Applying Quality Improvement Principles to your Web Presence: Ryan White TARGET Center

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INTRODUCTION

The lifecycle for website design and underlying technology is 2-3 years. Agencies that use their websites for mission-critical purposes should be in an ongoing cycle of review and update planning. Progressive enhancements can spare an agency the cost and interruption of major episodic website redesigns. In addition to learning about standards and best practices recognized in the web and software development worlds, Ryan White agencies can borrow from some of the principles used in their own quality improvement programs in managing their websites.

METHODS/ACTIVITIES

Needs Assessment

1. **Funder needs and priorities:** Current technical assistance programs were a good indicator of HRSA HAB's priorities, which are based on their own needs assessment findings. We knew that client-level data reporting, fiscal management, and program quality were key topics to feature.

2. **Feedback from frequent site users** (eg, HAB staff and TA contractors, grantees): We heard that the search engine was not working well. Search optimization would be a top priority.

3. **Our own expert opinion**: The site needed a more robust content management system. The general branding and design were solid and didn't need to be the focus of the initial "redesign."

4. **Analysis of site usage**: We had access to Google Analytics reports for the past few years. Webinar archives were a very popular feature, as was the Ryan White Community database of grantees. Many site resources were not used at all, probably because they were impossible to find.

METHODS/ACTIVITIES

Personas

The Ryan White community comprises a diverse group including community, public health professionals, and clinicians – each with their own priorities and needs. To ensure that we did not lose track of this diversity, we developed user personas for the following roles:

- New program manager
- Experienced program manager
- Clinician
- Planning council member
- HAB Project Officer
- Case manager
- Community member

Search/Browse/Findability

- The core of the TARGET Center website is a collection of 800+ documents, links, and multimedia presentations.
- We needed a system that allowed us to organize this large set into more manageable subsets, or collections of resources. Users and editors can browse the "Library" by topic, intended audience, date, and type of material.
- We needed an internal search engine that worked with a collection of our scale – which in the search world, is fairly small.
- Most of our website's users come to the site from external search engines like Google, and do not "land" on the site's home page first. We needed to ensure that our content was optimized for external search engines and that the site's navigation was clear from any page.

RESULTS

We didn't change the site logo or basic branding, but we did add a tag line to help explain the site to new users.

Social media links and tools help us reach a broader audience.

Tabs let us include a lot of information on the home page without overwhelming users.

Audience-based navigation helps new users, but also signals to all users the site's scope.

Task-based navigation helps users with specific goals, but also signals to all users how they might use the website.

We found that many of TARGET's users didn't realize that the name is an acronym, or what it meant, so we spelled it out in the footer on each page.


We expanded the topics library from around 10 topics to more than 50.

RESULTS

Each resource in the TARGET Center has its own landing page. This lets us display assigned categories and provide a description for users. It also gives a permanent page to link to and, importantly, it improves the visibility of the resource to external search engines.

Web users are used to rating resources, and it's a very easy way to get feedback about a particular document or tool.
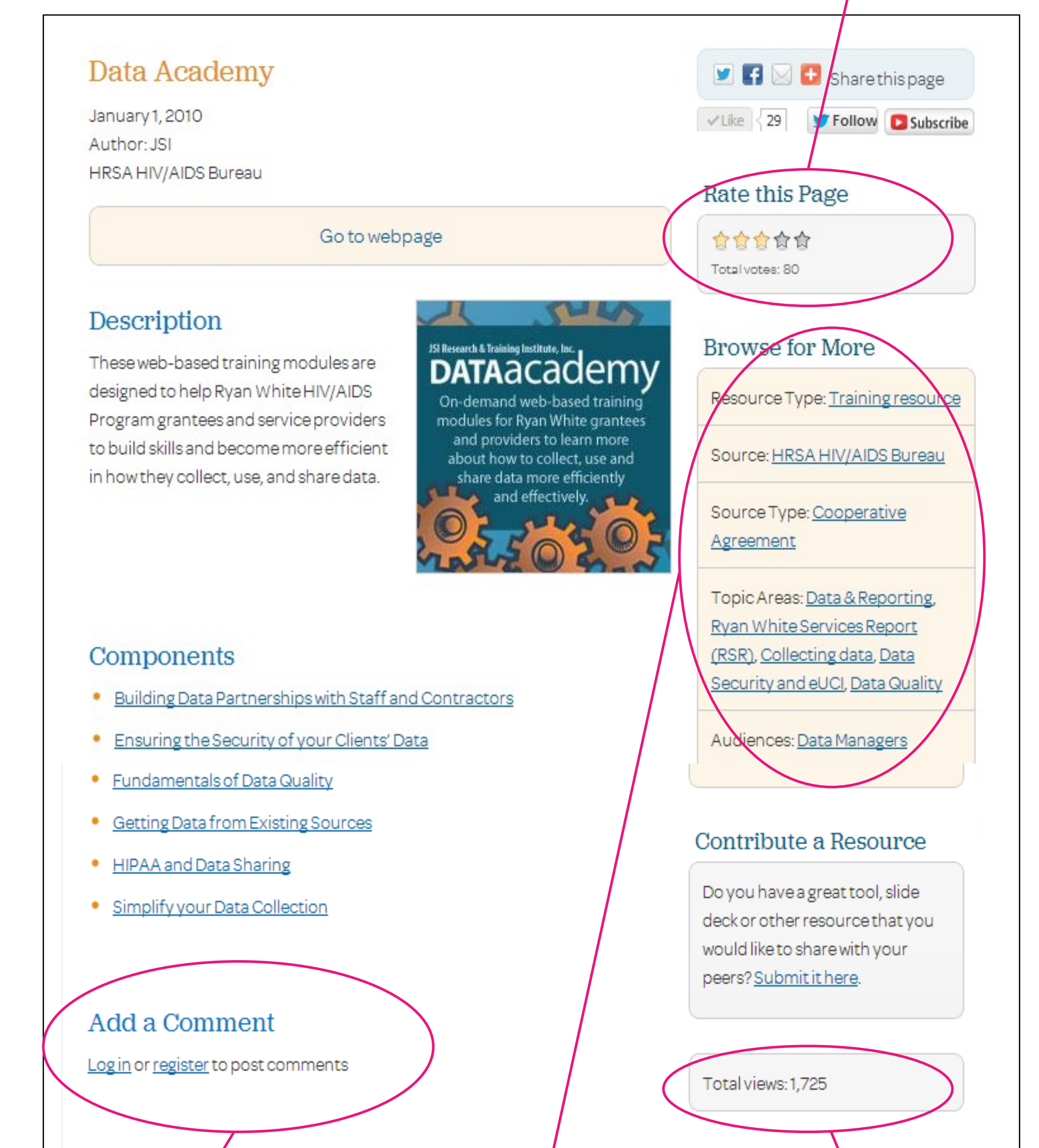
Allowing reader comments is a way to solicit richer feedback for specific resources.

Taxonomy-based browsing is very helpful for users.

A simple page counter is included so content contributors can check on their resources directly without going through the website staff.

RESULTS

- The updated TARGET Center website was launched in July 2012. Page views have doubled since the launch.
- Adding and editing content is a much streamlined process using the Drupal content management system.