publisher, Senior Managing Editor, Advertising Manager, the five Managing Editors, the writers and the administrative assistant. The latter handled some aspects of the data gathering and analysis. The Publisher initially proposed the training, but all key stakeholders were on board from the start and have provided all relevant data as required. The Website Administrator is another key stakeholder. He was brought in after goals, leading indicators and objectives were set, to give guidance on how technology might be used to meet those goals and objectives. He also installed the Yoast software on the WordPress site's backend. (Ongoing technical support for Yoast and WordPress is provided by the software vendors' support departments but has not yet been needed.)

## Objectives of Evaluation

The overarching objective of this training evaluation is to assess whether the Writing for SEO training program contributed to ad revenue growth. As a means to prove whether or not this occurred, the evaluation looks at learner reaction to the training, skills acquired, on-the-job behavior, average weekly page views generated by organic search and average weekly ad impressions.

Before training commenced, the key stakeholders held an online conference call to discuss the Writing for SEO training project. All agreed that the highest-level targeted outcome for the training program was ad revenue growth. If ad prices are stable, page views and ad impressions should directly correspond to ad revenue, making this an ideal metric for the training evaluation. Overall revenue and profit are beyond the scope of this training evaluation because they are routinely impacted by several factors unrelated to the training program. In terms of overall revenue, the most notable of these factors is the money the online magazine makes selling secondary rights to publish the articles in print magazines. Profits, obviously, could be impacted by changes in wages, rent, health insurance costs and Web hosting fees, to name a few.

## Evaluation Instruments

The evaluations will target all four of the Kirkpatrick Levels of Training Evaluation, as per below.

### Level 1: Reaction

#### **Mediabistro Training Evaluation by Learners** (See Appendix [A](#))

Target: A minimum response rate of 80 percent, with a minimum of 90 percent respondents giving answers of "Strongly Agree" or "Agree" to each question

Tool creation: Kremen Consulting in [Jotform](#)

This online survey was conducted by learners immediately after completing the required training modules. The survey assessed each learner's perspective of the training, including whether they felt it was relevant to their work as writers for Clever Magazine, engaging, and coherent. The questions were all learner centric and designed to gauge whether training was both favorable and effective. Notably, the survey also included a question asking learners if they felt confident they could apply their training on the job. This question, which asks learners to be predictive of the higher level of behavior, was included in the Level 1 survey because the

Managing Editor was concerned that the Mediabistro training would be targeted enough to Clever Magazine’s needs to be successful.

## Level 2: Learning

### **Writing for SEO Learner Test** (See Appendices [B](#) and [C](#))

Target: A minimum of 13 / 15 for each writer, with a 100 percent response rate

Tool creation: Kremen Consulting and Senior Managing Editor

This mandatory test, conducted in WordPress, assessed whether learners acquired the Writing for SEO skills taught in the training program. Specifically, it assessed whether learners could perform the Core Writing for SEO Skills, shown below.

### Core Writing for SEO Skills

1. Write a SEO title, meta description and headline that:
  - a. fully display in the Yoast preview of a Google search listing.
  - b. use a long-tail strategy by employing narrowly focused keywords that suit the article.
  - c. are not repetitive of each other.
2. Write a focus keyword that speaks to the narrow topic of the article and is included in the first sentence.
3. Write tags and categories that are different, to eliminate search engine confusion.
4. Write at least two subheadings in each article.
5. Write in the active voice in more than 90 percent of sentences.
6. Write articles in which 75 percent or more of the sentences have 20 words or less.
7. Writing link and anchor text that describes the destination, avoiding vague language such as ‘click here’ in favor of clear terms such as “House voting record.”

Mediabistro’s SEO course contained two of its own learning assessments, but these were thought exercises that did not involve writing full articles. They were too far afield from the learning objectives of the course. Consequently, learners were instead instructed to complete two Level 2 assessments constructed by Kremen Consulting and the Senior Managing Editor.

For the new evaluation, learners wrote an article in WordPress using the skills acquired in training and the Yoast tool. Facts were provided to the writers, who then had 24 hours to generate an article that earned two green lights from Yoast: one for SEO and one for Readability.

This assessment provided a strong measure of whether learners gained the knowledge most relevant to their jobs at Clever Magazine. These evaluations therefore provided a method of determining whether the content was learned, they also acted as a tailored review for the learner. Managing Editors were responsible for the grading and collection of the Writer’s tests.

### Level 3: Behavior

#### **Green Light Checks** (See Appendices [E](#) and [F](#))

Target: As a group, writers would earn 90 percent green lights SEO and Readability categories.

Tool creation: Yoast and Admin Assistant (with guidance from Kremen Consulting)

This evaluation assessed whether writers took what was taught in training and used it on the job. Specifically, it assessed whether learners performed the skills listed in Level 2: Learning evaluation while on-the-job crafting a real article for Clever Magazine. Yoast displays a green light for a good score, an orange light for something that needs improvement, and a red light for things that would stop a search engine from being able to understand the Web page.

#### **Story Spot Checks** (See Appendices [D](#) and [G](#))

Target: Cumulative average of 14/15 per writers

Tool creation: Kremen Consulting and Senior Managing Editor

Story Spot Checks were performed by the Managing Editors to ensure strong performance on the job. Writers were informed that the spot checks would take place during the training meeting, but they were not told which of their stories would be checked. Each Managing Editor was responsible for reviewing one of the five stories produced by each of their writers, per week. (See the Core Writing for SEO Skills Test Items in the Level 2 assessment above.)

### Level 4: Results

#### **Leading Indicators** (See Appendices [I](#) and [J](#))

Targets: 400,000 page views from organic search per week by Q3 2018 and 1 million ad impressions per week by Q3 2018

Tool Creation: Google Analytics provides data, Advertising Manager creates relevant charts for quarterly earnings statements in Excel

Data collection: Advertising Manager

Key stakeholders agreed in the initial planning meeting that the leading indicators were page views generated by organic search and ad impressions per week. Organic page views from search are those that are not generated via paid advertising. Whenever a user enters the search terms of their choice, is presented with the results, and selects a page from Clever Magazine's Web site, this counts as one page view. If they follow the first page to another on the site, this would count as a second. See Table 2 for target figures and past performance.

The Publisher provided the data on page views generated by organic search and ad impressions gathered using Google Analytics each month. This data had been collected since the magazine's launch, and so required no additional work to compile. This data assessed whether page views and ad impressions met targets, in an effort to deduce whether its ad revenue targets would likely be met.

The Advertising Manager supplied the data and his initial analysis to Kremen Consulting for further review so that the results could be included in monthly reporting about the training; this was emailed to the Publisher and Senior Managing Editor.

### **Highest Level Objective** (See Appendix [K](#))

Target: A minimum of \$250,000 per quarter in online ad revenue starting in Q3 2018

Tool Creation: Google Analytics provides data, Advertising Manager creates relevant charts for quarterly earnings statements in Excel

In a move led by the Publisher to ensure results that were easy to quantify and isolate from non-training influences, the key stakeholders agreed that advertising revenue per quarter would be the highest level objective. The Advertising Manager provided his data regarding advertising revenue on a quarterly basis. As with the leading indicators, the ad revenue data required no additional work to collect. The Advertising Manager had been gathering these figures since the magazine's launch. The Publisher supplied the data and his initial analysis to Kremen Consulting for further review so that the results could be presented to key stakeholders in quarterly reports regarding the training.

### **Description of Process**

The Writing for SEO training evaluation began with a meeting of the Publisher, Advertising Manager, Senior Managing Editor and Kremen Consulting to solidify that all were committed to the program. After discussing leading indicators and highest level objectives in the meeting, these were finalized by the Publisher. Kremen Consulting then worked with the Senior Managing Editor to select Mediabistro as the training vendor. Once the fees were paid to Mediabistro by the Publisher, the Managing Editors, editorial Admin Assistant and Website Administrator were apprised of the program. Kremen Consulting, the Managing Editors, and the editorial Admin Assistants then previewed the Mediabistro course. Kremen Consulting created the L1 Mediabistro Training Evaluation by Learners tool and worked with the Senior Managing Editor to create the L2 Writing for SEO Learner Test evaluations.

The Senior Managing Editor announced the training program to writers at a lively kick-off meeting conducted with remote writers via Zoom Meeting. The Publisher also spoke briefly to make clear just how important the training program was to the success of the company. Managing Editors then followed up the next day via email with each of their five writers to assure them that they had already taken the training and were there to help with any questions.

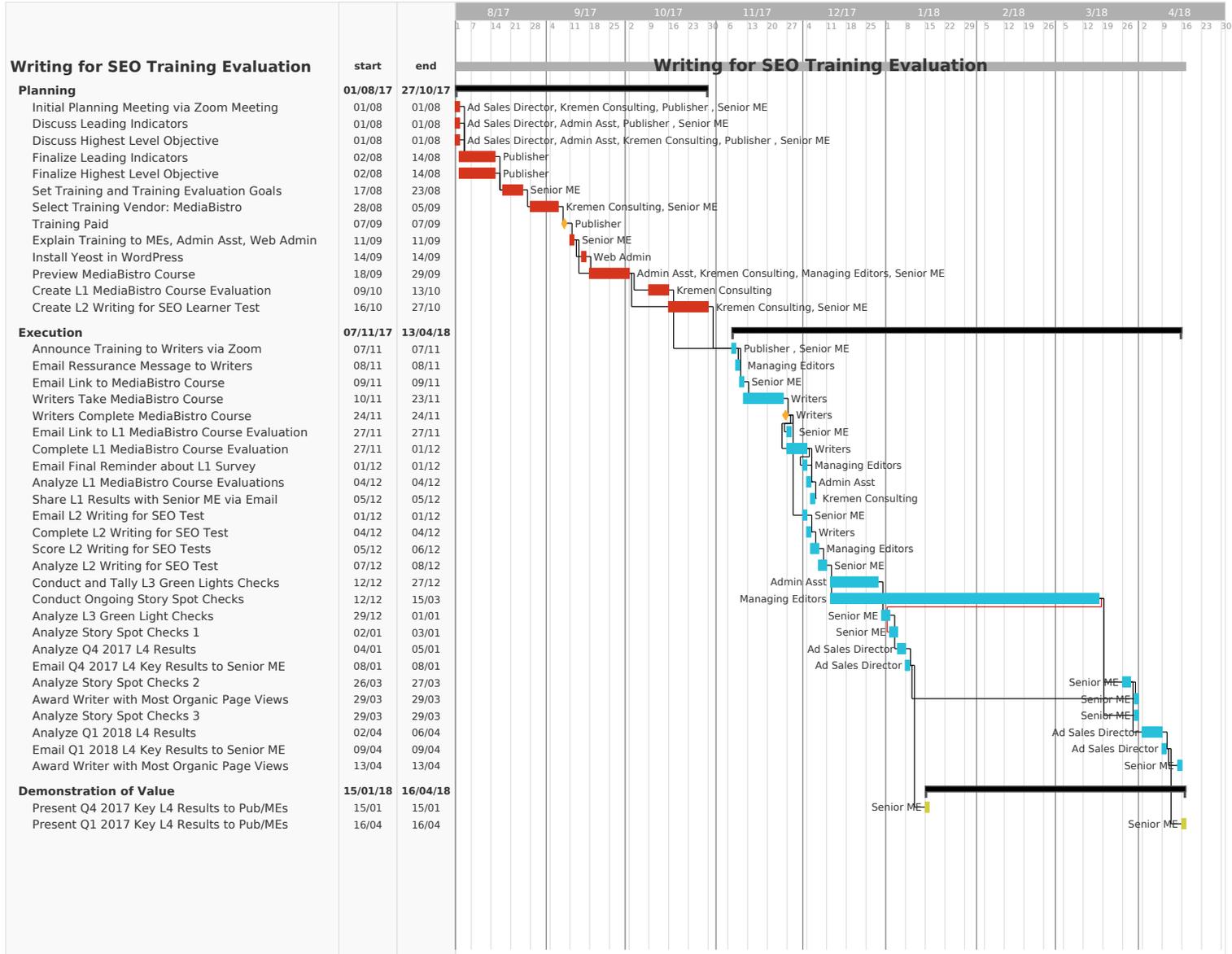
Writers had two weeks to complete the training program, with one days of wiggle room provided for writers who failed to meet the original deadline because it was essential that they all completed the training before moving on. Once all writers had completed the training, they were emailed the L1 Reaction survey to assess the learner's opinion of the training. This assessment showed learners felt the training was well organized and conducted. It also indicated they felt confident they could perform these skills on the job. To test whether this was true, instructions for the L2 Writing for SEO Learner Test were sent out via email immediately after the L1 data had been analyzed by Kremen Consulting and the Senior Managing Editor.

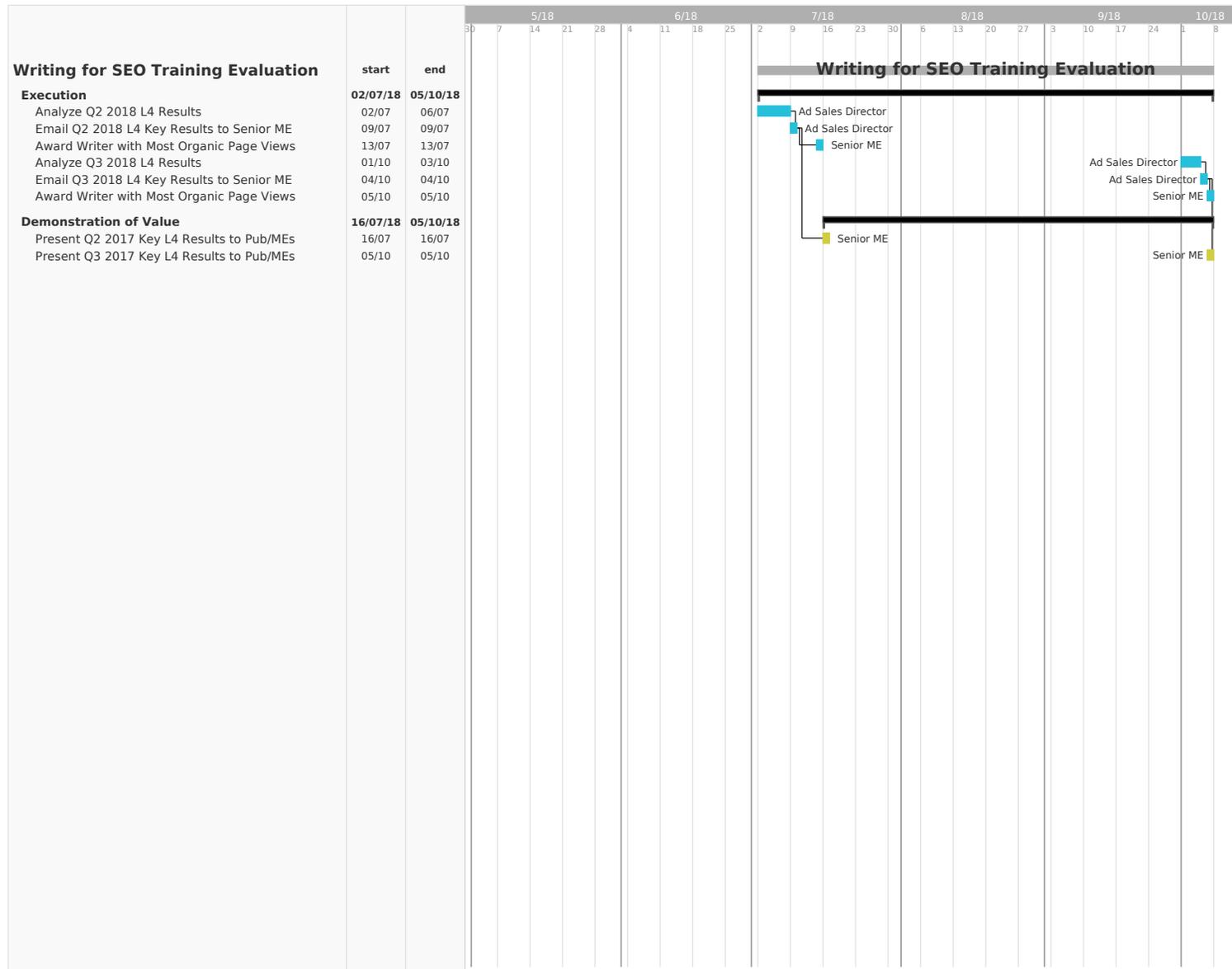
The L2 Test was completed via WordPress, and then analyzed by Kremen Consulting and the Senior Managing Editor. This analysis made clear that the writers found the training a positive experience that had left them ready to perform well on the job. A few days later, the Admin Assistant began three weeks of Green Light Checks. These showed that writers were consistently performing above the target. Story spot checks were also conducted during this period of Green Light Checks. These continued for an additional three months, after a full month where no writers fell below the target.

Quarterly statistics from Google Analytics for page views from organic search, ad impressions and ad revenue were collected and analyzed by the Advertising Manager, as this was a standard part of his job. The Senior Managing Editor used Google Analytics to determine which writers had the highest number of page views generated via organic search each quarter and presented an award to that writer at the editorial meeting, as a means of positive reinforcement.

Value was demonstrated to the Publisher and the Managing Editors in the company's quarterly earnings meetings, where the Senior Managing Editor tied earnings to the training.

# Gantt Chart





## Data Collection

### Level 1: Reaction

#### **Mediabistro Training Evaluation by Learners** (See Appendix [A](#))

The Senior Managing Editor emailed a link to the Jotform survey to all writers, who were given five days to respond. On the fourth day, the Senior Managing Editor sent an email reminding writers to complete the survey. Clever Magazine’s Admin Assistant logged in to the survey on the Jotform website and selected the Mediabistro Training Evaluation by Learners survey. She then clicked on Reports in the top navigation to download an Excel report. The admin assistant converted the table of data into a bar graph showing the percent of learners who responded “Strongly Agree” or “Agree” for each of the five questions. This made it easy to see that the 90% positive review target had been met or exceeded on all questions.

### Level 2: Learning

#### **Writing for SEO Learner Test** (See Appendix [B](#) and [C](#))

Writers were made aware of this assessment during the initial Zoom meeting about the training, but were reminded of it via an email from their Managing Editor (See Appendix B). The email was sent at 11:00 am EST so that learners on the West coast who were just getting in to the office wouldn’t feel as though they’d lost time. Writers then had until 11:00 am EST the following day to log in to WordPress and write a story based on the facts provided in the email, careful to apply all skills taught in the Writing for SEO Training. They could refer to the Yoast software embedded in WordPress while they were writing to see how they would score. (Scores marked with an asterisk on Appendix C were automatically generated by Yoast.) All other scores were awarded by the writer’s Managing Editor, who also transcribed the Yoast scores on to the rubric. The data was also analyzed by the Managing Editor who shared the results with the Senior Managing Editor.

### Level 3: Behavior

#### **Green Light Checks** (See Appendices [E](#) and [F](#))

To complete the check, every other day the Administrative Assistant visited the WordPress site to count the number of green, yellow and red lights on the first screen of the posts. Scores for the two categories – SEO and Readability – were tallied separately. All writers had to file stories by 2:30 pm local time. In order to ensure writers from all time zones were captured in this check, she alternated between 10:00 am and 4:00 pm checks. The morning checks tended to capture writers from the West coast who had filed the night before, while the afternoon checks tended to capture writers from the East coast. The tallies were logged in an Excel document created by the Administrative Assistant, after getting guidance on what to track from Kremen Consulting. Keeping the creation of this document in-house was cost effective. For ease of understanding, the Administrative Assistant added colored boxes at the top of the document to indicate the percentage of green, orange, and red lights for that day.

#### **Story Spot Checks** (See [Appendix D](#))

Not all aspects of the training are included in the automated Yoast assessment. To cover off these aspects of writing for SEO and ensure they became healthy habits, each Managing Editor completed one story spot check per week, per author.

The Managing Editors performed this task because the Senior Managing Editor didn't have the time required for this assessment, which spanned three months. Involving the Managing Editors spread out the work across five people. To complete the spot check, each Managing Editor randomly selected a story from each author and graded it according to the rubric in Appendix D, via Jotform. Using this Jotform tool was ideal for quick and easy data entry. The results of the spot checks were tallied by the Admin Assistant each month using an Excel spreadsheet, as shown in Appendix G.

#### Level 4: Results

##### **Leading Indicators** (See Appendices [I](#) and [J](#))

Google Analytics had already been set up by the Website Administrator to collect data on page views generated by organic search results and ad impressions. It was also routinely collected by and reviewed by the Advertising Manager; thus this aspect of the training program evaluation was straightforward and required no additional processes. The Advertising Manager logged into the Clever Magazine account in Google Analytics, clicked on Customization and Custom Reports. Then he named the file according to the quarter reported, clicked Add Metric, and selected Organic Searches. To isolate for quarterly figures, he adjusted the time settings by clicking on the triangle in the upper right hand corner by the dates. That released calendar mode, for easy date selection.

##### **Highest Level Objective** (See Appendix [K](#))

Advertising revenue is always closely tracked by the Advertising Manager, as it is the primary metric for success in his department – regardless of training initiatives. Consequently, this process also required no changes to his routine. Given that Clever Magazine solely uses Google AdSense to place advertisements on its Website, getting data for ad revenue was equally easy and involved the identical process outlined above. After logging in to Google AdSense, he selected Customization and then Custom Reports, added the metric Revenue and adjusted the time frame to quarterly.

## Analysis Process

### Level 1: Reaction

#### **Mediabistro Training Evaluation by Learners** (See Appendices [A](#) and [G](#))

This survey begins by asking the learner's name and Managing Editor, so that if there were worrisome results it would be easy to see if they were strongly associated with a particular managing editor. We used drop down menus instead of text fields, to eliminate the possibility of human error, which can sometimes add time and effort to the analysis process.

The core of the survey consists of 5 Likert questions that all use the same scale. This made completing the survey quick and easy for learners, which is shown by our 100 percent response rate. The reminder email sent by a boss two levels above them may have also contributed to the high response rate, as his name lent importance to the survey.

Given that the survey was well set up, brief, and required no journalism knowledge to analyze, the company opted to save money by having the Administrative Assistant do the analysis. Her analysis revealed that more than 90 percent of learners found the training, well organized, easy to understand, relevant and worth the time invested. Notably, it also proved the Senior Managing Editor's concerns were unwarranted: the Mediabistro training – while not made specifically for Clever Magazine -- had left learners confident they could perform the task on the job.

### Level 2: Learning

#### **Writing for SEO Learner Test** (See Appendix [B](#) and [C](#))

The Level 2 evaluation for each writer was scored and analyzed by the Senior Managing Editor, in order to keep the results private. (The data was deemed sensitive because it related to the abilities of each writer.) Giving this task to the Senior Managing Editor also ensured the scoring was uniform. Once the tests were completed, the Managing Editors checked the Yoast scores. These scores were transferred from Yoast to the Jotform survey sheet. Additionally, the Managing Editor manually graded each article to see if it met several criteria not covered by Yoast. This included using long-tail keywords, including a title that was different from the headline and the meta-description, having tags that are different from the category, and using descriptive text for anchors and links.

Overall, the analysis showed that most learners had achieved the minimum target of scoring 13 out of 15 points. Only two learners scored below the target; each earned just 12 points. The Senior Managing Editor followed up with each writer via Zoom to show them how they could improve their work. Both learners had the same problem – they'd forgotten to make sure their tags, headlines and meta-descriptions didn't contain the same phrase. It was a simple matter of reminding them. Managing Editors were informed that this was something to look out for with all of their writers, and an email was sent to all editorial staff reminding them to keep these fields different.

Level 3: Behavior

**Green Light Checks** (See Appendices [E](#) and [F](#))

Given that the green light checks didn't require any manual scoring, this task was offloaded to the Admin Assistant. She was advised not to reveal anyone's individual scores and the Excel file where she saved the tallies was password protected. Each reporter received two scores per story: one for Readability and one for SEO. These scores were added together using an Excel spreadsheet, to give a total score for each color in each category.

Writers were soon averaging 90 percent on the SEO scores and 95 percent on the Readability scores, exceeding the 90 percent target initially set. When the Admin Assistant gave the scores to the Senior Managing Editor for analysis, she noted to him privately her surprise that the inexperienced writers were scoring as well as the veterans. The Senior Managing Editor realized while going back through a few of the high scoring stories from the younger writers that the reason was simple: the stories handled by the less experienced writers tended to be more straightforward and therefore easier to write. The Yoast tool also prefers the short sentences and simple language embraced by the less experienced writers because it is designed to create content that caters to the masses.

Table 3

Managing Editor	Average Spot Check Score
Eric Eisenberg	14
Jane Jones	14
Tanya Ross	13
Brittany Shollow	13
Shea Talany	14

**Story Spot Checks** (See Appendix [D](#))

The spot-check data gathered by the Managing Editors was analyzed by the Senior Managing Editor. This provided some oversight to check whether the scoring was uniform across all editors. Dropdown menus for the selection of Managing Editor in the surveys made it easy to compare the scores of their writers as a whole. This comparison determined that, in fact, there were no scoring discrepancies between the Managing Editors. This is likely because the spot check questions were highly objective

and left little room for interpretation.

Level 4: Results

**Leading Indicators** (See Appendices [I](#) and [J](#))

Page views generated via organic search and ad impression data were analyzed by the Ad Manager, as he was experienced in this area from his past job and had always handled these figures. Page views followed a steady, upward climb. Ad impressions followed a similar path, except for a drop in the week of July 15, 2018. This was due to server issues at Google AdSense that allowed Clever Magazine to display Webpages (which are hosted on their own servers) without the ads. Consequently, page views weren't impacted but ad impressions dropped. Both metrics exceeded targets, as shown in Table 1.

In terms of confounding variables, it's worth noting that the training program's focus on Google was carefully selected, as it was unlikely to affect Clever Magazine's ability to meet its targets. Google is the dominant search engine and has been for more than a decade. But organic page

view metrics – even tallied using Google Analytics -- includes traffic delivered from all search engines. Moreover, while the Writing for SEO training program and Yoast focus on optimizing Web content to best suit the way Google works, the other search companies use very similar rules to determine their own listings. Ranking higher in Google typically means ranking higher in all search engines.

Additionally, Clever Magazine's small budget has meant it has little self-promotion. It does, however, run its own Twitter, Instagram and Facebook pages. While these three sites do bring in some traffic, it is not included in the data for average weekly page views generated via organic search.

Ad impressions are generated from traffic brought in via social media, though. A look at the numbers in Table 1 reveals that ad impressions and organic page views were increasing at roughly the same rate. Growth in terms of social media followers has been poor in comparison. This suggests the biggest factor in ad impression growth was traffic from organic search and not social sites.

**Highest Level Objective** (See Appendix [K](#))

Given the above, it is reasonable to assume that the Writing for SEO training was the major contributor to growth in both page views from organic search and ad impressions, which led to an increase in revenue.

The Ad Director, who also analyzed ad revenue, noted that Clever Magazine's limited funding meant that no other major initiatives were launched over the span of this project. This eliminated many other factors that are sometimes at play in publishing, such as new content licensing agreements. Ad rates at Clever Magazine also remained steady during this period, as did the cut that Google AdSense takes for sourcing and delivering advertisements.

# Appendices

## Appendix A

### L1 Survey of Mediabistro Training Evaluation by Learners

#### MediaBistro Training Evaluation

This survey is designed to give us a sense of the effectiveness of the training program. Please answer honestly so we can ensure future training programs meet your needs.

---

##### Name

First Name

Last Name

##### Email

example@example.com

##### 1. Who is your Managing Editor?

- Derek Macintyre
- Siobahn Mailer
- Rebecca Collins
- Tristan Ailesworth
- Dania Soros

##### 2. This course was well organized.

- Strongly Agree.
- Agree.
- Disagree.
- Strongly Disagree.

##### 3. The material was easy to understand.

- Strongly Agree.
- Agree.
- Disagree.
- Strongly Disagree.

##### 4. The material was relevant to my job.

- Strongly Agree.
- Agree.
- Disagree.
- Strongly Disagree.

##### 5. I am confident that I can apply the material on the job.

- Strongly Agree.
- Agree.
- Disagree.
- Strongly Disagree.

##### 6. Overall, I think this training program was worth my time.

- Strongly Agree.
- Agree.
- Disagree.
- Strongly Disagree.

Submit

## Appendix B

### Writing for SEO Learner Assessment

To: Clever Magazine writers  
From: Managing Editor  
Subject: Writing for SEO Learner Assessment

You just finished watching the videos for the Writing for SEO Training Program. Now you will complete the activity below, to show us what you've learned. Use the Yoast tools. This assignment is due tomorrow morning at 11:00 am EST.

#### Instructions

1. Open a new article in the Clever Magazine WordPress backend.
2. Use the invented scenario below as the basis of an article that is at least 300 words long and meets best practices for SEO. Feel free to add additional historical background or invent additional information to complete your piece.
3. Include at least two links, two subheadings and an anchor tag to each of the subheadings.
4. Use the Yoast tool to guide you toward best practices. Try to score as many green lights as you can. Check the rubric below to see how the assignment will be graded.
5. Save your article in WordPress, but DO NOT PUBLISH the story. Save it as a Draft.
6. Email your Managing Editor as soon as your article is complete.

#### Invented Scenario

- The Whig party has been reimagined by a group of three former libertarians: Senator Rand Paul (Kentucky), William Weld (former Governor of Massachusetts), and Senator Tom Cotton (Arkansas)
- The Modern Whig party (<http://www.modernwhig.org>) sees the ideal rule of law as one that is unchanged from the Constitution
- James Harrison (Ohio) is leading this new party
- He is the descendant of the original Whig party Presidential candidate, William Henry Harrison
- The Whig party was active from 1834 – 1854
- The name Whig is borrowed from the British Whig party, which opposed the monarchy
- After 1854, most Whigs joined the Republican Party
- One of the Whig party's primary goals is to bring back the Second Bank of the United States, which would replace the Federal Reserve and be accountable to Congress and the US treasury
- James Harrison says, "This would reinvent the modern day American financial system and Congress would handle interest rates and regulation of the stock market."
- Mark Cuban (<http://blogmaverick.com>), a billionaire investor and TV host, is financially backing the party
- Cuban, along with Rand, Weld, Cotton, and actor James Woods officially announced the re-launch of the party at 9:30 am EST this morning on the steps of the Federal Reserve
- Cuban wore a powdered wig

- One supporter held up a sign saying, "Real Republicans Wear Whigs!"
- Former Vice-President Joe Biden says, "We have to move forward, not get stuck in the past. It's what the founding fathers would have wanted."
- Political analysts say the party will likely split the Republican Party
- Actor Alyssa Milano tweeted, in response to the announcement, "Whatever destroys the Republican Party's lock on power is good news to me!"

## Rubric for L2 Writing for SEO Learner Test

Select your name as managing editor.

Select the name of the writer whose work you are scoring.

Please answer each question by clicking on the button for either yes or no. For the questions marked with an \*, transcribe the result from Yoast.

	Yes	No
1. *Does the title fully display in Yoast Preview?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. * Does the title use narrowly focused keywords that appear elsewhere in the article?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Is the title different from the headline?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Is the title different from the meta description?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Does the focus keyword address the narrow topic of the article?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. * Does the focus keyword appear in the title?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. * Does the headline fully display in Yoast Preview?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. * Does the meta description fully display in the Yoast Preview?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. * Does the meta description contain the focus keyword?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Are there at least two H2 subheads in the article?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. Are the tags used different from the article's category?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. * Is less than 10 percent of the article written in the active voice?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13.* Do at least 75 percent of the sentences have less than 20 words?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. Is all link text descriptive of the destination?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. Is all anchor text descriptive of the destination?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Submit

## Appendix D

# Rubric for Story Spot Checks

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Select your name as managing editor.

Select the name of the writer whose work you are scoring.

Please answer each question by clicking on the button for either yes or no. For the questions marked with an \*, transcribe the result from Yoast.

	Yes	No
1. *Does the title fully display in Yoast Preview?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. * Does the title use narrowly focused keywords that appear elsewhere in the article?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Is the title different from the headline?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Is the title different from the meta description?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Does the focus keyword address the narrow topic of the article?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. * Does the focus keyword appear in the title?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. * Does the headline fully display in Yoast Preview?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. * Does the meta description fully display in the Yoast Preview?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. * Does the meta description contain the focus keyword?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Are there at least two H2 subheads in the article?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. Are the tags used different from the article's category?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. * Is less than 10 percent of the article written in the active voice?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13.* Do at least 75 percent of the sentences have less than 20 words?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. Is all link text descriptive of the destination?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. Is all anchor text descriptive of the destination?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Submit

## Appendix E

Green, orange and red lights were tallied separately for the two categories: the SEO Score and the Readability Score, on the right.

Title	Author	Categories	Tags		Date		SEO	Readability
<a href="#">What of this Washington Coup?</a>	Alyssa M. Lopez	2018, Features	midwest, NAFTA, US-MCA	—	Published 2018/05/04		●	●
<a href="#">Nice Work If You Can Get It</a>	Autumn Oberkehr	2018, Archive, Features	employment, infographic, salaries	—	Published 2018/05/03	0	●	●
<a href="#">Sparking Change in New Jersey</a>	Nishika Sen	2018, Features	civic journalism, community journalism, NJ Spark	—	Published 2018/05/03	0	●	●
<a href="#">From SNL to the White House</a>	Alex Harrison	2018, Features	Entertainment, Fox News, Saturday Night Live	—	Published 2018/05/01		●	●

Appendix F

Sample of Yoast Score Tallies for Green, Orange and Red Overall Post Scores

### SEO and Readability Scores

Totals for 12/1/2018

	% Green	% Orange	% Red
SEO	90	15	0
Readability	95	15	0

Date	Author	SEO			Readability			
		Green	Orange	Red	Green	Orange	Red	
5/2/18	Alyssa Lopez	1				1		
	Autumn Oberkehr	1			1			
	Nishika Sen	1			1			
	Alex Harrison	1			1	1		
	Stephanie Cubias		1		1			
	Kylie Bezpa		1		1			
	Sabrina Tibbets	1			1			
	James King	1			1			
	Peter Lopez	1			1			
	Natalie Maszera	1			1			
	Emma Torres	1			1			
	5/5/18	Alanna Doherty	1			1		
		Liz Saofiem	1			1		
		Chloe Phillips	1			1		
Renata Chubb		1			1			
Brittany Chan			1		1			
Jean Consorti		1			1			
Rachel Maisel		1			1			
Sarah Post		1			1			
Bryan Alcox		1			1			
Tyler Hamilton		1				1		

Appendix G

Sample Excel Spreadsheet of Story Spot Check Results

**Story Spot Check Results - Week of 12/12/2017**

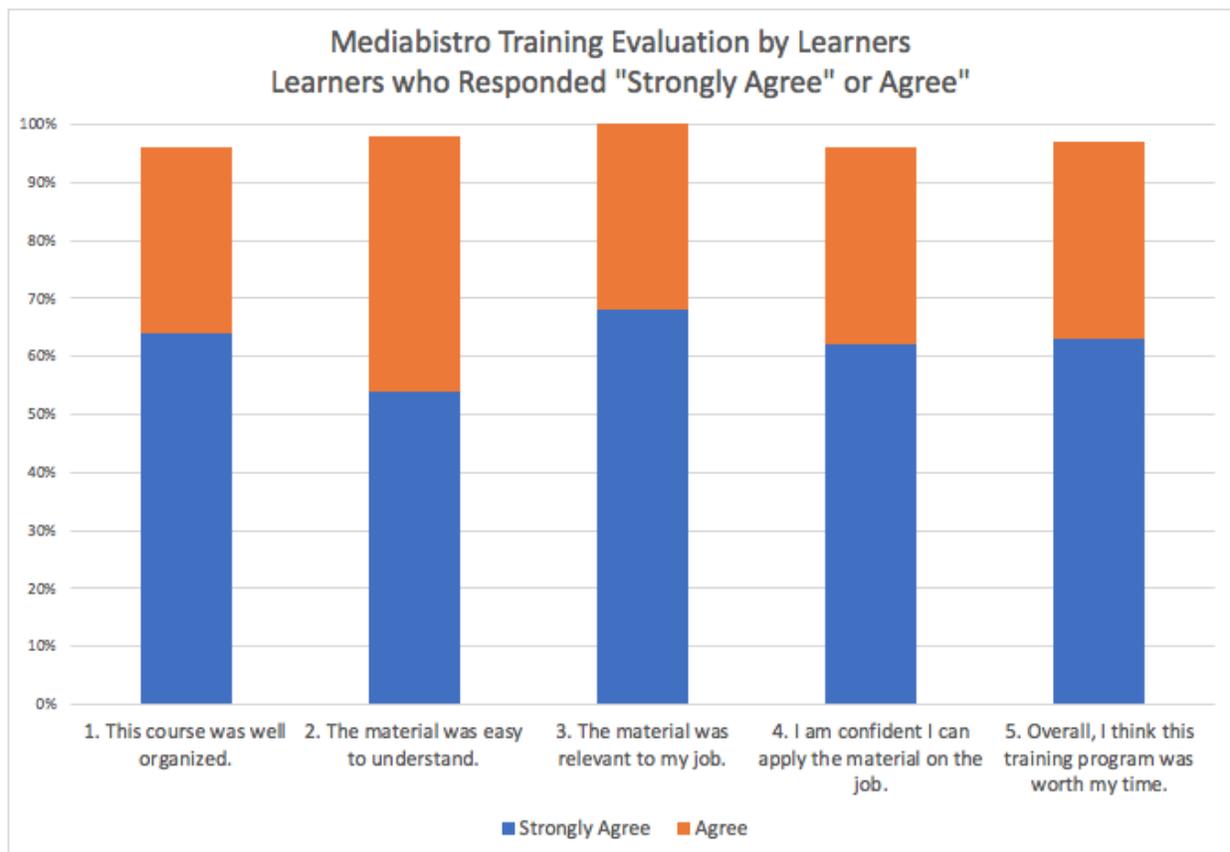
Witer	Managing Editor	Question #																									Totals	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	Total out of 15	Score as Percentage
Zayne Yang	Eric Eisenberg	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	23	92
Carolina Eaton	Tanya Ross	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	25	100
Dixie Clarke	Brittany Shollow	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	24	96
Alejandra Shellhammer	Shea Talany	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	23	92
Tena Lai	Jane Jones	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	25	100
Thomasena Elsey	Eric Eisenberg	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	25	100
Maricela Nicolas	Tanya Ross	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	25	100
Maurine Mcfatridge	Shea Talany	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	25	100
Annita Neill	Brittany Shollow	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	24	96
Scotty Crume	Jane Jones	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	23	92
Boris Cianci	Eric Eisenberg	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	23	92
Alta Garrido	Tanya Ross	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	25	100
Golden Manfre	Shea Talany	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	24	96
Dominica Liakos	Brittany Shollow	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	25	100
Darlene Depaola	Eric Eisenberg	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	24	96
Emerson Corsi	Jane Jones	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	25	100
Valrie Pearsall	Tanya Ross	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	25	100
Tabitha Mckeller	Shea Talany	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	25	100
Kandice Hern	Brittany Shollow	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	25	100
Corinne Zamarripa	Jane Jones	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	25	100
Vicente Hinkley	Eric Eisenberg	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	25	100
Eddie Rake	Tanya Ross	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	25	100
EleOr Belt	Shea Talany	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	25	100
Ryan Seldon	Brittany Shollow	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	25	100
Brianna Chase	Jane Jones	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	25	100

## Appendix H

### Results of Level 1 Training Evaluation

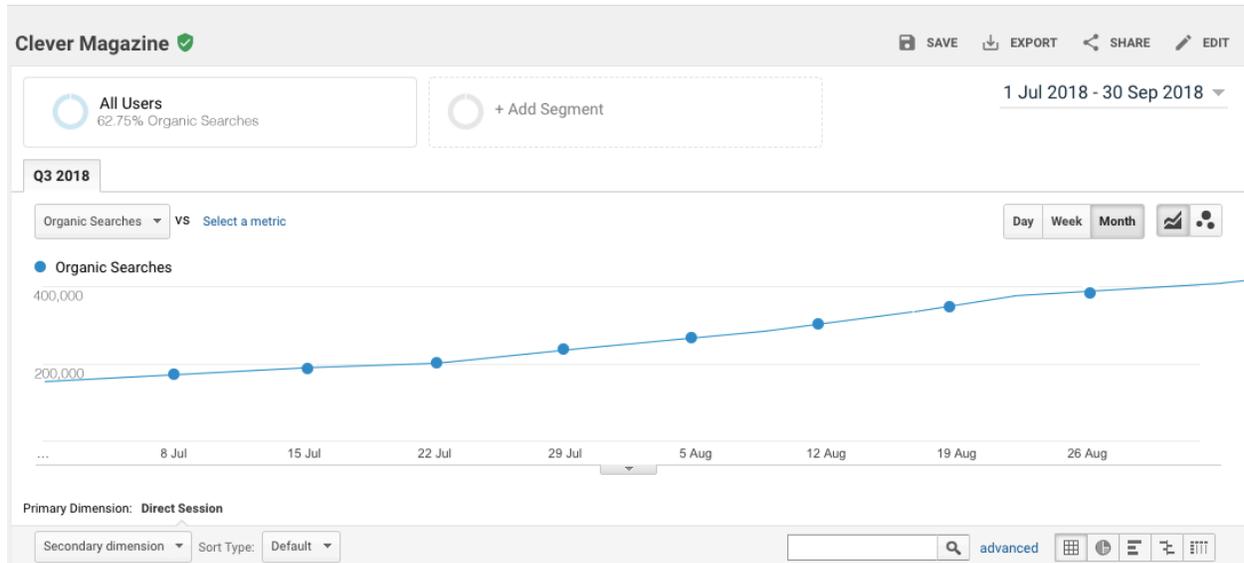
#### Mediabistro Training Evaluation by Learners: Table of Results

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. This course was well organized.	64%	32%	4%	0%
2. The material was easy to understand.	54%	44%	2%	0%
3. The material was relevant to my job.	68%	32%	0%	0%
4. I am confident I can apply the material on the job.	62%	34%	2%	0%
5. Overall, I think this training program was worth my time.	63%	34%	3%	0%



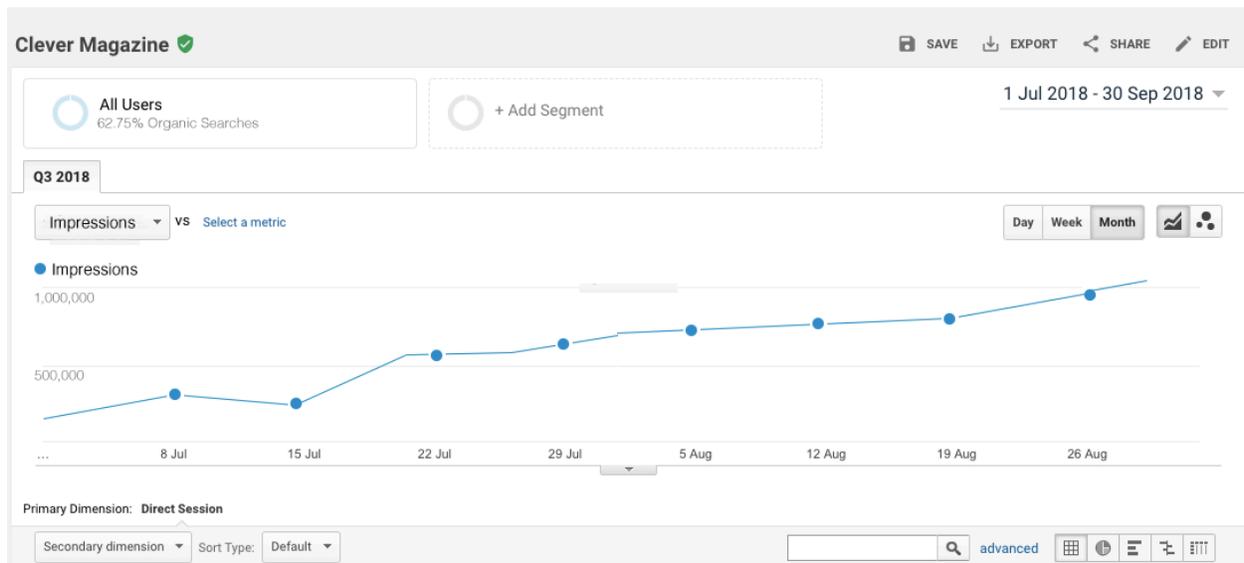
## Appendix I

### Google Analytics Data for Clever Magazine's Organic Search Traffic, Q3 2018



## Appendix J

### Google Analytics Data for Clever Magazine's Ad Impressions, Q3 2018



Appendix K

Google Analytics Data for Clever Magazine's Ad Revenue, Q3 2018

