David Pembroke: Hello, ladies and gentleman! My name is David Pembroke and thanks for joining us once again, InTransition. The podcast dedicated to the practice of content marketing and government.

Today we take on the subject of the dreaded website rebuild. I'm not talking any old website rebuild, I'm talking about one that involves more than 15,000 pages of content.

In Government, these types of projects are common place. Today, we're speaking to two talented young ladies who've just completed the task for the University of Canberra in Canberra, Australia.

We'll come to our guests in just a moment, but while content marketing is an old practice, it's still a relatively a new name and people are still familiarising themselves with what it is and what it means. For a government audience, the word 'marketing' is a massive turn off.

I spoke at the Government Communications Australia conference in Sydney last week and this very same issue was raised again. My closing slide had "Content marketing – the future of government communication". The response to the process, as always, was great but the word "marketing" not so much.

The answer I gave them is if a bear is a bear, you call it a bear. If a car is a car, you call it a car. In the case of content marketing is content marketing and as far as I'm concerned, I'm going to call it content marketing. We can dream up some other name. Just not to offend the sensibilities of others, but I don't think that works.

We've been down this path before, public relations was a well-established, effective private sector practice and government appropriated all the techniques and tactics that gave it a new name. They called it public affairs and it didn't make sense then, doesn't make sense today.

Another reason to be consistent with the name is to help people working in content marketing. For example, if someone is working in the public sector in the Department of Innovation doing content marketing and a job comes up at,

let's say IBM, wouldn't it be easier to say, I worked in government and I worked in content marketing? If you have a better name, let me know at david.pembroke@contentgroup.com.au

So, to add definition which is an adaptation of the content marketing institute's definition of content marketing. Content marketing is a strategic and measurable business process that relies on the curation, creation and distribution of useful, relevant and consistent content to engage and inform a clearly defined audience with the objective of driving a desired citizen or stakeholder action.

Technology has changed the way the world communicates and websites, apps and social channels are the key channel to building an organisation's reputation. With the adoption and use of mobile technology exploding, websites, or the centre of gravity, as they are known in content marketing have to be enabled; they have to be right and they have to be effective.

Now government websites the world over have been dumping grounds for digital detractors for years and it was the same at the University of Canberra.

They had to change. They did change. And here to tell their story of survival, are the architects of this triumph Inga Davis, the University's director of advancement marketing and communication and her trusted sidekick, Richa Arora. Ladies, welcome and thanks for being InTransition.

Inga: Thank you for having us, David.

Richa   Thank you for having us.

David: Inga, let's go back to the beginning. Tell us the story of the day that you pulled the trigger and said, "We need a new website."

Inga: David, I think I've wiped the memory of that day from the day we actually pulled the trigger to go live. And the whole experience is behind me, but happy to try and recant today.

             This was a project that took us about 18 months to get through from beginning to end. Ideally, I would've liked another six months to top it off, but 18 months was the timeframe we were working towards.

             The project came about because the university receives structural adjustment funding from government to look at repositioning the university, when they

were moving into demand driven environment. We were one of the fortunate universities to receive funding to reposition. And one of the goals we put in place was to redevelop the website.

You can you imagine universities, quite large beasts, a bit like government departments, you've got many types of professionals and academic staff working in them. They've all got their own stakeholder groups. They've all got their own markets and they all have websites pointing in different directions to tell different stories to different audiences and you can end up with a very confused and mixed message on your website.

At the end of the day, we decided that we wanted to put a student first approach forward with our website redevelopment. So we took that student centric approach and working from there we said, "Right, how are we going to redevelop this website? What do we need to do it and how are we going to start?"

David: How big of a mess was it in when you started?

Inga: I wouldn't describe it as a 'mess'. I would say, and I think the same goes for all websites, you need to stop and spend time cleaning them up and looking at the information architecture and really ensuring that the structure is working to tell a story to your customer base. So we were looking at our clients', our key customer base.

We needed to ensure that the huge volumes of content, the 15,000 pages, were streamlined in a way that was coherent for students. It wasn't a mess but it definitely needed a good tidy up. And there were number of authors responsible for that content across the campus.

David: At that point of initiation, you didn't have a process for content governance. Was there a way to keep the hygiene of this site in check?

Inga: Yeah. I think that's fair and I think that probably goes to the heart of being a university. You have academics that have freedom to publish what they like and you've got many service departments servicing all sorts of stakeholders and clients across the university.

In terms of governance, the way we do operate and the way we were operating was to have a nominated content author in each faculty, each

discipline area as well as the various administrative units. We had 250 authors across the university.

Whilst we use our best endeavours to provide training to them, you naturally get different authoring styles that come through. It certainly is still the way we operate the website and the university environment now is a distributed authorship model.

But in terms of governance arrangements, we've definitely put a policy in place to bring that all together. To put a health check over it going forward. Now we've gone through all the effort to clean it up, so there is a bit of governance in place there.

David: Richa, was it your experience, not just with the University of Canberra but beyond, that this practice of having proper governance and structure and process to maintain the hygiene of a website, is really a low priority and people really just love to throw the latest PDF up and keep them going until time stands still?

Richa   I think it's actually not low priority. The governance has always been established right from the start whenever there's a website in place. At the end of the day it just depends on the model of a particular organisation operates in. In the case of University of Canberra it is a distributed model. Unfortunately, as we get to share the responsibility with other authors across the board, it is a side effect; as a result the governance obviously takes a back seat in the system.

David: In most organisations, they use a distributed model for publishing, is there any way that you can establish an effective governance model?

Richa   I think in a distributed model it's not a supervision kind of approach. It is kind of a health approach where you say, "I am happy to assist you and I can guide you towards content writing and best practice manner. But you have to come to me for that guidance. You have to attend your training sessions and take them onboard when you go and write content going forward."

It's an assisted approach rather than supervising approach.

David: Have you found that that works?

Inga:	It has, yes. Taking a more rigorous approach to the quality message is absolutely essential. I think it is possible to have a more controlled governance arrangement. If you've got a centralized structure in an organization with lots of money to do so and you've got a team of writers who are writing content to consistent quality standards.
	But in an organization where you've got people who have freedom to publish whatever they like, you need to allow that freedom to support the university environment. It's just a matter of putting more rigorous training in place. We also introduce new CMS templates, and you design styles and style guides.
	So things are certainly looking much better and with training, you can improve your governance around search engine optimisation as well tagging of data and that kind of thing. So it's really an education process rather than a governance arrangement, I'd say.
David:	Okay, before we talk about the triumph, I really want to get back to the misery of the journey.
Inga:	Yeah, sure.
David:	Take us back to when you did start the process. What was some of the goals that you put in place and how specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time bound did you make those objective so as you could put yourself on the hook for accountability.
Inga:	Certainly the overarching goal was to redevelop the university's website. To ensure that the home page took a student centric approach. So that was number one. It then cascading from that, we wanted to move the website into a mobile responsive environment.
	We wanted to ensure that the website was compatible and optimised for social media. Obviously with a huge base of our stakeholders and market being students and staff as well, they're all on social media, so everything needs to be integrated now for our content marketing approach.
	We knew that we wanted to develop at six new templates within design templates that we could use. For the home page, for faculty pages, for new social media hub and we wanted to improve search access for courses and units as well, to improve the customer journey. We really looked at optimising

the steps that student are taking when they enroll; to make life easier for them.

Then the other objective we had was to develop a complimentary mobile app and Richa was responsible for project managing that as well.

David: From your point of view Richa, you knew you had the direction, what were the steps that you had to take to start and manage these processes and what are some of the tips that you can share with people about things that they need to do to avoid some of the pot holes along the way to a website rebuild?

Richa David, like you said we have to always start from what our problems are. We ask ourselves where do we begin before we even get to a solution, that's exactly what we needed to do.

When Inga gave me the brief of the project, I realised everyone was a stakeholder for the website in this university and we've obviously got huge problems that we want to resolve as part of this rebuild. The approach was actually talking to everyone in the university. Interviewing all senior management and heating about the problem that they have with the website.

When I started that process, the take away from that interview process was the problems were quite common. Everyone understood clearly that our target market was perspective students. The website should be foremost serving the needs of future students who want to come to this university. There were obviously also concerns about how we represent ourselves as a university to anyone other than students as well.

We did that interview process to gather feedback and then from there we developed scope of things that Inga mentioned. We needed to look at the content, we had 15,000 pages and we had a website that wasn't a mess but it was a disjointed website.

The information wasn't flowing from one area to other seamlessly. It was like we're repeating ourselves from one area of the website to the other area of the website. We realised as part of that process that a content audit was absolutely necessary for us before we even take on the journey of improving anything.

Inga: We benefited because till this day, in our office, we have a process on our wall.

Richa	We do.
Inga:	The web team literally mapped that content wall to wall, one by one.
Richa	Yeah, it now serves as a reminder of the fact that we never want to get back there.
David:	In terms of that stakeholder engagement, what worked best for you?
Richa	I think giving everyone an opportunity to actually raise concerns. They've all dealt with the website, in and out, every day in their jobs. They're not students but they've heard problems that student face day in and day out. It was a really comprehensive process in the sense that everyone had an opportunity to bring up the problems that they face. For example, as a project manager, I am not the subject matter expert but I manage to be facilitating that process of where people get opportunity to talk about their issues and then we go away and find a solution to those issues.
David:	Was it face to face communication that where you got the best insights?
Richa	Yes, absolutely. It was. The interview process was face to face. And I think the other thing that really worked for us in stakeholder engagement was keeping students at the centre of everything. Whatever take away we had from staff at stakeholder meetings, we took those back to students and said, "What do you think about this? Is this really the problem you're facing here?"
David:	Was the ratio of consultation weighted heavily to students to continue to get those insights?
Richa	They were, yes. Wherever we had a conflict of interest between what staff want and what students want, students took the priority. And staff are okay with it because they obviously has already said to us that that's what the website should be for. And they agreed with that approach.
Inga:	The way we went about getting buy-in in that context was to identify the senior management group and the key decision makers at the end of the day. Have them agree to the goals and objective up front and also to have Richa interview them one on one. As she mentioned, to get that feedback, but then we developed the whole testing cycle and workshops with students to find out what their issues were and what we were going to do with the information architecture to make things a bit easier.

We certainly focused on perspective students so far in this discussion, but also current students, in the current student journey. We developed two new intranets as part of this as well. Moving a lot of content into new staff and student portals so that that information was sequestered and made easier to access for current students and captive markets.

David: That decision was taken off the back of the insights that you gained through the consultation process?

Richa   Yes, absolutely.

Inga: Yes, we wanted to keep the corporate page very corporate and useful for people coming into the university but not necessarily current stakeholders of the university. Then we created the intranets. There were existing intranets but we improved them and moved the content over into better intranets for current staff and students.

David: What about the segmentation of those student audience groups? What was the process that you used to sort of aggregate these characteristic into personas and how many personas did you ultimately end up with?

Inga: From a student point of view we had research, post-graduate, under-graduate, and University of Canberra College students. Then from a perspective student point of view, we had senior secondary school students from Lake Ginninderra College, UC Lake Ginninderra.

Richa   And their parents.

Inga: And their parents as well because obviously parents are very critical to the decision making process for perspective students. That's about six or seven different personas. We included all of those students in workshops, they were all able to contribute in terms of their feedback about the website.

David: Did you get further down into culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and those sorts of things?

Richa   I think we had some challenges there. I would say. Especially because perspective students are students who haven't still come to the university. We had to target at current students who had just come to the university and had gone through the process to get their understanding of how the process worked for them and did the website help in any way. Or what were the obstruction.

David: In terms of building out these clear audiences that you can aim your content at, what's the best thing that you can do to really get those clear insights into the audience?

Inga: Well you need to be working with the marketing team. So understanding who your market are and linking that back to your goals and objectives. Do your segmentation.

We did a lot of work around describing the personas with the vendor who were running the workshops. So we had a vendor that came in and redeveloped the website and managed the IA process to some extent as well.

So knowing who those students are and the type of information you need to get out of them ahead of doing the workshops so that you get a value for money. Because you get lots and lots of feedback and information from multiple workshops and multiple sources and websites alike –marketing.

Everyone's got an opinion about what they like better and what colour works for them and the way they use information. So you've just got to take all of that feedback on-board and try and make some sense of it.

David: Richa, how did you balance the input of qualitative and quantitative data and how did you weight qualitative and quantitative data?

Richa: I suppose sometimes, in terms of qualitative and quantitative data, we did not want to base our decisions on let's say, a group of stakeholders as such, we wanted a broader picture. We did six workshops last, every 10 students included an age. But then again, do we rely on a data of worth 60 students or do we now keep testing this data with other students? And that's the kind of approach we took.

We had quantitative data but we take quality in every step. Basically by going back to other students and talking to them and something was produced. For example, we got the requirements first up. We went and did our designs and then tested them with students again as part of the usability testing of the website as well as with stakeholders.

I think having several check points at every step of the way helps when you've got such a broad audience.

David:	Did you bring forward data from the old website or did you just leave it behind thinking, "No, that's from the past, we're not going to use that."
Richa	No, there was lot of data and we could not leave everything behind. So we have brought, in fact, 90% or 80% of the data with us. And we've only created 500 pages fresh, as part of the website redevelopment.
Inga:	Yeah. In terms of the analytics, we had to use that as part of the content analysis process. Looking at who owns the pages when they were last updated. What kind of content's there? What kind of metadata is there? How many times has it been used?
	That's all of the kind of information that went into the analysis for every single URL. As to whether we kept it or whether it needed to be here? Who the owner was? Did they want it? There was a huge amount of engagement across the university.
Richa	Actually like you said, it was a joint effort. So the team was responsible for analysing the data but we weren't the owners of that data. At every step of the way, we went back to them and said, "This page hasn't been updated in five years, do you think it's still relevant? Do you think we should keep it or archive it?"
Inga:	Speak now or forever hold your peace.
Richa	Yes and a lot of the time
David:	Did anyone say, "NO! NO! Someone's going to hold. Someone wants it"?
Richa:	Yeah and a lot of the times. There were times people were saying, "Okay we probably don't need it and it's outdated actually. So we should put it down."
	Sometimes people said, "Oh no, it just needs to be re-written" and they took on that opportunity when asked and re-wrote those pages.
Inga:	Which is great outcome.
Richa	It was.
David:	Now you've got the architecture, we've got the goals sorted and we've got the audience sorted. Take us through the challenge of mobile. What were the things that you had to consider to make sure that this was a great mobile website?

Inga:	There were two things going on in parallel, there was a development of a mobile app as well as having a mobile responsive website. We went through a full on tender process to select the vendor, which was ultimately Squiz, with my source matrix CMS.
	We worked with them. In their presentation through the tender process, they, I guess, really impressed us with their mobile first approach and the range of templates that they were able to deliver. We did two tablets, mobile phones and the website.
	We absolutely took onboard a mobile first approach. I think at the moment, with the old website, about 20% of our users were using a mobile device to access the website.
Richa	Exactly, we already had data to prove to us that students are more and more are looking at our website from mobile devices but they're not getting the experience they want. So it was absolutely critical for us to follow mobile first approach.
Inga:	I'd expect that that will shoot up to 60 – 70% evenly this year and we know that people use their mobile devices to access websites and that changes scrolling behavior. Longer websites are now acceptable whereas they weren't a few years ago. It changed the dimensions of the design that we were willing to accept for the different market that we were targeting.
David:	What were some of the threshold questions that you addressed with your vendor provider that were must haves in terms of development of the mobile app and the mobile site?
Richa	The vendor for the mobile app was different than the vendor of the website. But I think we had to clearly define our objectives for both products basically. What we wanted to achieve out of the mobile app and who should it be focusing on as oppose to what was the website doing?
	Although they're both are serving the needs of the students in the university as well as other audiences. But we had to state our objectives clearly to both vendors. We did not want a mobile app to be an extension of the website, we wanted it to save some quick needs that students can use it on the go. For things like parking, lab availability information, staff directory.

That mobile app became current student focused and current staff focused. Whereas the website obviously is broader than that.

David: What are some of your advice in terms of working with vendors?

Inga: I think it's absolutely critical that the vendor, for a huge project like this, the big factor in my mind when we were selecting the successful vendor was, have they got experience with a project to this magnitude and complexity? If they haven't, you need to really think twice about whether they're going to be up for this and if they actually know what they're getting into.

That was absolutely critical; the fact that they were bringing a project manager at their end. I have really learned throughout this process as director of marketing, the value of having an excellent project manager. And I'm smiling at Richa now.

Someone that is qualified in project management methodology, I think Richa uses a prince to approach someone that can be right across the documentation, stay across stakeholders. Really do the business analysis as well. In Richa's case, the stakeholder interviews.

So a great project manager is absolutely critical but that needs to be mirrored at the vendor end as well. Squiz had a pretty good project manager who we were able to work with throughout the project.

That way you know you've got that dedicated resource that's whipping all of their resources into line. Because the project, while it's complex to manage from our end, it's equally as complex from their end. And they're coming at it nude. Digesting who all these stakeholders are and what's going on with all these information architecture.

Richa   I think one key thing I would like to add is the vendor was Squiz and they have a magnitude of experience working with universities across the board. So whenever we ran into issues, we always looked at what they did for other universities in a case like this.

Whether they had directly managed that project or not, they were able to go and talk to their peers and seek that information for us. And we some lessons learned from previous projects that we could apply to ours.

David: In regards to insights around social media and the integration with the website, what did you do there that worked really well?

Inga: I think one of the things we've done there is, we've created our own social media hub. So recognizing that our stakeholders are all using different social media platforms, in particular, academics are publishing on blogs and in their conversation, or Facebook, they're on The Din, they're on Twitter, and university's got corporate accounts as well.

One thing that was really exciting that we're able to do was to create this really nice looking social media hub that has live streaming from all of our relevant accounts onto the home page. Which really promotes interaction in that way.

In addition, there's far better social media integration on individual pages as well. Enabling individual faculties and degree areas and disciplines to channel their own feeds through. And to really collect details and create subscriber services. That's all really critical for content marketing.

Richa And just to add there, we do have some unofficial channels being used by, let's say, faculties or other areas of the university. But having a cool social media hub, as described by many in the university now, it has remoulded our social media presence. And now people want to come to that common platform so they can promote the platform that everyone else sees on the home page.

David: People like the fact that there is one place and there's a substantial engaged audience in one place?

Richa: Yes. Absolutely.

David: What was the hardest, toughest moment of the project?

Richa A couple, actually we can go through here, but I think the first of biggest moment we had been with the homepage designs.

Inga: I was trying to reflect back. Yeah I do think that that's the case and having in advance what your approval process is going to be. So I know of another university in Australia that actually had their senior executive sign off on every single URL on page that was created. We didn't go down that path. But we did want the homepage to be accepted by a few key people around the university of course including the vice chancellor who's the equivalent of the CEO.

So we went through quite a few phases and were diff design phases with the homepage. I think the challenge is when you're using an outside vendor, you purchase X amount of hours and you might only get three goes to get it right. We hit our three goes and we still didn't have it right. So we had to look at, "Well what are we going to do?"

David: How many goes did you end up with?

Inga: I think we probably had four or five.

David: Six or seven?

Richa   If you count all the internal goes that we had.

Inga: I'm glad we did and what we did in the end was bring in to work with Squiz because it was absolutely imperative that the design align with the university's brand. So they were able to add a new dimension, a new flavour. And the outcome was fantastic. We got to showcase all of our new photography. And they brought a new edge to it.

But that was tricky. Because then you've got a third party. So you're not just dealing with one vendor, you're dealing with two vendors. And everyone needs to be available at the same time for meetings. And you're working to a very tight timeline and so forth. So that was good.

David: Richa, your worst moment?

Richa   Well, I can probably go through a couple here but I think the good part is we overcame all of them to have a successful story today. I suppose my grief was, the information architecture of the website kept evolving. Just kept evolving until one day we just said to everybody, "This is the last round of updates". That did not mean it was the last round of updates. I was getting updates before go live.

But you just have to sort of keep…

David: Every time you thought you had it pegged in to the ground, someone somewhere would say, "You haven't thought of X".

Richa   Yeah or this is how it should be.

David: Don't you think you need to be adaptive and agile and be able to respond to that, particularly if they've got a good point?

Richa	Absolutely, I think the information architecture of the website is such a thing, it needs to overtime. We are still taking recommendations. I think we have never gone back and said it is not a good point. We want to take that onboard but we want to test it.

We don't want to go make changes on the fly on the website because we will then have a website that can go on the wall again. And we do not want to get into that situation.

All the recommendations that came our way, we did not ignore a single one. We actually looked at them and went through the process that we took on board in the first place and tested that with students where we could.

But then you run out of time. Produce do run on time and then you run out of time for doing that. In the end, everyone was accommodating that we've now reached somewhere and it's not the end of it. It will be evolving as we progress.

David:	That's a really good point because these days, no website or app is ever finished. We're in this perpetual state of updating, improving and changing. And really trying to sell to people that, "here's a hard and fast stop" is really not the way it should go. It should always be sold as, "This is where will get to on this particular day, but that might be where the money runs out so the large amounts of changes, but we can iterate and change as we go."
Richa:	Especially in the digital spaces; it's quite imperative to keep reviewing current strategies and goals.
David:	As you look back, do you feel that it was a real satisfying experience, a great professional experience?
Inga:	Yes.
Richa	I feel it was a great experience personally for me. As much as I've learned, I also feel that having a successful project like the website project, I really feel the satisfying experience was what I would call it.
David:	Fabulous.
Richa:	Oh yeah.
David:	And for you, Inga?

Inga:	Yes. I think I'd describe it as satisfying. I'm just joking. It's one of the projects I'm most proud of having been involved with the university. And you can certainly sense there's a real, there's a bit of a let-down. The go live moment was incredible. I was just amazed.
	So we had about 20 people across IT and the web team present until 10:30 – 11pm at night and there was a 20 page document with checklist that Richa had prepared and it was like watching a space shuttle to the moon. It was…
Richa	Inga's words were, "Spaceship is just about to take off people."
Inga:	Everyone had their part. The vendors had their part, the technical guys had their part, their switching over and you got to sort all your caching out and networks and firewalls. There was a huge amount of work that needs to be done just to go live and I think there was such a build-up of adrenaline. Now people are missing the rush. People are like, "Oh you know they're ready. The web team are ready for the next big project."
David:	There war stories are on.
Inga:	Which is really wonderful to have been part of that. Yeah, going live was definitely my hairy moment where I think as sponsor or a project like this you have to be willing to draw a boundary around where you're at and say, "Right, we're going to do it. I know that the information I could teach you. That the stakeholders that want this and the stakeholders that want that, we've got it to a point where we can use it, let's go live and we'll continue to improve because that's what websites are all about. They're not static, they're evolving." And that's the way we've approached it.
David:	Alright, thank you very much for your time this afternoon. That was fascinating chat about something that really is at the heart of content marketing. Your website it sits there, it's where you want a lot of your engagement to take place because it's where you can build your audience.
	At the end of the day, that's what content marketing is about. It's about creating and distributing useful, relevant and valuable content so you are drawing people in through your social channels, into your website so they can get a sense and a feel for who you are, what you stand for and so that they would engage with your story and hopefully you'll get them to either come to the university or to send their children to the university or travel from overseas

to come to the university because it is a university that speaks to them through content.

Lots of good insights there, I think, around having a great project manager, having a great process and having very specific and clear objectives each step along the way and making sure that you are managing the time, managing the capability by being prepared to be agile to move to adapt and to change as things change.

Because as we go further and further into the digital era, we are all going to have to be more agile, we have to move faster. It's all going to have to get changed so change is the new normal so get used to that.

Thanks again everybody for being with us once again In Transition, a great episode with the ladies from the University of Canberra. I hope you've learned a lot and I'll see you next week.