

The Entrepreneur's Journey

STYLE GUIDE

Produced by the WPI Albanian Project Center in Collaboration with the
Worcester Albanian Business Network (WABN)

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Creating the first rendition of the digital exhibition *The Entrepreneur's Journey* involved a combination of multiple processes that culminated in a tribute for Worcester Albanian Entrepreneurs. This guide outlines these procedures and highlights the best practices one should use to ensure that the expansion and continuation of this exhibition neither detract from the work that has already been done nor become a separate entity that seems unrelated to the other parts of the exhibition.

The exhibition can be found here: <https://www.wabn.org/exhibition.html>

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Conducting Interviews

We would not have been able to get most of our interviewees had it not been for the help of many people in the Worcester Albanian community, namely, Mr. Ardian Preci, founder of the WABN, Peter Christopher, who founded the WPI Albanian Project Center, and Greg Steffon, who organizes the Albanian Festival in Worcester. We would highly recommend contacting these individuals for more potential interviewees:

- Ardian Preci - email: ardian.preci@gmail.com
 - Sponsor of the project, highly involved in the Albanian community.
- Peter Christopher - email: peterrc@wpi.edu
 - Provided us with Greg Steffon's contact information and is very involved in the community
- Greg Steffon - email: greg.steffon@yahoo.com, cell: (617) 519-7608
 - Highly involved in the Albanian community, Mr. Steffon gave us 4 contacts, 3 of which we were able to interview.
 - He offered to provide us with more contacts if we told him what types of entrepreneurs we were looking for.
- Irida Tollkuci - email: irida@catalystinsuranceagency.com
 - Worked for Greg Steffon and offered to provide us with more contacts if we told her what types of entrepreneurs we were looking for.

Potential Entrepreneurs to Interview

The following entrepreneurs were willing (or likely willing) to be interviewed but due to either their or our limited availability, they could not be in the first round of entrepreneurs. We recommend they get interviewed in the following rounds:

- Olta Kodra - email: okodra@sbs-aba.com
 - Her husband, Erion Kodra, was available, but she was not. They both own Strategic Behavioral Solutions, but Olta does the day-to-day work.
- Andrea Nasto - email: asdautobody@yahoo.com, cell: (774) 272-0355
 - Mr. Nasto owns ASD Automotive in Worcester and DJs Albanian parties on the side. He responds better to phone calls, and is generally more available after 5pm.
- Eda Stefani - email: estafani@wpi.edu
 - Eda Stefani owns a photography studio, Stefani Studio. She is also the Associate Director of Application Data Management in the IT Department at WPI. She was a sponsor for the B2020 IQP term.

A full list of potential contacts can be found at this [link](#).

Convenience Sampling

To find entrepreneurs for the exhibition, one can use a number of sampling strategies. We used convenience sampling (we interviewed whoever wanted to be interviewed) as we found that entrepreneurs did not respond to our inquiry emails without encouragement or endorsement from either our sponsor or another member of the Albanian community. This strategy is quick, simple, and efficient, but it does not guarantee a lot of diversity in the sample.

Purposive Sampling

We hope that after publishing the first wave of the exhibition, other entrepreneurs will want to be interviewed and volunteer themselves. In this case, if too many want to be interviewed, one can use purposive sampling. With this strategy, one would use expert knowledge to define characteristics of most importance to the research (like the year of migration, etc.). Then they would handpick a nonrandom sample of entrepreneurs in the Albanian community that could be assumed to represent the entire population of what is being researched within those categories (“Purposive Sample”, 2008).

Snowball Sampling

Finally, we recommend, however the initial sample of entrepreneurs is selected, that one uses snowball sampling to further their list of entrepreneurs. One simply needs to ask entrepreneurs whether they know of any other entrepreneurs who would like to be a part of the exhibition (which could be done in an interview or afterwards as part of the “thank you for meeting with us” email). Then, by asking those contacts for new contacts, one can explore new networks of Albanian entrepreneurs from many different people.

Interview Questions

The interviews with the entrepreneurs should be semi-structured, meaning that one should not stick to a scripted set of questions. We have provided our complete list of sample interview questions on page 8. Yet, we did not follow the same order of questions for every interview; we followed the flow of conversation, even asking closed- or open-ended follow-up or clarification questions as they came up.

We found our most successful questions for an in-depth response to be:

1. *What was your life like in Albania before coming to the United States?*
 - a. While this question is somewhat vague and open-ended, we found that this question typically launched the entrepreneurs into stories of their childhood and provided an overview of their life right at the start of the interview. One interviewee actually talked for 20 minutes straight just after this first question.

2. *What advice would you give to your younger self?*
 - a. This question is also purposefully vague. The entrepreneur must decide for themselves at what stage in their life they would easily be able to define much-needed advice, which might benefit someone else who reads their profile if they have encountered a similar situation.
 - b. If the advice they give is unrelated to being an entrepreneur, however, for the purpose of the exhibition, we would recommend one ask the question again but modified to be more specific; ex. “what advice would you give to yourself before starting your business¹?”

3. *What would you want represented for your profile in the exhibition?*
 - a. One should make it clear to each interviewee exactly why the interview is being conducted, as that makes the entrepreneur more likely to answer the interview questions in a way that would be most helpful to the interviewers in making their profile.
 - b. Asking this question towards the end of the interview allows the interviewee in most cases to reflect on what they’ve previously said and pick out what they feel their biggest message is. This also allows one to consider how to structure their profile.

Writing the Profiles

We transcribed all of our interviews using free transcription software (we found that otter.ai worked reasonably well) and then went back through the recording to refine the transcription. In revisiting the transcription, we would make note of the timeframe in which each interviewee was talking: when they came to America, when they considered becoming an entrepreneur, etc. to more easily structure their profiles in clear chronological order. We followed a method used by museums when they curate narratives for exhibits:

For a narrative to be curatorial for an exhibit, one must first recognize the set of events that make up the story. By creating this timeline of important events for each story related to the exhibition, it becomes easier to define recurring themes, times, or locations (which are called facets) in certain events (Wolff et al., 2012). Thus, the same events can be told through different perspectives in different stories, offering greater depth to the exhibit. Once the curator decides how they want the audience to experience each facet (e. g. to be influenced-by, react-against, relate-to), events with the same facets can be clustered together into plots and plot descriptions (Wolff et al., 2012). These plots serve as the baseline for each

¹ Change to venture specific to each entrepreneur; this exhibition should not solely consist of businesses.

story in the exhibition and ensure that no two stories are the same, while keeping them interconnected.

The profiles we made were structured after this procedure; we would find connected pieces of a story (even if they were talked about at different points in the interview) and format the profiles to chronologically tell the story of each entrepreneur, tracing the connection between their journeys to becoming an entrepreneur and their journeys within being an entrepreneur.

We also started each profile with a hook to draw the visitors into the story and provide an overarching message for the entrepreneur; this was typically related to the question wherein we asked the entrepreneurs what they would want represented in their profile.

Designing the Exhibition Profiles

During each interview, we would have one person taking notes while another primarily asked the questions, and either interviewer would take note of interesting, inspiring, profound, or advice-specific quotes. In going back through the transcription we would highlight those quotes and decide whether it would be best represented as an audio clip, video clip, or a block quote.

Text Color

All text should be #3f3f3f, shown in Figure 1A, which is not the default text color on weebly. The default coloring of block quotes is #aaaaaa, which is a very light gray. It can be hard to read on a white background, so to be conscientious of user accessibility, we make all text a dark gray.



Figure 1A: Text color #3f3f3f

Yet, there are instances in writing quotes or text wherein we find it to be more compelling to emphasize some words. These words can either be bolded, changed to #da4444, shown in Figure 1B, or both.



Figure 1B: Emphasis color #da4444

An example of text that has been emphasized can be seen in Figure 2.

*"I was 18. So what was my life like? You know, **a dreamer** with a lot of enthusiasm and a desire to **reach the stars** and that that time of everybody's life when you feel like you can **conquer the world.**"*

Figure 2: A box quote displaying how to emphasize certain words in a quote.

Text Font

Weebly only allows one font per tool in the plan *wabn.org* is on. Thus, one is limited in their choice of text fonts. The team recommends not changing the font from Crimson Text, as different fonts may disrupt the prior formatting in other entrepreneurs' profiles. The site's owner, Ardian Preci, has made the font for block quotes Architect's Daughter, which we would not recommend changing either. Because of the lightness of the block quotes' font, we recommend completely bolding them.

Block Quotes vs. Text

Text is typically in third person and should be used only as a tool to help the story along (i.e. if there is no clear quote, or one wants to provide background information that would make for a dull quote). The stories should be told by the entrepreneurs themselves, through quotes, audio, and video. For larger, compelling points, use a block quote. The stylistic rules of text font and color still apply to these quotes.

HD Video

Weebly allows one to add videos through YouTube links and HD videos. We only used the HD video option, as that made the video embedded into the site, whereas the YouTube videos would open YouTube in another tab. The team recommends adding video to the entrepreneur profile if the entrepreneur is very expressive with their thoughts, or monologues without losing their original point along the way. The team also recommends keeping the videos 1-2 minutes long without much editing so the thoughts of the entrepreneurs stay in flow; cuts in a video are always noticeable.

Audio Clips

One can also add audio with Weebly. This can be used to add more media to the webpage or alternate it instead of the videos. The team recommends usage of audio if the entrepreneur does not have video, pauses a lot while talking, or does not move much while talking so that a video would add nothing more than an audio clip. The pauses can be edited out of a clip using software like Audacity, while in a video, cuts are more obvious because the person might have moved during their pause. The team

recommends that audio clips are between 30 seconds to 2 minutes in duration to maintain brevity and engagement on the webpage.

Areas of Future Expansion

In discussing the exhibition with Mr. Ardian Preci, and our advisors Professor Robert Hersh and Leslie Dodson throughout the term, the similarities in our entrepreneurs' profiles, we noticed several key areas of future research that would be beneficial to the versatility of the exhibition:

1. Explore transformational stories
2. Investigate non-first-generation Albanian entrepreneurs
3. Focus a sample on part-time Albanian entrepreneurs

Explore Transformative Stories

Transformational stories of immigrant entrepreneurs would recognize immigrants who had professional, scientific, or specialized careers in Albania but lost their credentials to continue pursuing that career when they arrived in the United States—which happened to many of our entrepreneurs' parents.

Investigate Non-First-Generation Albanian Entrepreneurs

While transformational stories are more likely to be found in the older generation of Albanian entrepreneurs, investigating the newer generations—the American-born Albanian entrepreneurs in Worcester—would provide yet another perspective to our exhibition. Their attitudes, motivations, and approaches to entrepreneurship might differ from first-generation Albanian-Americans.

Focus a Sample on Part-Time Albanian Entrepreneurs

We recommend using a purposive sampling strategy to find part-time entrepreneurs, or those who have at least one other job and do not rely on their entrepreneurial venture as their sole source of income. This sample would add another facet of entrepreneurship to the exhibition while also giving recognition to those who are less likely to receive it than large corporations or small-to-medium enterprises.

Sample Interview Questions

1. What was your life like in Albania before coming to the United States?
 - a. What were your parents' occupations?
 - b. To what extent would you say they influenced who you are today?
2. How would you categorize your own path to becoming an entrepreneur?
 - a. What kind of work and educational experiences did you have?
 - i. To what extent did they help you become an entrepreneur?
 - b. What brought you to the United States?
 - c. What was your first impression of the US? Worcester?
 - d. What were some of the struggles you faced upon arrival to the US?
 - e. Did you have the support of your family through this time?
 - f. What made you want to become an entrepreneur? Necessity? Desire?
3. Tell us about your work experiences in Worcester?
4. What things have helped you become an entrepreneur?
5. What has been difficult for you as an entrepreneur?
6. Why become an entrepreneur?
7. Would you want your children to become entrepreneurs?
8. What role would you say your business plays in the Worcester Albanian community?
 - a. Are a lot of your customers of Albanian heritage? Mix?
 - b. How about employees?
9. What advice would you give to a [the age at which they began exploring entrepreneurship]-year-old you?
10. Do you have any photos that you would like to contribute to the exhibition?
 - a. Childhood, adolescence, adult years, work set up?
11. What would you want represented in a digital exhibition?
12. Questions Regarding the Worcester-Albanian Community
 - a. How close are you with other people of Albanian heritage in Worcester?
 - b. Do you find yourself choosing the businesses of people you know that are of Albanian heritage over other businesses of the same nature?
 - c. Are there people in your community that you wouldn't know if they were not of Albanian nationality?
13. How have you handled COVID-19 as an entrepreneur?

References

1. Purposive Sample. (2008). In P. Lavrakas, Encyclopedia of Survey Research Methods. Sage Publications, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412963947.n419>
2. Wolff, A., Mulholland, P., & Collins, T. (2012). Storyspace: A story-driven approach for creating museum narratives. Proceedings of the 23rd ACM Conference on Hypertext and Social Media - HT '12, 89. <https://doi.org/10.1145/2309996.2310012>