PROJECT 3: SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION (SEO) PLAN

1. THOUGHT LEADERSHIP GOALS

In developing my thought leadership goals, I hope to utilize my journey through unemployment to assist jobseekers in need of training via online and blended learning environments. In addition, I'd like to inform people, particularly those that are employed and are in policy-making roles, what steps are needed to deal with the problem of unemployment. This is, perhaps, a goal most people would not think of in terms of thought leadership. Unemployment has a negative connotation and does not necessarily offer opportunities for growth and prosperity. It is, however, a topic that has influenced my life and the lives of millions of Americans over the last several years. I enrolled in the Information & Learning Technologies program at the University of Colorado-Denver to understand how online learning could help people train for new job opportunities or re-train for existing opportunities.

To accomplish this goal, it will require a certain amount of outreach on the web. First, I plan on building my Base Camp Site, [Learning in Motion: An eLearning Portfolio](#) by blogging on a regular basis and adding to my portfolio when the opportunities arise. Second, I hope to grow my circle of followers on my Personal Learning Network on Google+ Communities, [Jobless Journey: Reflections on Unemployment](#). Finally, I hope to have the ambition to talk about my unemployment in a public forum where my story can be recorded and shared with people on the web. The long-term goal is to have something similar to a TEDx presentation. Despite the anxieties of stage fright, I have often enjoyed speaking in public and telling a story with personal meaning.

Perhaps and even broader thought leadership goal will be to offer hope to anyone who has felt discouraged or lost their confidence entirely due to losing a job through no fault of their own. This also could prove rewarding to college graduates looking for inspiration to chart a new path in their still-forming careers.

2. ROLE OF BASE CAMP AND PERSONAL LEARNING NETWORK

As stated earlier, I will need to build on my Base Camp Site and expand my circle of followers on my Google + Communities Personal Learning Network. Of the two online platforms, the Base Camp Site could serve as an ideal location to display my educational portfolio and more formal presentations of my work.   In some ways, the site would look and feel more like LinkedIn than Facebook. The overall tone would be more professional and the site would draw the eye (and the Google search) of academic instructors, business leaders and policy makers. Not having much experience in either online learning or corporate training, the base camp will take several years for me to develop. It will not only include content from my Information & Learning Technologies classes, but also material gathered outside the course framework.

On the other hand, my Personal Learning Network will have a more informal tone as well as greater opportunities for "out-of-the-box" endeavors. Having worked in the creative field of television production, I have found working on the site to be less of a challenge as well as more personally rewarding. I have enjoyed contributing a variety of content, including news articles, links to unemployment blogs and the occasional inspirational/motivational photo. One additional item I may consider contributing would be a video blog (vlog) about my unemployment experience. This audiovisual content could serve as a transition to building a possible TEDx presentation down the road. The videos could be simple 2 to 3 minute segments of me talking about how unemployment has changed my life for better and worse. Hopefully, the videos will broaden my reach of Google + followers as well. Video is a more popular content for sharing than text and is more enjoyable to experience.

3. STRATEGIC PLAN FOR ESTABLISHING WEB PRESENCE

In order for my Base Camp Site and Personal Learning Network to have a significant impact on delivering my thought leadership goals, there must be a constant effort to maintain and update my content to maximize search engine optimization. Having created a Weebly blog earlier this year, Laboring To Work, under a pen name of Marc Schaefer, I came to realize what I takes to not only build a website, but what is necessary for search engines, like Google, to enable people to find a site. In addition, I realized it would be important to share updates to my site via social networking communities.

First, each of these sites will have to be updated with new content on a regular basis. Blogging is perhaps the simplest way to accomplish this, especially Learning in Motion, where I will have weekly opportunities to reflect on educational technology news articles and ILT class discussions. Recently, I posted a brief comment regarding a KQED article about a school district's efforts to improve broadband access for its online students in a rural area of Alabama. Likewise, posting news articles on the Personal Learning Network will be important, especially given that the improving job market for the short-term unemployed masks a continuing problem for the long-term unemployed.

Second, I plan to utilize Google Webmaster and Google Analytics to get a more detailed idea of how often my sites are being visited and what content is being accessed. Having used Google Webmaster Tools before with my Laboring To Work site, I have gotten a better sense of what types of search queries are being made, what sites are linking to my site and what content keywords are relevant. Google Analytics will give me a better picture of my followers: age, gender, country of origin, etc. Google Analytics seems to be more of a marketing tool useful for commercial/retail websites, but it could prove useful to get a better idea of who is engaged in my content contributions, especially if I can get a better idea if there are visitors who work in education, government, and non-profit. Also, it will be important in include certain keywords into not only the titles of the blog entries on my Personal Learning Network, but also in the meta keywords menu of my Weebly settings on my Base Camp Site.

Third, I hope to utilize social media sharing sites to publish my academic portfolio work from my Base Camp Site. At the moment, I'm interested in posting future material on Slideshare or Slideboom, where my audiovisual skills and experience could be put to good use. At this moment, I'm not sure whether to include a link to my Personal Learning Network given the informal nature of Jobless Journey. If there are times where my Personal Learning Network can compliment a contributed project on one of these social media sharing sites, I will be sure to include it. Otherwise, I will focus on my portfolio work.

Fourth, I plan to utilize social networks to both broaden my circle of followers and improve my search engine optimization potential. As stated earlier, I believe my Base Camp Site, Learning in Motion, would be a better fit on LinkedIn due to the more professional and formal nature of the site. LinkedIn would offer the opportunity for me to include my academic portfolio along with my work experience and professional recommendations within my profile. Plus, there would be instances where I could contribute my opinions with academic groups and corporate training professionals. On the flip side, I believe Facebook and perhaps Twitter could be ideal platforms for broadening my reach of my Personal Learning Network due to its informal and personal scope. At some point, I might begin sharing video blogs regarding what I have learned during my journey through unemployment: how exercise helps one's self-esteem, how to socialize within your budget and how important a keyword-rich resume will be.

Fifth, I hope to contribute to the sites of my fellow classmates and followers who make an effort to actively contribute to my site. When I was blogging on my unemployment site Laboring To Work, I was a contributor to the site Lady Unemployed. It not only enabled me to contribute comments and guest articles, but I was able to have my blog site linked to this site, which came up in the top Google searches for the keywords "unemployed" and "blog." Besides the benefits of improving search engine optimization, contributing to other people's site will create a greater sense of community. If there arises an occasion where I can join an event posted on LinkedIn or Facebook and meet my classmates in person, that could prove rewarding, especially when I can offer feedback in person.

Finally, I plan to add more details, to a point, on my profiles on Facebook, LinkedIn and Google+ Communities. The information I disclose will enable people to get a better understanding of who I am and what I hope to accomplish. When I say "to a point", I mean that I wish to disclose information that will not compromise my personal identity. This was a factor I had to consider when I wrote my unemployment blog, where I chose to blog under a pseudonym. I feel a little more confident now to disclose certain facts and events from my unemployment journey, but I am mindful not to include specifics regarding past employers.

4. PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT OF SEO PLAN EFFECTIVENESS

From my experience creating and contributing to my Weebly unemployment blog [Laboring To Work](), I know that it will take some time to get a clearer picture of how effective my search engine optimization plan will result in implementing my thought leadership goals. It takes a while, sometimes weeks, for Google Webmaster and Google Analytics to produce detailed results of a website's reach on the internet. Sometimes the results are initially reported as "no data available." The upside to using Weebly for blogging is that the site offers basic statistics to get an ideal of how many page views and unique visitors have been tallied. Advanced statics, like a registered domain, require an additional fee.

****As of December 7th, I have very little information on Google Webmaster Tools and Google Analytics to get a clearer picture of who is visiting my sites. I must confess, I am not a master website builder and I may need to ask for some professional advice to maximize my search engine optimization.****

Regardless of the statistics and demographic information, a bigger issue to improve the search engine optimization will be broadening the social networking reach of both sites. As someone who has considered himself an introvert in personal settings, I find it very challenging to persuade people to "like" my site, "share" my blog entries and "follow" me online. While I was unemployed, I did not see friends and former co-workers as often as I would have liked, and many of those social ties have been strained and, in some cases, cut completely. I realize I have an opportunity to build new relationships, both online and in-person, but I also hope to mend old connections.

5. NEXT STEPS

During the course of my ILT program studies, I hope to regularly contribute to my Base Camp Site and my Personal Learning Network. The goal will be to contribute up-to-date content, whether it will be timely news articles about educational technology, employment data or personal reflections on what it's like to transition from full-time jobseeker to full-time worker. At some point, I may take the time to learn WordPress so I can fully utilize the software's website building potential and create a richer Base Camp Site and Personal Learning Network.

Like I mentioned earlier, the biggest challenge for me will be to broaden my circle of followers. It will take some time and self-confidence for me to reach out to my classmates and followers and speak honestly about how unemployment has impacted my life. I do believe, however, that discussing the challenges of finding a livelihood will bring some greater purpose to my life and give me an opportunity to become a though leader on the topic of adversity.   Then, I hope to incorporate that thought leadership role into my online learning studies to help jobseekers looking to either start a new career or improve their skills in their existing careers.