



Connecting Artisans Around the World: Promoting and Developing Aid to ArtisansU

WPI Washington, DC, Project Center

Submitted By:

Mackenzie Banker
Vanshaj Chowdhary
Michael Prindle
Yang Xu

Advisors:

James Hanlan
Stephen McCauley

Sponsor:

Maud Obe
Senior Project Manager,
Aid to Artisans

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Abstract

The goal of our project with Aid to Artisans was to enhance their nascent web platform, Aid to ArtisansU, by increasing its functionality and user base. We interviewed artisans from seven countries and evaluated website analytics to understand site usage and gain insight into the ideal web-platform for craftspeople. In addition, we created a tutorial video and a course on importing, observed an immediate increase in user ship, and provided recommendations for future projects with Aid to ArtisansU.

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Survey Respondents and Interviewees

Executive Summary

Across the world, artisans making handcrafted goods have difficulty competing with the mass produced goods created with modern manufacturing. While artisanal goods are very high quality, artisans face difficulties in successfully marketing their crafts from the lack of marketing and business knowledge. Many organizations, such as Ten Thousand Villages, the Alliance for Artisan Enterprise, and Aid to Artisans, make it their mission to provide assistance to artisans around the world by helping them reach wider markets and improve their livelihood opportunities.

Aid to Artisans (ATA) is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to improve the lives of low-income artisans in developing nations by providing them with design, leadership, and marketing assistance. ATA was founded in 1976 by James and Mary Plaut, with the goal of providing artisans practical assistance in selling their products. Since then, ATA has worked in more than 110 different countries helping artisans improve and sell their craftwork. In October 2015, ATA launched Aid to ArtisansU (ATAU), an e-learning platform designed to teach artisans skills necessary to succeed in marketing their products such as communication, business development, effective writing, and leadership. ATAU provides users with access to many courses, and enables artisans around the world to connect with other users through discussion groups. All of the features on the ATAU site are free to any user. The site also aims to provide a communication platform to link artisans, potential buyers, and organizations, allowing artisanal producers to create, share, and spread their own content.

METHODOLOGY

The goal of this project was to help Aid to ArtisansU connect artisans all around the world by improving the existing platform to make it more effective for current users and promoting the platform to anyone who would be interested in learning about the craft sector. We aimed to broaden the site's current user base and implement new functions to improve user-friendliness for current members, empowering Aid to Artisans to continue connecting artisans with new markets across the world.

In order to accomplish our goal, we created five main objectives as shown in Figure 1.

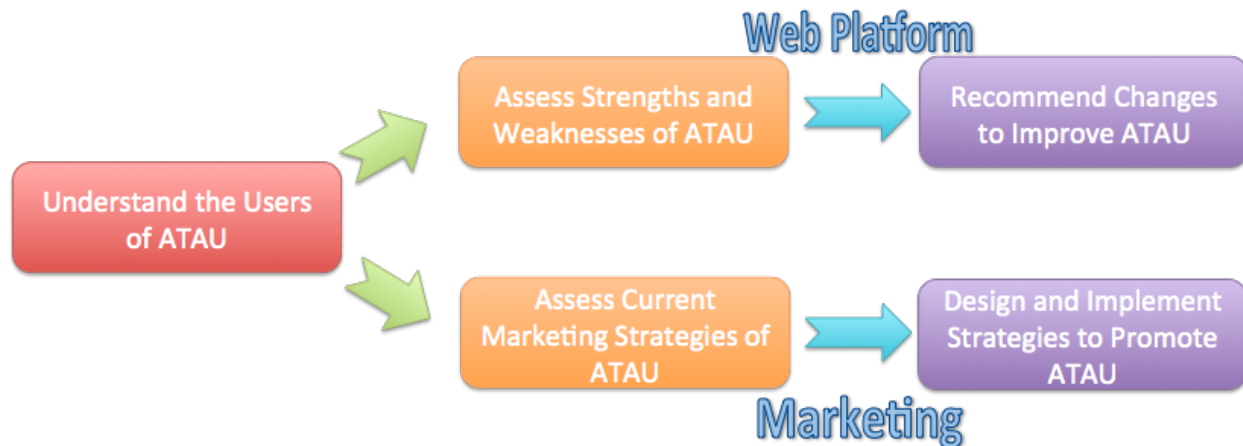


Figure 1: Project Outline

We achieved our objectives by surveying and interviewing current ATAU users to understand their perspective on how ATAU can be more beneficial for them. In addition to the surveys and interviews, we analyzed the site usage through Google Analytics. Lastly, we went to different craft shows and events to introduce ATAU to the artisans there.

RESULTS

From performing our methodology, we were able to identify the basis for our deliverables and recommendations.

Users are struggling to use Aid to ArtisansU to its full potential.

A large theme we noticed during our surveys and in-person interviews was that users have trouble understanding how Aid to ArtisansU can be beneficial to them and how to use the features on the site.

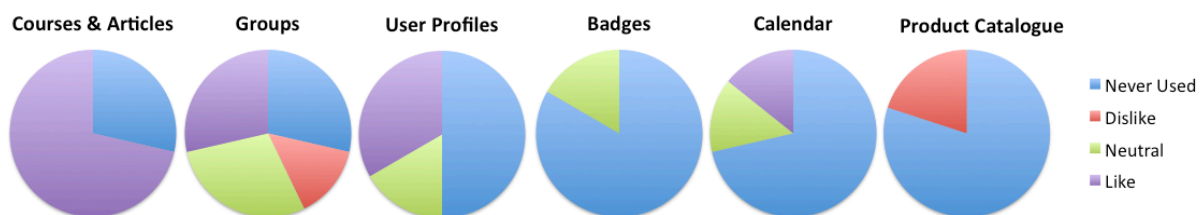


Figure 2: Rating of all the features on Aid to ArtisansU

From our survey responses as shown in Figure 2, we saw that most of the new features added to ATAU such as uploading images of products were not used, while courses and articles were used and liked by the majority. We also noticed this during our in-person interviews where the users were having trouble understanding how to use the different features on the site. Because of this, we performed a demonstration on how to use the site during our in-person interviews. After the demonstration, the users seemed much more comfortable using the site and started using it more frequently.

Users prefer personal communication as opposed to surveys.

When we sent emails to the users on Aid to ArtisansU requesting them to fill out our survey, our response rate didn't meet our expectations. However, when we sent users personal emails as opposed to a general email requesting for a Skype interview, we received a significantly higher response rate. A number of respondents expressed preference for face-to-face communication.

Regular curation and promotion of the site leads to more sessions on the site.

Our last major finding was that the activity on Aid to ArtisansU spikes significantly whenever there is an individual or a group of students working on the site. As shown in Figure 3, every time there wasn't anyone managing the site, the activity on the site dropped immediately. However, when there was a group working with ATAU by either promoting the site to new users, updating existing users on ATAU updates, or adding new content on the site, the activity on the site increased. This increase in activity is entirely from new users or existing users going on the website, as any activity performed by the group in charge was filtered. Many of our interviewees also informed us that all of our emails and communication with them reminded them about ATAU and led to them checking the website again (Personal Communication, 2016).

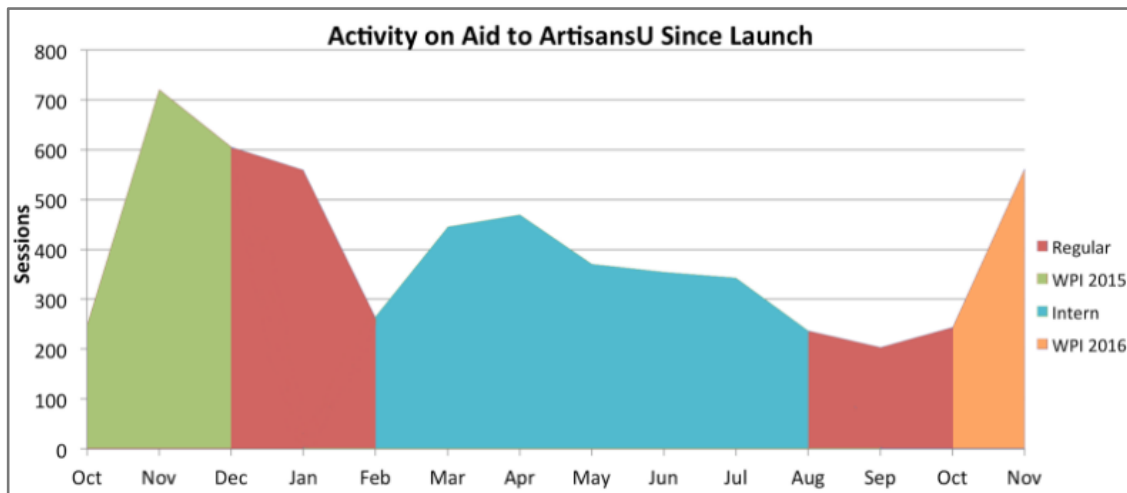


Figure 3: Activity on Aid to ArtisansU Until Our Departure

DELIVERABLES & RECOMMENDATIONS

We were able to create three significant deliverables addressing the expressed needs of the users. These included a list of site improvements, a tutorial video for the ATAU platform, and a course on the topic of importing artisan goods to the U.S. retail market. In addition to the deliverables, we created a list of recommendations for future work on Aid to ArtisansU.

We created a prioritized list of site improvements for Aid to ArtisansU.

From our assessment of the site, we created a list of improvements that addressed minor changes like misspelling or capitalization errors to major changes like fixing features that are not working properly. In order to make sure the web team addressed the most important improvements first, we prioritized the list based on the significance and impact the change would create for ATAU.

We created a tutorial video that highlights the different features of Aid to ArtisansU.

The tutorial video was developed based on interview feedback, where a number of users said that they felt that the site had more to offer them than they fully understood how to access; the video walks a new or returning user through the basic site functions such as adding a product to their profile, enrolling in a free course, and joining a group to communicate with others. This video was posted on the ATAU site where all site users can view it.

We created a course on importing artisanal goods to the United States market.

The course was developed at the behest of ATA due to the desire to start inviting ATA's buyer and retailer partners to join the site, following the aforementioned addition of product catalogs to the site. With the addition of both the product catalogs and the course, ATAU can attract more buyers, retailers, and trade networks.

We recommend implementing an advanced search feature on Aid to ArtisansU that allows for searching users by their country and their products.

The advanced search feature would allow for users to search for other users or products by qualifiers such as region or type of good; this would help to improve ATAU's ability to showcase artisanal goods.

We recommend adding an additional set of categories for the products on Aid to ArtisansU.

The product categories recommendation addresses a similar issue as the advanced search; products cannot currently be categorized into relevant categories, and are as such difficult to search. With the addition of the product categories, searching for and organizing products will be an easier task.

We recommend implementing a discussion forum to allow for more communication and activity on Aid to ArtisansU.

The discussion forum seeks to add more of the user-desired interactivity to the site, by allowing any user to post questions or news for all other users to see and comment on, without needing to join a specific group to do so, as is currently the case.

We recommend Aid to Artisans to continue having interns or staff members work directly on Aid to ArtisansU, by having them regularly update the site with new content, as well as make social media posts about the site on a frequent basis.

We succeeded in more than doubling the site activity from before we arrived during our short seven weeks with ATA, using mostly simple promotional strategies, and we believe that this is both the easiest and the best way to ensure the continued growth of the site. We are confident that, with dedicated effort, the site can grow to become an immensely useful resource for artisans across the world.

Authorship

Section	Author(s)	Editor(s)
Abstract	Michael Prindle	Mackenzie Banker, Vanshaj Chowdhary
Executive Summary	Michael Prindle, Vanshaj Chowdhary	Mackenzie Banker
1 Introduction	Michael Prindle	Mackenzie Banker, Michael Prindle
2.1 Business Challenges Facing Artisans in Developing Countries	Vanshaj Chowdhary, Yang Xu	Michael Prindle
2.2 Aid to Artisans	Vanshaj Chowdhary	Michael Prindle
2.3.1 Evaluating an E-Learning Platform	Mackenzie Banker, Michael Prindle	Vanshaj Chowdhary
2.3.2 Addressing Shortcomings of E-Learning Platforms	Vanshaj Chowdhary	Mackenzie Banker
2.4.1 Difference Between Marketing Nonprofit versus For-profit Organizations	Mackenzie Banker, Michael Prindle	Vanshaj Chowdhary
2.4.2 Analyzing a Nonprofit Organization's Marketing Strategies	Mackenzie Banker, Michael Prindle	Vanshaj Chowdhary
2.4.3 Importance of Online Marketing	Mackenzie Banker, Michael Prindle	Vanshaj Chowdhary
2.4.4 Online Marketing Strategies	Vanshaj Chowdhary	Michael Prindle
3.1 Understand the Users of Aid to ArtisansU	Vanshaj Chowdhary	Michael Prindle
3.2 Assess Strengths and Weaknesses of Aid to ArtisansU	Mackenzie Banker, Vanshaj Chowdhary	Michael Prindle
3.3 Recommend Changes to Improve Aid to ArtisansU	Michael Prindle	Vanshaj Chowdhary
3.4 Assess Current Marketing Strategies Used by Aid to ArtisansU	Vanshaj Chowdhary, Yang Xu	Vanshaj Chowdhary, Michael Prindle

3.5 Design and Implement Strategies to Promote Aid to ArtisansU	Michael Prindle	Vanshaj Chowdhary
4.1 Initial State of Aid to ArtisansU	Vanshaj Chowdhary	Mackenzie Banker
4.1.1 Understanding the Layout and Functionality of Aid to ArtisansU	Vanshaj Chowdhary	Mackenzie Banker
4.1.2 Usage of Aid to ArtisansU	Vanshaj Chowdhary	Mackenzie Banker
4.2 Feedback from Aid to ArtisansU Users	Vanshaj Chowdhary	Mackenzie Banker
4.2.1 In-Person Interviews with Users	Vanshaj Chowdhary	Mackenzie Banker
4.2.2 Survey Responses	Vanshaj Chowdhary	Mackenzie Banker
4.2.3 Skype Interviews	Vanshaj Chowdhary	Mackenzie Banker
4.3.1 Review of Aid to ArtisansU	Vanshaj Chowdhary	Mackenzie Banker
4.3.2 Communicating with Members Effectively	Vanshaj Chowdhary	Mackenzie Banker
4.4 Impact on Usage of Aid to ArtisansU	Vanshaj Chowdhary	Mackenzie Banker
5.1 Deliverables	Michael Prindle, Vanshaj Chowdhary	Mackenzie Banker
5.2 Technical Recommendations	Vanshaj Chowdhary, Michael Prindle	Mackenzie Banker
5.3 General Recommendations	Vanshaj Chowdhary	Mackenzie Banker
6. Conclusion	Michael Prindle	Vanshaj Chowdhary

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1: Introduction

The artisan sector has one of largest consumer bases in the developing world, second only to agriculture (Indego Africa, 2016). Artisans in developing nations produce unique handmade goods ranging from clothing, to pottery, to high-end furniture; compensating for lack of production volume with the high quality and personal touch associated with goods made by hand. Despite the high production quality achieved by many artisans, they often find difficulty marketing their goods to new markets because they are unable to compete with the marketing platforms of large-scale industrial companies. Outside the structured world of mass manufacturing, artisans are faced with irregular payment schedules, inconsistent supply chains, and heavy competition from organizations which can mass produce similar goods for far lower prices (Mohapatra & Dash, 2011).

Aid to Artisans (ATA) is a nonprofit organization based in Washington, DC, with the purpose of helping artisans around the world connect with other organizations and buyers by providing them essential marketing strategies. ATA has been working with artisans since 1976 and has helped more than 125,000 artisans in over 110 different countries in their 40 years, resulting in hundreds of millions of retail sales for previously struggling artisans (Aid to Artisans, 2016). The organization sets out to “create economic opportunities for artisan groups around the world where livelihoods, communities, and craft traditions are marginal or at risk” (Aid to Artisans, 2016). One of the ways ATA helps artisans with connecting to markets is with their signature program, the Market Readiness Program. This program lasts for five days and is held annually in New York, where groups of artisans meet with ATA in order to participate in marketing and business skills workshops. By providing marketing and business training, ATA hopes to empower artisans to couple their existing trade and craft skills with the organization’s market-readiness training to enable artisans to penetrate new markets, improving their incomes and, as a result, their livelihoods.

Just a year ago, in August, 2015, ATA launched a new online e-learning platform, Aid to ArtisansU (ATAU) in partnership with their parent organization, Creative Learning. E-learning is a technique used to provide online training to large populations in a convenient and flexible

manner. ATAU aims to provide online learning content accessible by other organizations that work with artisans, improving the capacity of the organizations to provide marketing and business education without having to “reinvent the wheel,” as explained by Maud Obe, 5 year member of the ATA team and senior manager of ATA programs. The introductory courses on ATAU serve both as standalone learning content, as well as providing background information useful for users seeking to participate in ATA’s Market Readiness Program. On top of being an e-learning platform, ATAU also showcases artisanal goods developed by artisans working with ATA and partner organizations. This enables potential buyers to contact artisans in developing nations and purchase goods from them.

The ATAU platform stands to benefit from improvement on several fronts. Increasing the site’s user base, improving current site functionality, and ensuring that e-learning content present on the site engages users and prompts continued site usage are all challenges that ATAU is currently working to address. The goal of this project is to empower Aid to Artisans to provide expanded business and marketing assistance to artisans in developing nations through their online platform, Aid to ArtisansU. We will accomplish this by collecting feedback on ATAU from current users, buyers and artisans alike, through surveys and interviews. After gaining a solid understanding of what the users would like to see from an e-learning platform such as ATAU, we can use this information to improve and add features to engage users, and promote the platform to new artisans, buyers, and donors.

2: Background

The background section provides an overview of the current difficulties facing artisans in developing countries, as well as the efforts being made to alleviate these problems by Aid to Artisans. In addition, we present information on methods to develop and improve e-learning platforms, as well as promoting nonprofit organizations in a way that enables them to attract more members.

2.1 Business Challenges Facing Artisans in Developing Countries

Across the world, artisans making handcrafted goods have difficulty competing with the mass-produced goods created with modern manufacturing, which results in a lower quality of life for many artisans. This stems not from lack of quality goods, but from lack of ability to introduce their products to new, profitable markets. As shown in Figure 4 below, over 40% of artisanal craftspeople surveyed in India suffer from irregular payment schedules, while an additional 20% suffer from canceled orders, and another 20% complain about difficulty acquiring raw materials for their craft (Mohapatra & Dash, 2011). These supply chain difficulties arise from lack of business knowledge, as artisans typically produce their products out of very simple goods. Research shows that artisans' quality of life can be improved by outside intervention to educate them on market practices (Mohapatra & Dash, 2011), as many lack knowledge on current design and production practices, as well as information on raw materials such as cost, quality, location, source, and dealers of the goods they need to produce their products (Yusuf, 2012). A major obstacle faced by some artisans is the inability to read and write, forcing them to seek market information from friends, relatives, radio, or television programs, as opposed to resources specific to the topic.

Problems Facing Artisans in India

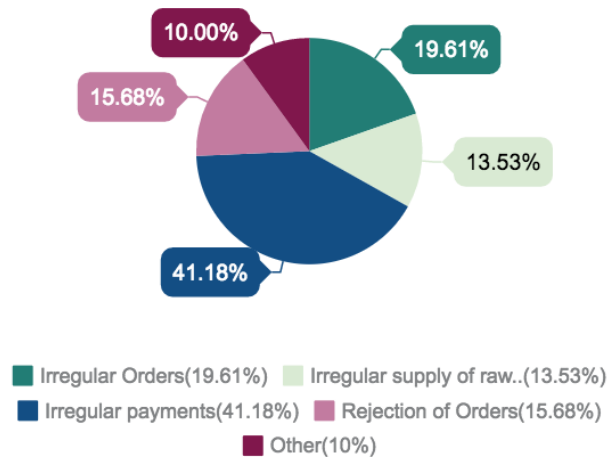


Figure 4: Business problems faced by artisans in India (Mohapatra & Dash, 2011)

Many artisans struggle to adapt to modern methods of acquiring and selling their goods; these goods, such as handmade clothing, furniture, and art, are typically high quality and are rarely the weakest link in the business of an artisan in a developing economy. If provided education on modern business and management practices, such as market communication skills and the utilization of social media for professional networking, artisans would likely see a notable increase in their quality of life.

Many organizations, such as Ten Thousand Villages, the Alliance for Artisan Enterprise, and Aid to Artisans, make it their mission to provide assistance to low-income artisans around the world. Ten Thousand Villages is a nonprofit organization that markets craft goods made by over 20,000 artisans in 30 developing countries spanning South Asia, Africa, Middle East, East Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean. Their mission is to have all artisans in developing nations “earn [a] fair wage, be treated with dignity and respect, and be able to live a life of quality” (Ten Thousand Villages, 2016). In 2015, Ten Thousand Villages helped unemployed or low-income artisans around the world earn a total of 7.5 million dollars by selling their products. Similarly, the Alliance For Artisan Enterprise is a collection of artisan businesses and artisan support organizations that work towards their goal of integrating artisans into global commerce and increase revenue for both artisans and their communities (The Aspen Institute,

2016). They promote the importance of the culture associated with artisanal goods, on top of providing financial assistance to struggling artisans.

2.2 Aid to Artisans

Aid to Artisans (ATA) is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to improve the lives of low-income artisans in developing nations by providing them with design, leadership, and marketing assistance. ATA was founded in 1976 by James and Mary Plaut with the goal of providing artisans practical assistance selling their products. Since then, ATA has worked in more than 110 different countries, helping artisans to improve and sell their craftwork (Aid to Artisans, 2012). ATA offers a program called the Market Readiness Program (MRP), a hands-on training experience held annually in New York City for anyone involved with the artisan sector (See Figure 5). The program is held in collaboration with NY NOW, the largest trade show representing home and lifestyle goods in the United States. Lasting five days, the MRP is designed to be an intensive preparation program for entry into the US market. In addition to this key initiative, ATA works with partners in developing nations around the world who work directly with artisans to provide in-person training and assistance. Some of these partners include the Afghan Business Women’s Federation (ABWF), Barro Sin Plomo, Caribbean Craft, and the Peace Corps.



Figure 5: A flyer for a previous ATA Market Readiness Program (Aid to Artisans, 2013)

In order to implement their ideas and strengthen their mission, Aid to Artisans has partnered with many different organizations. In 2012, ATA joined Creative Learning, a nonprofit founded in 1977, whose mission is to enable other domestic organizations to achieve their goals of improving lives around the world. Alongside ATA, America’s Unofficial Ambassadors, Human Rights & Advocacy, and Global Education Initiatives are also a part of Creative Learning.

In October, 2015, ATA launched Aid to ArtisansU, developed by Creative Associates’ online branch, CreativeU. ATAU is an e-learning platform designed to teach artisans skills necessary to succeed in marketing their products such as communication, business development, effective writing, and leadership. ATAU provides users with many courses and allows users to connect with other users by creating groups. All of the features on the ATAU site

are free to any user. ATAU also offers a Market Readiness Introductory Course, which is a preparation course for ATA's Market Readiness Program. This course helps artisans understand the characteristics of the US market, identify their target market, and the importance and role of the buyer in the retail market. The site also aims to provide a communication platform to link artisans, potential buyers, and organizations, allowing them to create, share, and spread their own content. The goal of ATAU is not just education of artisan groups, but also to connect artisan groups with each other in order to build a strong community by sharing ideas and experiences.

Aid to Artisans also worked with a group of Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) students one year ago (Bell, Kuchibhatla, & Rivera, 2015). The group of students promoted ATAU by creating their own promotional materials and attending many different conferences, trade shows, and conventions each week. Alongside the promoting aspect, the students also conducted interviews with current and potential users of ATAU in order to get feedback on the site and how it could be improved. In order to further improve the site, the group also tested all the different functions on the websites and held meetings with the site developers to address these issues. Lastly, the group recommended both marketing and technical changes to ATA. Our project is a continuation of where this group left off with promoting ATAU at more events, and recommending improvements for the ATAU platform.

2.3 E-Learning Platforms

The fundamental basis for Aid to Artisans' ATAU platform is the creation and dissemination of online learning content, known as e-learning. Recent developments have led to an era where online learning platforms have become one of the most productive uses of the Internet for businesses training (Harun, 2002). These e-learning platforms have many advantages when compared to traditional classrooms. An e-learning application can attract a broader audience as it can be accessed from anywhere with an internet connection. Furthermore, the users are no longer constrained in terms of daily schedule like in a traditional classroom setting, which is often fixed. Users can access the platform at any time and set their own pace for the course. Users can even choose what topic they want to focus on and learn more about. Along with this flexibility for the users, e-learning platforms are cost-effective for the developers and do not require as much continuous resources as classroom learning (Anaraki, 2004). Alongside advantages, however, there are many potential drawbacks. Some of these drawbacks include users facing frustration, anxiety, confusion, and reduced interest in the topics (Anaraki, 2004). All of these can eventually lead users to stop using the platform.

2.3.1 Evaluating an E-Learning Platform

Evaluating e-learning platforms is crucial in order to prevent the common problems that most platforms face. Lui, Lo, and Yiu (2013) propose a framework to evaluate e-learning platforms by analyzing the platform's infrastructure, functions, specializations, learning activities, learning context, and learning experience and customization. Infrastructure includes the compatibility of the platform on different devices, such as desktops and mobile devices, as well as network technologies and software platforms (Lui et al., 2013). E-learning platforms can have many different functions, though they can be generalized into six major ones: Communication, Collaboration, Class Management, Assessment, Learning Activity Management, and Learning Object Management. E-learning platforms, depending on their specialization, which can be categorized as Generic, Generic Educational, or Subject-Based,

focus on different functions; ATAU is a Subject-Based e-learning platform. Learning objects and learning activities can vary in detail depending on the platforms, but usually fall within the ranges: acquiring knowledge, practicing and applying, exploring and evaluating, and proposing and creating ideas. Learning context is an e-learning platform's ability to use the learning objects and activities effectively for their specific audience (Lui et al., 2013). In other words, an e-learning platform should present content that depends on the interests and motivation of the users. Learning experience and customization is perhaps the most important of these "six dimensions" as denoted by Lui, Lo, and Yiu. A major part of the learning experience is the interactivity with the users. Interactive features help engage and motivate users. Some strategies for increasing interactivity are providing text that when hovered over defines the word, allowing users to control the order of viewing the content, and simulations (D'Angelo, 2015). Overall, this framework presents the different parts of an e-learning platform that must be considered when evaluating an e-learning platform.

2.3.2 Addressing Shortcomings of E-Learning Platforms

While e-learning may be experiencing fast growth and development, the dropout rate in online classes when compared to that of traditional classes is much higher. According to Hodges (2004), attrition rates are as high as 80% in e-learning courses. While only about 20% of the users actually complete the courses they sign up for on e-learning platforms, roughly 60% of students pursuing a four year bachelor's degree program graduate in 6 years (US Department of Education, 2016). There can be many factors involved that lead to a high attrition rate for online teaching websites, but the two most common issues are motivation and poor design and usability of the e-platform itself (Zaharias & Poylymenakou, 2009). Motivation is one of the key problems that becomes magnified significantly in an online setting when compared to traditional settings. Often times, the users are unable to sustain their motivation throughout an online course, which leads to them losing interest and dropping-out of the class (Hodges, 2004). Website usability also plays a large role as it improves customer trust, satisfaction, and loyalty (Flavián, Guinalú & Gurrea, 2006). In order to lower an e-learning application's attrition rate, motivational strategies as well as improving usability are key methods.

The meaning of motivation has been debated in the past, and even now the exact definition is unclear. According to Weiner, motivation is the “primitive drives and needs” (1990), though Hodges believes that this is an “antiquated view” (2004). On the other hand, another author defines motivation as the amount of “attention and effort required to complete the learning task and apply it” (Moshinskie, 2001), though Hodges also believes that this definition is not detailed enough. With this, Hodges, Husen, and Postlethwaite suggested that motivation can be categorized in two different forms: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation is when a user completes a task for no reward other than personal enjoyment or accomplishment, while extrinsic motivation is when a user is forcibly motivated by the use of incentives that may be outside the user’s interest and satisfaction (Hodges, 2004). While intrinsic motivation usually has a stronger effect and is desired more, some moderation of extrinsic motivation is also needed in order to keep users engaged.

Along with strategies to motivate users, the usability of a website has a large impact on user satisfaction. With websites becoming more prominent, the information on a website and specifically how that information is displayed has increased in importance. In an experiment done by Zaid, Hassan, and Mohamed (2015), criteria such as personalization, accessibility, and community were ranked as the highest factors for an e-learning website by both the students as well the staff. Furthermore, criteria such as content, effectiveness, and learnability were the bottom three. A visual representation of priorities to keep in mind while developing a web platform is shown in Figure 6 below:

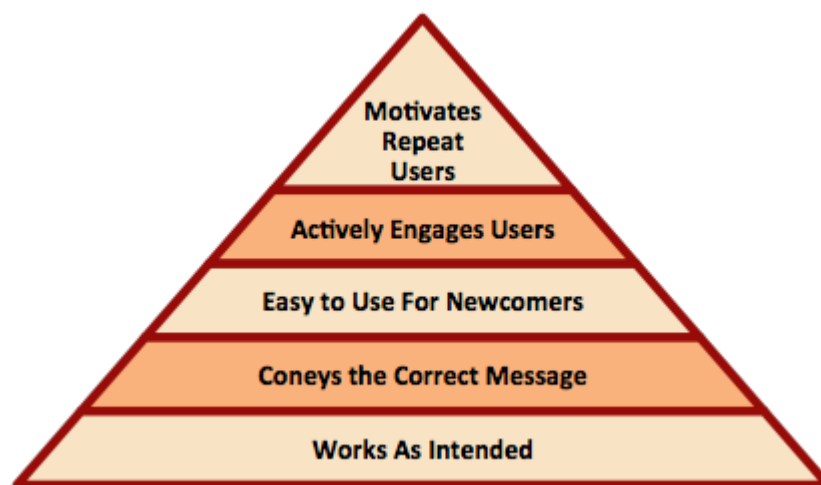


Figure 6: *Priorities when designing a generic web platform*

While content is important, users often cannot maintain interest or motivation in the topic unless the content is delivered in a more personalized form. Flavián, Guinalú, and Gurrea (2006) agree on usability being extremely important, and concluded that in order for an e-learning platform to have lower attrition rates, two basic objectives need to be achieved: a high level of user satisfaction, and a high level of usability. User satisfaction is effectively meeting a user's expectations, while usability is more about the user-friendliness, personalization and the delivery of the expectations. Flavián, Guinalú, and Gurrea (2006) also describe usability specifically relating to websites in terms of:

1. Ease of navigating a website,
2. Ease at which the user can learn and memorize the layout of the website,
3. User's speed to reach a specific section of the website,
4. Ease of navigation to reach a specific section (number of clicks needed to get to that point),
5. Ability for the user to control exactly where they are on the website.

Usability considers the learnability, memorability, errors and efficiency (Kipkurui, Wanyembi & Peters, 2014). Specifically for e-learning platforms to have a high level of usability, the platform must be easy to use and memorize the layout, have no errors that lead to a feature to function improperly, and be efficient in the sense that a user can go to their destination in a timely manner. Kipkurui, Wanyembi, and Peters (2014) recommend performing a user-based evaluation when analyzing the usability of an e-learning platform. By achieving a high level of usability, users are more pleased with the platform, thus resulting in trust and loyalty, both of which lower the chance that the user will stop using the platform.

2.4 Nonprofit Marketing Strategies

Aid to ArtisansU serves to benefit from a concerted marketing strategy. While word of mouth can spread knowledge of ATAU between neighboring artisan groups or partnered nonprofit organizations, the global scale of ATA's work necessitates dedicated marketing to bring knowledge of the platform to new regions. An understanding of the best practices in

nonprofit marketing is required in order to develop future marketing strategies for the ATAU platform.

2.4.1 Differences Between Marketing Nonprofit and For-profit Organizations

Nonprofit organizations (NPOs), like Aid to Artisans, are distinct from for-profit organizations in the strategies used to market themselves. For-profits are looking for customers to buy a product, but nonprofits are often looking for donors to aid a cause, and people to benefit from their cause. Due to the differing demographics and the lack of studies on beneficial marketing strategies for nonprofits, NPOs tend to be behind for-profits when it comes to using new tactics and technologies. Nonprofits are on average 5 years behind for-profits when it comes to integrating new technologies into their company (Pinho, Macedo, 2006). Along with this, a nonprofit organization tends to have less capacity in terms of dedicating effort towards marketing than for-profit due to being smaller and having fewer employees, as is the case for Aid to Artisans. Due to having fewer resources available, NPOs need to manage their resources and effort effectively in order to successfully promote themselves to their audience.

Marketing for three different demographics in clients, volunteers, and donors can be troublesome, but multi-purpose goal setting is necessary to keep an organization like ATA afloat. Many nonprofits even shy away from popular marketing tactics, feeling as though they are too manipulative (Blery, Katseli, Tsara, 2010). This can be problematic since nonprofits tend to be in competition with one another, fighting for volunteers and donors. NPOs need to market their cause to clients, volunteers, and donors (Pope, Isely, Asamoah-Tutu, 2009). Getting clients to join a cause is not usually a problem, since the cause directly helps them. Volunteers can be more difficult to attract, however. Some nonprofit organizations lack volunteer recruitment strategies, and thus find it difficult to recruit skilled volunteers. Volunteers tend to not have extensive business skills required to grow an organization. Along with this, volunteers often lose sight of the main goal after some time and, with that inattention, they begin to lose interest in the cause, which makes it difficult to hold on to people to help. It can be difficult to reach donors for the same reasons. Donors can have

trouble seeing the merits of the cause and the resultant good that they are doing, since most benefits for the nonprofit are non-monetary.

2.4.2 Analyzing a Nonprofit Organization's Marketing Strategies

Overarching marketing strategies remain similar between nonprofit and for-profit organizations. There are several strategies employed by many varied organizations, such as performing marketing audits, SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats), "Four P's" analyses (Product, Price, Place, Promotion), and "Four C's" analyses (Customer Centrality, Competitive Capability, Company Collaboration, and Cyclical Connections) (*Marketing strategy*, 2006). Despite this, blindly copying the marketing techniques used by popular for-profit companies and organizations is not sufficient for a nonprofit organization to market itself successfully for the reasons stated in the previous section.

Out of the strategies listed above, Hartnett and Matan (2011) suggest performing a SWOT analysis for nonprofit organizations. A SWOT analysis is a strategic planning tool that looks at an organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in order to improve the organization's current marketing plan ("Performing a SWOT analysis", 2006). When identifying the strengths, questions to consider include what the organization does better than its competitors, advantages, unique resources, and what others see as the organization's strength. For weaknesses, it is important to consider obstacles inhibiting progress, places where the organization needs improvement, and sources of complaint. Opportunities are for an organization to identify circumstances such as technological developments, new markets, and demographic trends in order to evaluate the possible benefits. Threats are the opposite of opportunities in that obstacles, goals and actions of competitors, and resource problems are considered. After performing a SWOT analysis, the insights gleaned can be used to help set goals for the organization, recognize unique attributes, identify target audience, review the programs and services offered as well as their relevance to the audience's interests, and finally create a priority list of tasks based on resources, time, and money (Hartnett & Matan, 2011).

2.4.3 Importance of Online Marketing

Aid to Artisans' e-learning platform, Aid to ArtisansU, is the newest branch of their organization, designed to take advantage of the opportunities presented to nonprofits by the World Wide Web. Since the rise of the internet in the everyday life, nonprofit organizations, like most organizations, have increasingly begun to take their businesses and marketing online. However, marketing nonprofit organizations online is not as simple as transposing existing marketing materials to websites, as evidence demonstrates that traditional marketing strategies are less effective for website marketing (McMahon, Seaman, & Lemley, 2015). A nonprofit organization should create an interactive communication between itself and the consumer market (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012). Despite this, evidence shows that nonprofit organizations in general have failed to successfully take advantage of online opportunities; in a 2012 study, 58.6% of tweets studied were primarily information based (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012). The information density of United Way's "What is United Way?" video contributed in part to its failure to go viral, garnering just 12,000 views (Parker, 2015). Notable examples of successful viral marketing campaigns include the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge, which received over 10 billion views, and the KONY 2012 video, which received over 112 million views in the first week (Frazier, 2015).

Online marketing presents nonprofit organizations with the opportunity to directly contact new members, granting greater control over brand communication and enabling group- or individually-focused marketing (Watfa, Najafi, & Bakkar, 2013). Visitors to a nonprofit's website should feel "no choice" but to take action. Websites invoking strong emotions, either pleasant (e.g. compassion) or unpleasant (e.g. disgust), increase the likelihood that a material is popular (Parker, 2015). In addition to promoting instant action, online marketing has many long-term benefits, such as improving the transparency and credibility, and thus the public image, of an organization (Frazier, 2015).

2.4.4 Online Marketing Strategies

Social Media

Small nonprofit organizations such as Aid to Artisans can benefit greatly from an improved online presence. Having only been active for just over a year, it is likely that a large

percentage of potential ATAU users have not yet been made aware of the site. Because of this, an online campaign through popular media such as Facebook or Twitter could dramatically increase the user base of the platform, as well as increasing awareness of Aid to Artisans as an organization, potentially bringing in new donors and partners. By using social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, nonprofit organizations can directly reach out to their stakeholders and understand the actions of the stakeholders on these social media platforms. In an analysis of 275 nonprofit organizations using Facebook as a marketing platform, researchers found that while organizations often linked to external news stories, they rarely posted items such as multimedia files, press releases, or even summaries of their campaign (Waters, Burnett, Lamm, & Lucas, 2009). These organizations did not utilize the full potential of direct communication with the consumers. In their posts, many asked for feedback to be emailed rather than commented on the relevant post. This is mainly due to the large amount of effort and resources required to sustain the platform's page. In order to address this, nonprofits have begun asking young volunteers or college interns to manage their social media platform as the stakeholders for the organizations tend to be on the younger side due to the technological environment.

Increasing Profile on Search Engines

Along with social media, improving the standing of an organization on search engines is also a popular strategy for increasing awareness. In general, nearly 50% to 66% of people browsing on the internet rely on popular search engines in order to find the information they are seeking (Hart, Greenfield & Johnston, 2005). Increasing an organization's placement on the search engines for keywords can dramatically increase viewers. For example, if an artisan searches with the keywords "artisan business training" on a search engine, Aid to Artisans should show up near the top of the page. In order to improve the placement, where the website places on the search engines currently needs to be reviewed. This is done by creating a list of five or six keywords associated with the organization, and then searching each one of them using any of the popular search engines (Hart et al, 2005). The next step is to optimize the website in order for it to appear higher on the searches. These optimizations are usually subtle changes to a website's design, layout, or even the programming (Hart et al, 2005). The

website's design and layout could change to reflect the keywords better on the website. Specifically to the programming, it is important to look at the information between tags such as Title, Metadata, and Image. The title tag of a website should include a small phrase with one or two of the keywords along with the organization's name. The "keywords" metadata tag should reflect the above keywords. Lastly, since search engines cannot read images, it is important to fill the ALT tag that is associated with each image. By adding keywords around the website, and changing the programming slightly, a website is much more likely to appear on search engines for specific keywords. Overall these minute changes can potentially lead to large increase in attracting more users.

3: Methods

The goal of this project was to evaluate and improve Aid to Artisans’ online e-learning and communication platform, Aid to ArtisansU. We aimed to broaden the site’s current user base and implement new functions to improve user-friendliness for current members, empowering Aid to Artisans to continue connecting artisans with new markets across the world.

The main objectives for this project were to:

- Understand the Users of Aid to ArtisansU
- Assess Strengths and Weaknesses of the Aid to ArtisansU Platform
- Recommend Changes to Improve Aid to ArtisansU
- Assess Current Marketing Strategies for Aid to ArtisansU
- Design and Implement Strategies to Promote Aid to ArtisansU.

Figure 1 below shows a graphical representation of our objectives and the relationships between them. As shown, the objectives are separated into either Web Platform or Marketing, which are the two key aspects of this project. The objective for understanding the users of ATAU connects to both aspects of the project.

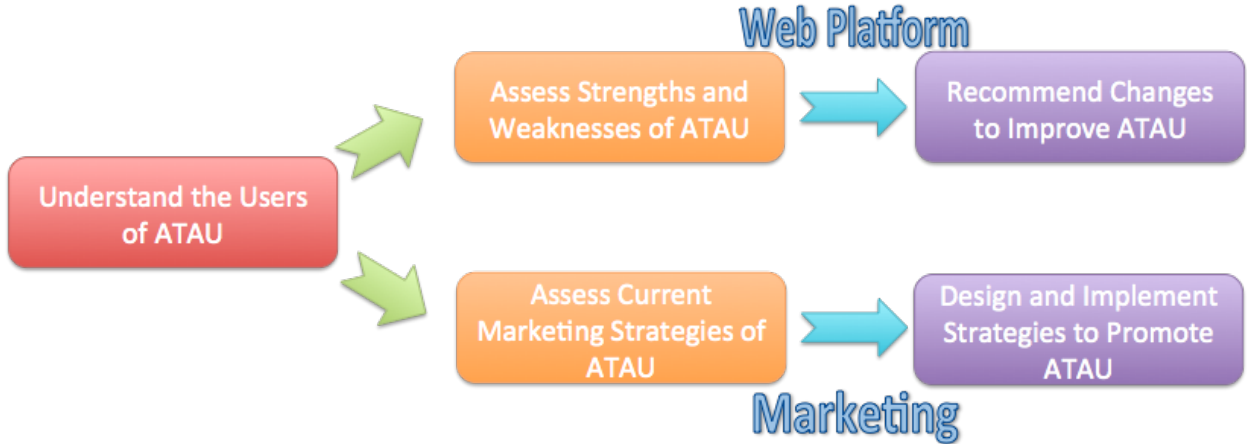


Figure 1: Project Outline

3.1 Understand the Users of Aid to ArtisansU

Our first step in order to successfully develop and promote Aid to ArtisansU was to understand the needs of its current and potential users. It was important to consider all the users of ATAU: artisans, designers, sellers, and buyers who are interested in finding more about the artisans and their craftwork. The buyers were not focused on because currently ATAU does not have any registered buyers. The topics we looked to address in this objective included the problems artisans faced when trying to sell their products, their interests in learning more about business skills, resources they currently use to help market their goods, and thoughts about an e-learning platform as a tool for teaching business and marketing skills.

The main user groups we looked at were the current artisans on ATAU and potential artisan users in order to learn more about their work and what would be the most helpful e-learning platform for them. We contacted five users registered on ATAU requesting an in-person interview, and 20 more for a Skype interview. These users lived in the Washington, DC, area, making them ideal to contact in-person with interview questions. These interviews were semi-structured as opposed to a structured or informal interview. The semi-structured interviews provided the personal feel that is present in informal interviews, but still had a set list of questions similar to structured interviews. The questions were designed to give us insight into the desires of artisans that are most pertinent for ATAU, and provided the basis for our future site recommendations.

Our next step was to visit both the Empowering Women International (EWI) Marketplace and the DC Downtown Holiday fair during our time in Washington, DC, where we interviewed several participants about their work, as well as asking them questions about their interest in an e-learning platform that could provide them essential business and technical skills to better market their products. We highlighted the different features that ATAU provides and gathered feedback on them. We visited these trade shows due to a combination of the suggestions from Maud Obe, as well as recommendations made by last year's ATA IQP group. The two events we visited were the more popular events to find potential future ATAU members. With the information gathered at these events, we could evaluate ATAU based on what features bring new members to the website, and recommend these features for future updates.



Figure 7: Meeting with Artisan Maryam Katongo at the EWI Marketplace

3.2 Assess Strengths and Weaknesses of the Aid to ArtisansU Platform

In order to ultimately recommend improvements for the Aid to ArtisansU website to the CreativeU Web Development Team, we needed to understand and assess the current website. The criteria we used to assess the website were design/layout, functionality, learning content, usability, personalization, and accessibility; these were chosen because they address the majority of website characteristics. By looking at these criteria, we could identify areas where ATAU excels at and highlight them when promoting the site, as well as areas which can be improved. Our evaluation was a combination of our own personal analysis based on comparisons drawn between ATAU and popular websites such as Facebook, as well as feedback gathered from surveys and interviews conducted with current ATAU users.

In order to assess the strengths and weaknesses of ATAU, each of the criteria were evaluated individually. The major concern for the functionality was to see whether every feature present on ATAU worked properly. When looking at the functionality of an e-learning platform, the functions can be described generally in terms of: communication, collaboration, class management, assessment, learning activity management, and learning object

management (Lui et al., 2013). Some of these functions more specific to ATAU included creating and enrolling for a course, uploading products to profile, creating and sharing events on a calendar, sharing articles, joining groups, and messaging other users. Another concern for functionality was the ability of users to effectively engage with other users on the website. Aid to ArtisansU, being primarily an e-learning platform, is also a communication portal for users to form groups, participate in discussions, and connect with other members. Our first task was to systematically visit every page of the website by creating our own accounts and interacting with all the features present on the page. This allowed us to form a list of small errors with each of the features that needed to be fixed as well as understand the layout of the site. Our second task was to gather feedback from the ATAU users on the functionality by asking for their opinions on the different features of the site and how they think it can be improved. This was asked during the interviews conducted with ATAU users from the earlier objective, and also as a question in the survey.

Alongside the functions of the website, we analyzed the content, accessibility, personalization, and usability of the website. Analyzing the content included reviewing the courses and articles, the different interactions the courses provide, and the presentation of content. Evaluating the accessibility involved looking at the different devices that the platform could run on, as well as the bandwidth requirements. For personalization, we looked at the ability for users to customize their profiles. Lastly, we evaluated usability based on the user's ease in navigating and understanding the platform. In order to evaluate all of these topics, we included a question that asks the users to rate all of these criteria on our surveys.

In a previous project with ATAU conducted by Worcester Polytechnic Institute students, there arose difficulties in receiving a substantial number of responses when they sent out a number of online surveys to ATAU members. The group concluded that this low response rate was mainly due to the lack of personal interaction and engagement causing the users to not want to fill out the survey. On the other hand, when the group tried to communicate with the members via an online conversation, there was higher interest and better feedback. Despite last year's problems with survey responses, we still surveyed the users because of how little resources surveying requires. In order to increase the response rate, we made the survey as short as possible while still asking the most important information that we needed. All the questions were closed-ended questions such as rating particular website criteria on a Likert

scale and multiple-choice questions. We also added a personal feel to the emails that were sent to the users with the survey by greeting them by name and using more personal language. Appendix J shows an example of the email that was sent to the users. In order to keep the users engaged in the survey, we also made the survey simple and visually appealing.

After the data collection from the surveys and the interviews, we used coding techniques for the open-ended questions in the interviews. The codes were determined by reviewing all the responses and finding meaningful keywords and themes that appeared repeatedly. By looking at the overall trends from both the codes and the responses of the closed questions, we were able to understand the strengths of ATAU as well as areas that could be improved.

3.3 Recommend Changes to Improve Aid to ArtisansU

As covered in the background section, nonprofit organizations do not have the same resources to dedicate to websites as a large for-profit company. For this reason, the first thing we hoped to do before working to improve ATAU was discuss with the current web team to understand the web team's available resources. We wanted to avoid wasting time proposing ideas that simply are not feasible for the web team to produce. We faced some difficulty in this area as we expected an on-site web team, but later discovered that the web team is located in Egypt and would be communicating with us through the project manager, Eyitayo Ogunmola.

After learning the perspective of the web team from Eyitayo and understanding the strengths and weaknesses of ATAU from our earlier objective, we created a list of suggestions to improve ATAU. These suggestions addressed the areas in our assessment that could be developed further as well as any changes that were suggested in the surveys and interviews conducted. The goal of this aspect of the project was not to conceptualize an ideal, finalized format for the ATAU platform, but to make suggestions that fully utilize the resources available for Aid to Artisans.

3.4 Assess Current Marketing Strategies for Aid to ArtisansU

In order to promote Aid to ArtisansU to artisans and other organizations, we needed to further our understanding on their mission, goals, and marketing efforts. We did this in order to be able to focus on the primary goals of ATA and the ATAU platform while promoting the site to potential users at conventions and other events, in the hopes that a deeper understanding of ATAU would help us more efficiently expand its user base.

To break down ATAU's marketing strategies for easier analysis, we performed a SWOT analysis in order to understand the strengths and weaknesses of Aid to ArtisansU, as well as to identify the external opportunities and threats. We used a SWOT analysis because of its effectiveness in quickly identifying the most important aspects of an organization as shown in Figure 8 below. Along with this, the analysis requires no monetary cost and requires little resources and time ("Performing a SWOT analysis", 2006). In order to perform this analysis, we conducted a semi-structured interview with Maud Obe, Senior Manager at Aid to Artisans, to learn more about ATAU. A semi-structured interview was chosen over a structured interview in order to account for more questions arose during the interview as well as allowing more depth for certain questions. In this interview, we asked open-ended questions on ATAU's uniqueness, advantages over other similar nonprofit organizations, obstacles blocking progress, areas of improvement, and sources of complaints (See Appendix D for more). These questions allowed us to understand the internal structure of the organization and bring out new strengths to display when promoting the organization. For the opportunities, some questions included partnership with other organizations, and events and trade shows where ATAU could be promoted. One of the concerns when identifying threats was to find organizations that have similar goals as ATAU and are competing for the same users. By looking at the opportunities and threats, we gained an understanding of the factors external to the organization that affect it the most. With the data collected from this interview, we strengthened our overall understanding of ATAU's role in the artisan sector, as well as understanding the external factors such as partners and competitors.



Figure 8: SWOT Analysis of the Aid to ArtisansU platform

Alongside general understanding of Aid to ArtisansU, we also asked questions related to their efforts on marketing. These questions were asked in the same semi-structured interview with Maud Obe on the specific strategies they use, the events and trade shows they attend, and their overall reach in terms of number of countries with artisans using ATAU. By gaining this knowledge, we were able to progress onward to our next objective: promoting ATAU.

3.5 Design and Implement Strategies to Promote Aid to ArtisansU

After gaining an understanding of the organization, their marketing strategies, and the needs of the primary stakeholders, we were able to develop a marketing plan for ATAU short-term. We began implementation during the later weeks of the project, and hoped to see a marked increase in site use by late-November. Our actions on promoting ATAU depended heavily on the information we received from the previous objectives. However, from our background review there were some key strategies we implemented. Our first focus when promoting ATAU was on the utilization of current Aid to Artisans social media accounts. Currently, ATA’s Facebook page has over 3,400 followers, with posts mainly focusing on

upcoming events from ATAU and ATA's activity. While the posts are presented in many forms (text, photos, and videos), they had very few likes or comments. This was a problem because part of any nonprofit organization is establishing communication between their users and them. This lack of communication may partially be due to the specific audience we are working with, so in our survey with the users we had a question regarding their social media activity. Along with this, we performed a quantitative analysis by tracking the viewership, follower trends and content preferences on the page. This provided us an understanding of the popular ideas and types of posts artisans like to see. Another strategy that has been used to promote ATAU in collaboration with similar organizations is promoting each other by writing an article on the organization on their websites and sharing it on social media. We consider this a very effective way to increase the awareness of ATA and ATAU as well as build a strong connection with other organizations. In order to do this, we asked Maud Obe and others at ATA about potential organizations that we could contact that would be interested.

As we progressed with our project, we were constantly checking the impact our methods had on ATAU's site usage. We checked on the current total users of ATAU and the overall activity on ATAU often with Google Analytics, as it is the tool ATAU had been using to track their viewership in the past. Google Analytics provided us with the daily number of sessions on ATAU, which allowed us to measure our progress. A problem that we faced early on was that Google Analytics would also include our activity on ATAU skewing the data significantly. In order to prevent this, we created a filter to disregard all of our activities and only look at the other users.

Through research, interviews, and site analysis, we were able to effectively gain an in-depth understanding of ATAU. We spoke with artisans and buyers about the e-learning platform; using emails, phone calls, and social media, we were able to reach a wide range of people and inform them about the benefits of ATAU. By adding and expanding new features and subsequently promoting these features, we were able to bring new members to, and existing members back to ATAU.

4: Findings and Results

In the following section, we describe the impact of our methods on increasing the existing user base of Aid to ArtisansU. We took steps in understanding the current state of Aid to ArtisansU by looking at the current layout and functionality, and the existing user base and activity on the site. After understanding the initial state, we executed the list of actions defined in our methodology in order to both improve and increase the activity on the platform. After constantly re-evaluating our progress with site usage metrics, we were able to increase the number of users on ATAU, and formed the basis for our deliverables and recommendations.

4.1 Initial State of Aid to ArtisansU

4.1.1 Understanding the Layout and Functionality of Aid to ArtisansU

One of our first steps on the e-learning aspect of the project was to gain better familiarity with Aid to ArtisansU. We performed a participant observation on ATAU. ATAU is divided into four sections: Learn, Connect, Share, and Profile. Learn and Share contain the educational resources for users, while Connect and Profile pertain more to communicating with other members. After dividing these sections between one another, we tested each section individually and compiled a list of errors that we noticed (See Appendix H). These errors were as small as a word being misspelled to as large as a button not working entirely. After our list of errors was compiled, we assigned a priority to each list on the site based on both the significance of fixing the error and the ease. These were the two factors used to sort the list because we wanted to provide the web team with the errors that had the most significance, but also factor in the time it would take to fix the error. The time was a large factor for us because our project lasted only seven weeks, and we wanted to see changes on ATAU during that time period.

Three of the main sections for Aid to ArtisansU are learn, connect, and share. In the learn section, we looked at the all the courses present on the page, and whether they linked to

the actual content. From our search, we found four courses out of a total of 45 that did not work on the site. We also looked through the different ways to sort the courses, and categories to search courses. The connect section consists of different groups for the users to join and communicate under. Users who took MRP in past years are able to find their MRP classmates in their MRP group. Similar groups are also created for buyers. Within the groups, members can post and comment on discussion questions. The share section consists of articles with topics ranging from color and trends to importing and exporting. Users can share these articles with others through social media. While looking through the articles, we found numerous broken links, issues with images, and problems with sharing the content to Facebook or other social networking platforms.

The profile section consists of the user's name, summary, friends, messages, badges, courses, groups, calendar, and products. Users can edit their name and provide a brief summary about themselves. They can also view their friends on ATAU and send messages to them. The profile also displays the different courses that have been taken or are currently being taken, and the badges associated with them. Users can also create and share events on their calendar with their friends. Lastly, users can upload their products to their profiles. In order to upload a product, the user must provide a title and description for the product, and either an image for a single product or a PDF document for a catalog of products. We have found that if you decide to attach an image or a PDF to your product, it becomes inaccessible to other users. A category can also be chosen for each product, however, the list of categories is the same as the one associated with the courses.

4.1.2 Usage of Aid to ArtisansU

Along with understanding the site, we also analyzed the initial usage of ATAU. Figure 2 below shows the total sessions for ATAU from when it launched in October 2015 until September 2016 before our arrival. A session is defined as a sequence of interactions from a user all-occurring within 30 minutes of each other (Google Analytics, 2016). For example, a session of 10 minutes duration could be when a user logs on to ATAU for 10 minutes, and then goes inactive for 30 minutes. As evident from Figure 9, whenever there is a period where no group is in charge of monitoring ATAU, the number of sessions drops drastically. This is shown

clearly from December to the start of February where the number of sessions dropped from nearly 600 to 270. On the other hand, when a group has been set in charge of monitoring ATAU the total number of sessions during their period of time is higher. For example, when Abeer started working with ATAU in February, the sessions quickly increased from 270 to over 400. From August to September has also been a decline since there has been no one to administer the activity on the site. Furthermore, the total number of sessions across the past year has also been steadily declining. In November, the sessions peaked at over 700 and then dropped to 200 sessions in September.

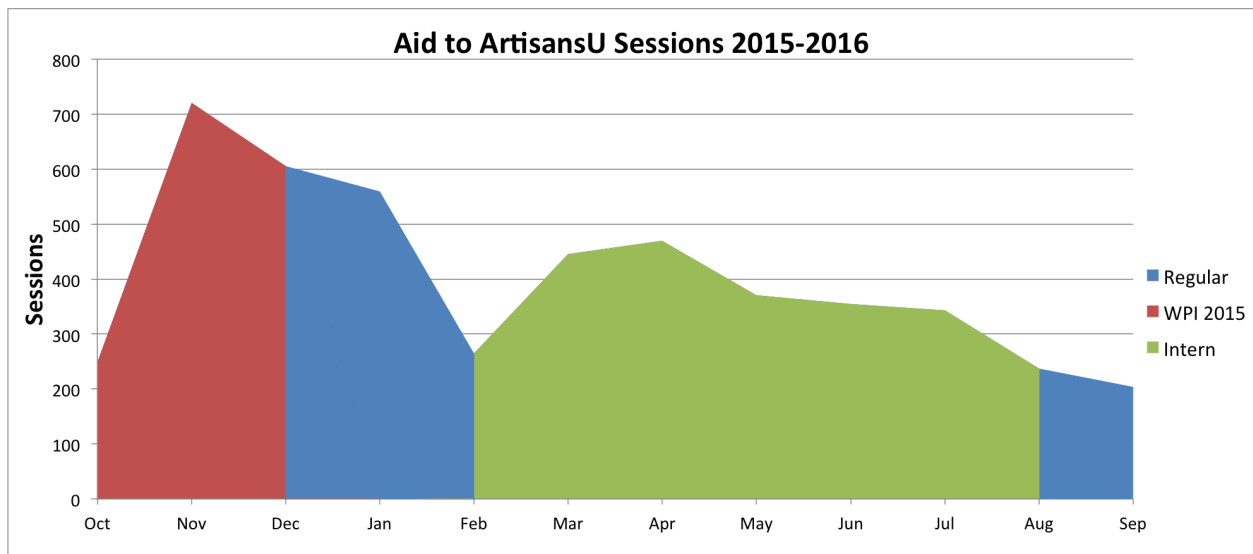


Figure 9: Total Sessions on ATAU from October 2015 to September 2016 (Google Analytics, 2016)

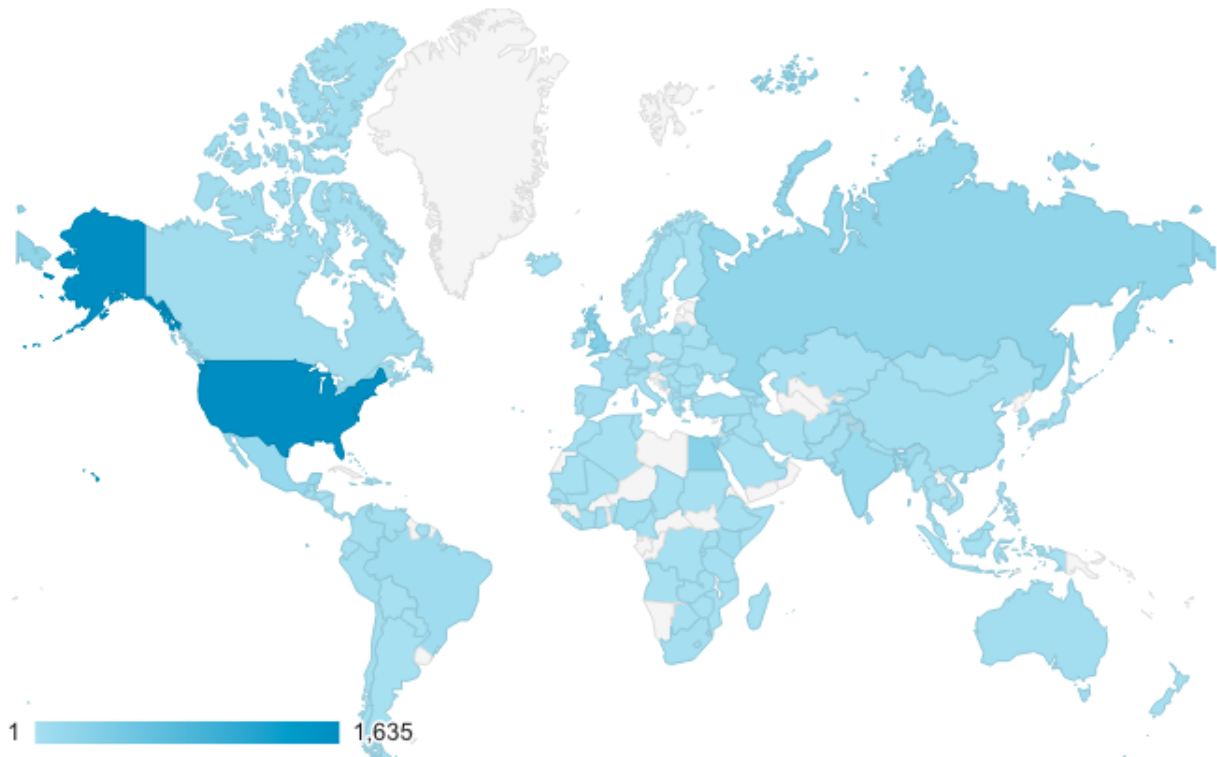


Figure 10: Usage of Aid to ArtisansU by Country from October 2015 to September 2016 (Google Analytics, 2016)

Figure 10 above shows a visual representation of the usage of ATAU in terms of the number of countries from where users have visited the site since the launch. Overall, ATAU has been used in 146 countries for a total of 4,918 sessions. Of these sessions, over 1,600 of them were from United States, 339 from United Kingdom, and 321 from Egypt. The reason for why there are more sessions from United States than most other countries may be because ATAU is currently only available in English.

4.2 Feedback from Aid to ArtisansU Users

4.2.1 In-Person Interviews with Users

Through interviews with artisans in Washington, DC, we were able to gain insight on what artisans want out of an e-learning platform like ATAU. We spoke with Soheir Ghali, a collector of artisanal goods originally from Egypt. Ghali can be classified as a reseller, in that she

buys handmade crafts from artisans and NGOs in other countries and sells them in the United States. Ghali learned about Aid to Artisans through Creative Associates, the parent organization of ATA, in Egypt; she is an ex-employee of Creative. Now that she is in the US, she is experiencing the challenges many sellers face: she cannot enforce designs on the artisans since they have limited resources. Also, since everything is handmade, it is hard to have standardized sizes, colors, and quantities. Ghali recently attended the Market Readiness Program, and took the Market Readiness Introductory course as well. She was pleased with how helpful the course and program were, but was unsure how to proceed with ATAU. She did not know what else would be beneficial on the site, and thus did not take any more courses. She suggested a “road map” at the end of the MRP, something to reference after the program is over, whether it be a consultant to talk to or a guide to using ATAU after the MRP. When asked what her ideal platform would be, she said she would want a site that teaches artisans to promote their products, help users create a social media presence, and help artisans and sellers determine market value for their products. Another interview we had conducted was with Maryam Katongo, an artisan from Tanzania. Katongo makes handmade home goods from materials in Tanzania to be sold in the US. Katongo was introduced to ATA through another organization, Empowered Women International. Katongo also recently attended MRP, and was excited by what she had learned there. Katongo’s activity on ATAU was infrequent, only visiting the site when there were updates on Facebook regarding it. During the interviews with Ghali and Katongo, we also demonstrated a brief tutorial on ATAU and how to use the new features such as the product catalog. Both Ghali and Katongo were pleased with the feature and excited to add their products, and also found the tutorial extremely helpful.

4.2.2 Survey Responses

We sent the survey to 645 email addresses, with 145 of the emails being opened. From the 145 opened emails, there were 10 responses to the survey, leading to a survey response rate of 7%. The low response rate can be due to several factors. The first reason is the population that we sent the survey to. Due to difficulties in attaining the list of only ATAU users emails, we created our own email list by going through every account registered on ATAU. Some of these accounts were duplicates, or had minimal or no activity on the site. Since the

backend database of ATAU is connected to several other sites, we could not distinguish between ATAU and other users. Due to this, our email population size was larger than the number of ATAU users and thus may have caused a significant drop in response rate. Another reason for the low response rate could be due to the account we used to send the emails. Since we did not have an official Creative Learning account at the time, we sent the emails through a Gmail account, which could have led to emails being marked as spam. Overall, if we were to send the emails through a Creative Learning account and to the exact email list representing the ATAU users, we may have received a higher response rate. Despite the low response rate, the outcomes of the responses were still beneficial to us in forming our deliverables and recommendations. Out of the 10 respondents, seven of them attended the Market Readiness Program, and five of them took the Market Readiness Introductory course on ATAU. Most of the respondents only took a few courses on ATAU as seven reported taking zero to four courses and only one reported taking 10 to 15 courses. Figure 11 below shows how often the respondents visited ATAU. As shown, most of them reported either less than once a month or never.

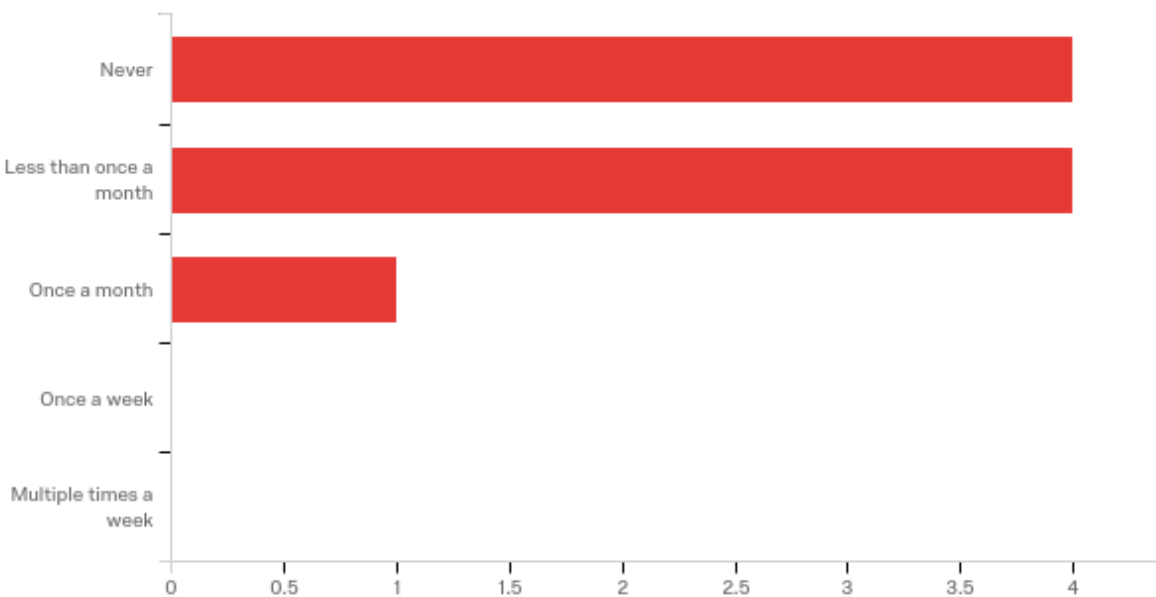


Figure 11: Usage of Aid to ArtisansU based on Survey Responses

Figure 12 below shows the usage and effectiveness of the different features on ATAU. This figure was converted from the five-point Likert scale in the survey question to a three-point Likert scale. According to the figure, many of the newer features were in the ‘never used’ category, while the older features were used and mostly in the ‘like’ category. For example, five respondents reported never using the calendar and the product catalog. On the other hand, five respondents reported that they liked the courses. From this figure, the courses are currently the strongest feature of the site. Overall, most of the features are in either ‘like’, ‘neutral’, or ‘never used’, leaving very few in the ‘dislike’ category. This leads us to believe that the courses are one of the strongest parts of ATAU and newer features such as the product catalog and calendar need to be promoted more heavily.

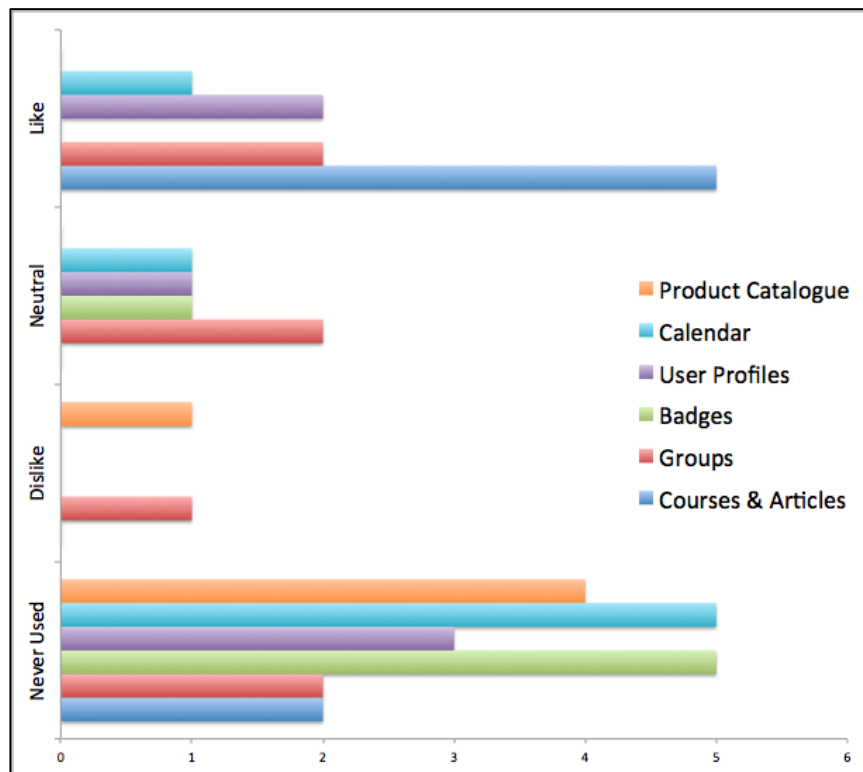


Figure 12: Rating of Aid to ArtisansU Features on Likert Scale

4.2.3 Skype Interviews

Since our survey response rate did not meet our expectations, we conducted Skype interviews with ATAU users as well. Out of the total 19 users we reached out to, we were able to schedule eight calls. However, we only completed four of the calls due to schedule conflicts.

For the other four respondents, we emailed them the interview questions, and got back two responses. While we weren't able to contact everyone in time, we still received a much higher response rate with the interviews than with the surveys, along with more in depth information.

The information we gathered from the interviews reflected the feedback from the surveys. The interviewees did not use ATAU frequently either due to the lack of applicable and helpful information or lack of activity from other users on the site. One interviewee, in particular, noted that the information on ATAU was either "presented at the MRP" or "it is so general that it is not very useful" (Personal Communication, 2016). There were also similar suggestions about creating a "roadmap" or a guide for what should be done after taking the MRP. The interviewees wanted information on "where to go once you have taken some of the preliminary market readiness steps" such as "good products, properly costed, [and] prices are appropriate." In terms of new content to add, the interviewees suggested ideas such as "what are the best trade shows," or "list of online sites that have a wide variety of products and are considered to be high quality sites with fair trade." Another topic that occurred during some of our interviews pertained to the curation of ATAU. The interviewees informed us that our emails and social media posts reminded them of ATAU and thus visited the site. One interviewee, in particular, noted "this November, I have been having ... emails coming to me, ... [and] this skype call. I keep in mind that there is ATAU, [and] there is people so we can chat." With constant updates on ATAU and keeping members posted on new content, the interviewees were reminded of the site and began using it more. While the usage of the site isn't currently as high as desired, the interviewees felt that "when people actually use [ATAU], it will be a big part of helping the global business."

4.3 Promotion Outcomes

4.3.1 Review of Aid to ArtisansU

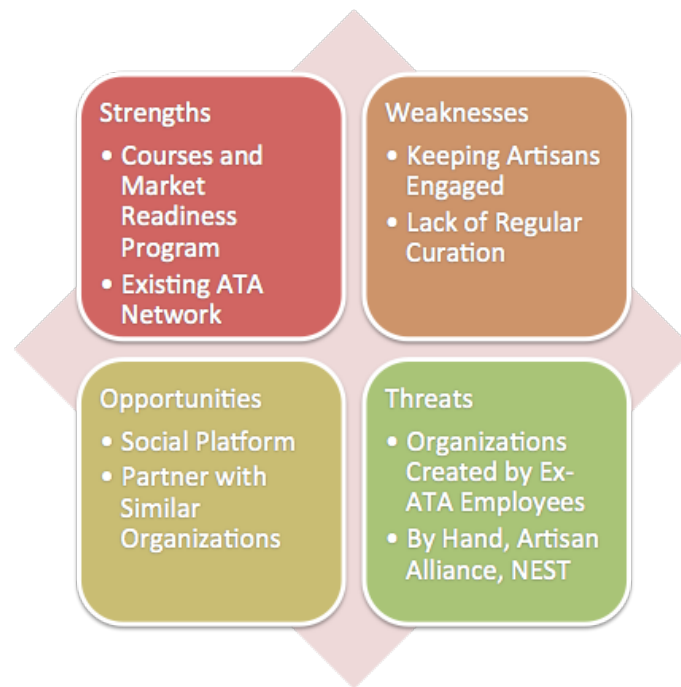


Figure 13: Result of SWOT Analysis of Aid to ArtisansU

In order for us to promote Aid to ArtisansU effectively, we needed to understand its current effectiveness. In order to do this, we performed a SWOT analysis as shown in Figure 13 above. One of the largest strengths of ATAU is the courses. ATAU offers more than 45 different courses all for free. Some of these courses have as many as 120 learners while the rest have around 20 learners. The most popular course on ATAU is the Market Readiness Introductory course, which is a preparation course for ATA’s Market Readiness Program. From our interviews, all the interviewees took the Market Readiness Introductory course and found the course extremely helpful in empowering their business. Because of the overall approval and satisfaction with the Market Readiness Introductory course, one of ATAU’s largest strengths is the courses. Another strength for ATAU is the pre-existing network with ATA. As covered in the background section, ATA works in over 110 countries, so the number of people it is able to market the ATAU platform to is significant. From our interviews and surveys, many found ATAU through either MRP or another event hosted by ATA. Alongside the strengths, there are also areas where ATAU has room for growth. One potential growth area is the addition of more

languages to the ATAU platform; this has already been addressed by Maud Obe, and Creative and ATA are working to find reasonably priced translations for the site. The site could also be grown by providing engaging content to existing members through regular curation of the site. Members from our surveys and interviews seem to visit the site infrequently. In the surveys, most of the responses were either less than once a month or never as shown in Figure 12 above. In terms of curation, ATAU doesn't have a dedicated person in charge of updates on the site. Since its launch, ATAU has had two project groups from WPI for development and improvement of the site as well as a spring and summer intern. While this covers a majority of the months, December to February and August to October are all times where there is no one in charge of ATAU. ATAU also has areas where it can expand further open, specifically the social platform on ATAU and partnering with similar organizations. Some of the organizations we have been in contact with are Hand of the Artisan and Kleeia. While the courses are a strength of ATAU, the other sections still have further room for growth. The connect section allows users to meet other users and communicate between groups. However, currently there are technical issues that could be fixed as well as new features to add to make communication between members easier and more effective. There are many organizations similar to ATAU that are threats. Some of these include By Hand, Artisan Alliance, and NEST. Past employees from ATA also join or create other organizations, which become threats as well. After understanding ATAU's strengths and weaknesses, we were able to create a plan for promoting ATAU.

4.3.2 Communicating with Members Effectively

One of our first goals was to inform the existing users about the new updates on ATAU. We emailed all the users registered in the ATAU database to see the new features that have been added to the site during the week of November 6th to November 12th. Appendix I shows the template of the email sent to the users from Constant Contact. Out of the 786 emails sent, 169 of them were opened, with 22 of them clicking on a link in the email (Constant Contact, 2016). 21 of the clicks were on the link leading to the user's product catalog, and the last one click on the user's calendar. From the 786, 179 emails were bounced and could not be sent the email, and 438 did not open. Overall, the open rate was 27.8% and the click rate was 13%. In comparison, ATA's average open rate for emails is 21% and the nonprofit industry average is

31.3% (Constant Contact, 2016). Our next email was requesting the users to fill out the survey. We used the same template of the email for the new updates on Constant Contact. Out of the 645 emails sent, 145 opened and 10 of them clicked on the survey link. There were 123 bounces, and 377 of them did not open the email. This led to an open rate of 27.8%, same as with the new updates email, and click rate of 7%.

Our last email was sent to a number of Aid to ArtisansU members requesting an interview. There were 19 emails sent, however, this time we were able to send it from an official Creative Learning email domain as opposed to using a Gmail domain in the previous two emails. Each email was sent individually and addressed their name and organization and a little about what we knew of them in order to add a more personal feel to the email. As a result, we received emails back from 12 of them. Out of the 12 who responded, we were able to schedule an interview with eight. Since we did not use Constant Contact for sending these emails, we could not determine the open rate of the emails. However, the response rate for these emails was 63%, a much higher rate than the previous emails we sent. This large increase can be due to many factors including sending emails from a more official email domain so it isn't marked as spam, and adding a more personal feel to the emails. The response rate is also going to be higher because we selected members who showed great involvement with ATA and ATAU in the past as well and were more likely to respond back.

4.4 Impact on Usage of Aid to ArtisansU

All of our promotional strategies have led to a significant increase in the activity on ATAU over the course of the past two months. One of the first emails we sent to the ATAU database was regarding the new features added onto the site. We sent this email on November 8th, and as shown in Figure 14 below there is a large spike shown in the figure that occurred during the same week we sent the emails. Furthermore, even though November 13 - November 20 shows fewer sessions than the previous week, it is still significantly higher than the number of sessions during October 2nd to October 8th. We sent another set of emails regarding the surveys on November 16th, however, despite this the sessions still dropped slightly. The

sessions rose once again during the November 27th to December 3rd week when we requested users for an interview.

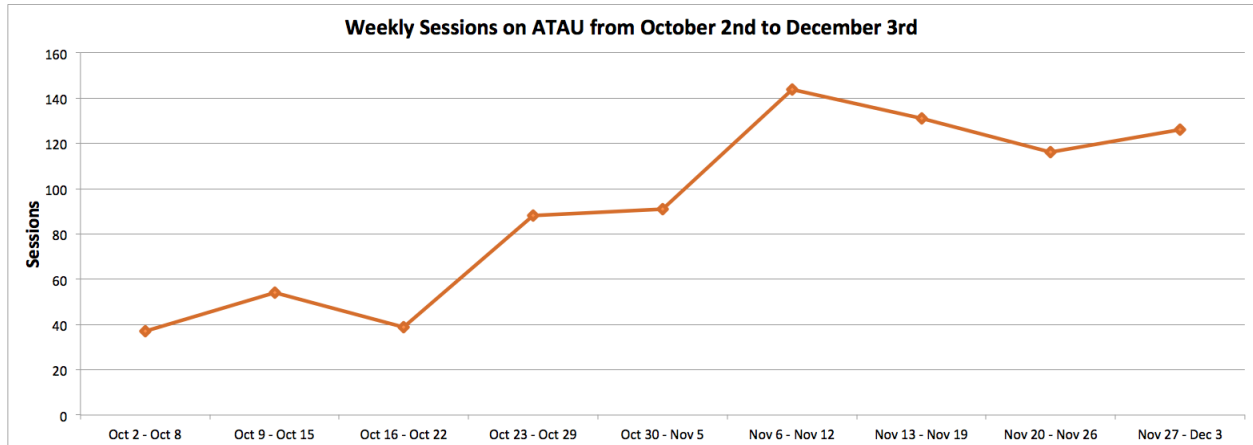


Figure 14: Sessions on Aid to ArtisansU from October 2nd to December 3rd (Google Analytics, 2016)

Figure 3 below shows the overall usage of ATAU since October 2015 when it was launched. By the end of November, the number of sessions on ATAU reached over 500 compared to around 200 sessions in September and 250 sessions in October. While the activity of ATAU was showing no signs of significant growth prior to our arrival, we were able to more than double the number of sessions by sending out emails to users and making regular updates to the site, such as the implementation of new features. The pattern shows that, when a new intern or group of interns arrive, the active curation of ATAU results in a large spike of site use.

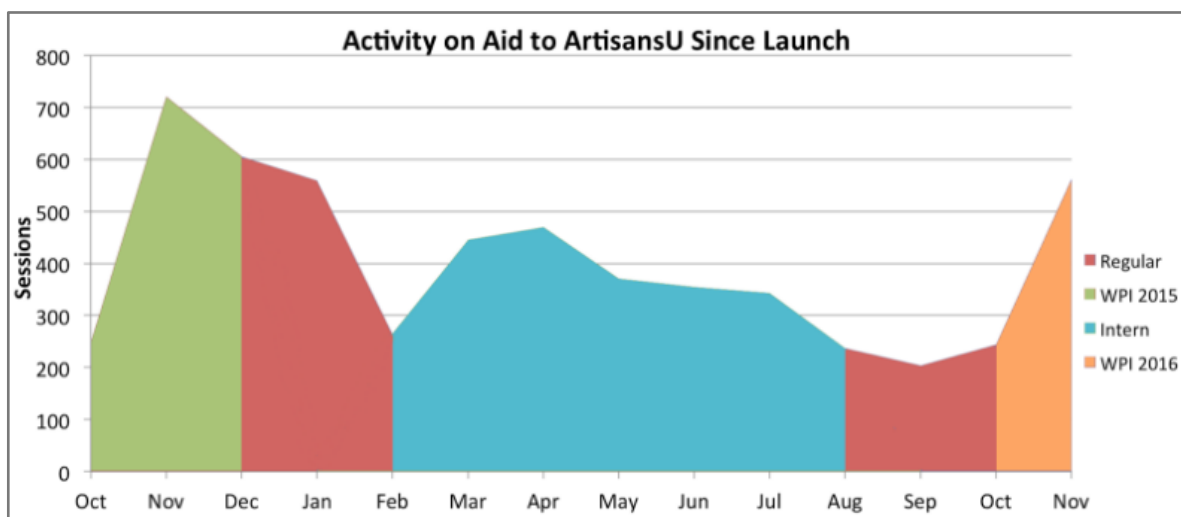


Figure 3: Activity on Aid to ArtisansU until our departure

Figure 15 below shows the usage of ATAU in terms of the number of countries where users have logged into ATAU from. There were a total of 69 countries with overall total sessions of 737. Of the 737 sessions, the United States had the most with 274 (37.18%) and Russia had the next largest with 117 (15.88%) sessions (Google Analytics, 2016). Aside from the United States and Russia, most of the other countries had less than 5% of the total sessions. However, while the number of sessions may be higher in the United States and Russia, the average session duration within the countries is not as high as some other countries. Figure 16 below shows the average session duration for each country. Kenya had the largest average session duration of nearly 20 minutes while the United States hovered around 10 minutes. Other countries with more than 10 minutes of average session duration include Colombia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Rwanda, and Afghanistan.

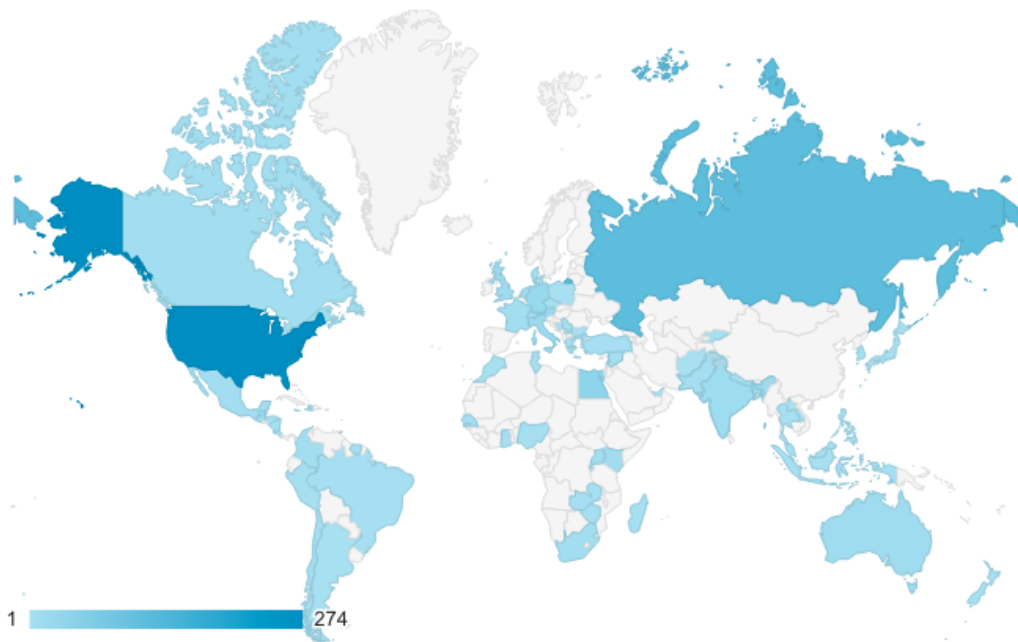


Figure 15: Sessions on Aid to ArtisansU by Country from October to December 2016 (Google Analytics, 2016)

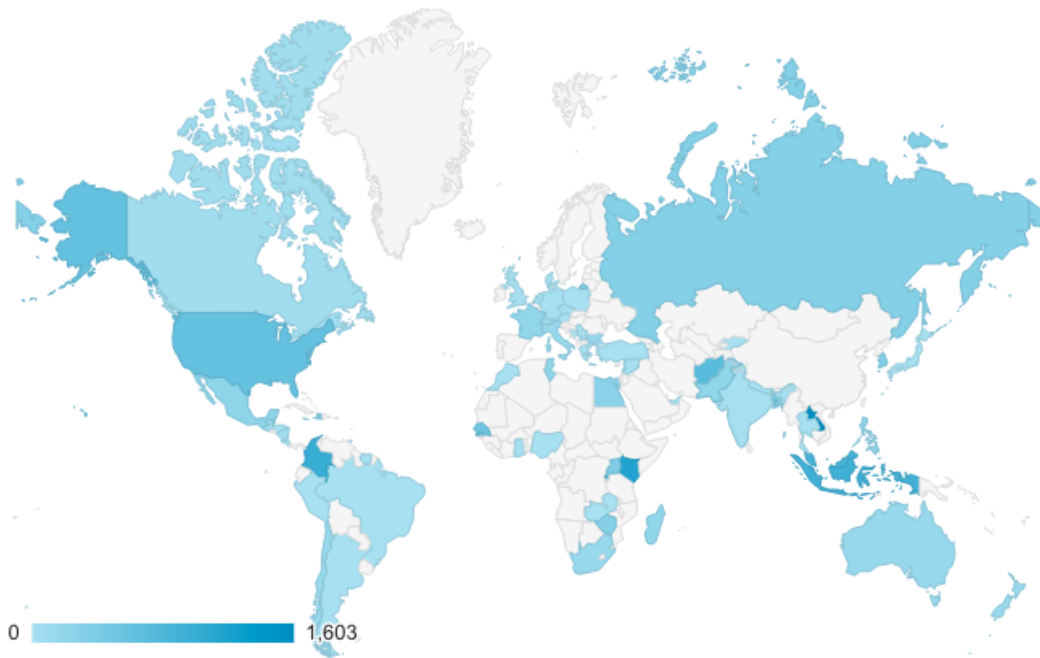


Figure 16: *Session Duration on Aid to ArtisansU by Country from October to December 2016*
(Google Analytics, 2016)

Figure 17 below shows the usage of the four major sections (Profile, Learn, Connect, and Share) of Aid to ArtisansU over the length of our project duration. The profile section seems to be the most popular part of Aid to ArtisansU with over 200 sessions. Alongside the profile section, the learn section is also over 100 sessions. While the figure does include most of the courses on the site to be included in the learn section, some of the off-site courses are not included and so the sessions visiting the learn section should be higher than displayed. The connect section and the share section are less popular compared to the profile and learn sections with less than 100 sessions for connect and 50 sessions for share. Since our promotion strategies were focused heavily around highlighting the new product catalog feature on the website, more users visited their profiles. This figure highlights that the profile and learn sections are the strongest parts of ATAU, while the connect and share sections could be developed more.

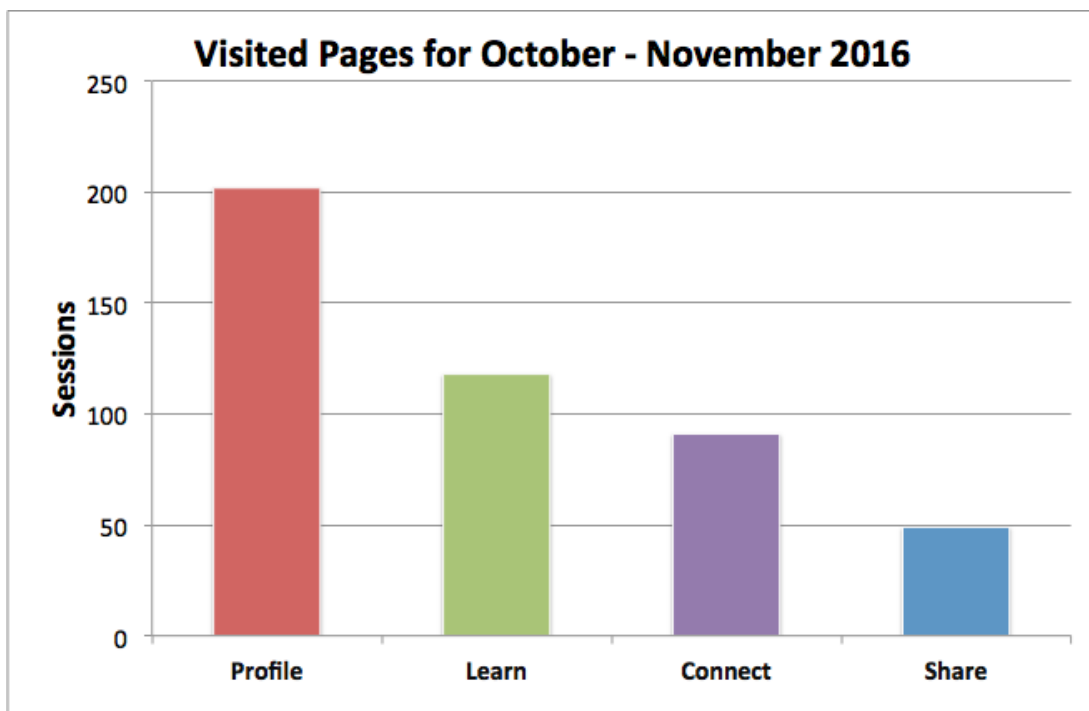


Figure 17: *Distribution of sessions across ATAU's major sections from October to November 2016*

5. Deliverables and Recommendations

5.1 Deliverables

List of Site Improvements

From our assessment of Aid to ArtisansU, we created a list of site improvements ranging from minor changes such as correcting capitalization or spelling, to more significant changes such as fixing or redesigning features not working properly. This list, as shown in Appendix H, was prioritized by importance and impact each item had on ATAU. For example, changes dealing with the product catalog were prioritized higher than changes dealing with the calendar or the badges because of the users' extensive interest in the development of the product catalog.

Course on Importing to the US Market

We created an introductory course on importing artisan goods to the U.S. retail market in order to continue expanding the course database of ATAU (See Appendix K). This course also served as a follow-up to last year's group's course on exporting goods to the U.S. retail market. We created the course on Versal in consultation with Carol MacNulty, who is one of the experts at ATA's Market Readiness Program. The development of this course was not directly related to the main focus of our project, however its creation does help satisfy ATAU's need for regular updating. The course was posted on ATAU and is available under the title "Tips for Importing to the U.S. Retail Market" and, like all other courses on the site, is freely accessible by all users. The course contains interactive quiz elements to maintain user interest and allow for self-teaching at a user-set pace, and is designed to take a user 15-30 minutes to complete.

Tutorial Video

A trend we discovered when interviewing some local ATAU users in person was that they have limited tech- and internet-knowledge and benefited from our in-person presentation of the site. In order to address this, we set out to create a tutorial video to walk new and

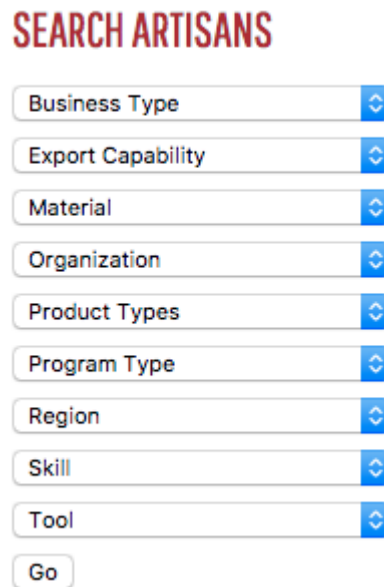
returning users through several key site functions (See Appendix L). The video addresses account creation and login, searching and signing up for courses, joining groups and accessing group discussion functions, searching and sharing new articles, and the customization of a user's profile, specifically the use of the newly added product calendar function. This video was created through screen capture of a programmed script that would automatically navigate the mouse in a smooth, easy to follow manner, with a voiceover generated through simple text-to-speech software. This video was edited to include highlighting of key sections in order to draw attention to important parts of the site. Upon completion of the video, we posted it to the "Share" section of ATAU so that users would be able to see it on the site, and requested that the video be posted on the ATAU splash page so as to be immediately visible to all visiting users. We hope that the visual aid provided by this tutorial video will help users become more familiar with the ATAU platform.

5.2 Technical Recommendations

Introduce an Advanced Search Function

In its current implementation, the search feature of ATAU can only search for names of users and titles of courses. These searches must exactly match the formatting of the name or title; if a course is marked to the category "marketing", for instance, but does not have the word "marketing" in its title, then searching "marketing" will not bring up the example course. This is not such an issue for courses, as the course library may be searched by category by clicking on the list of categories, however, there is no categorization of users that allows searching by region or craft. Research by previous year's group that worked with ATAU, as well as feedback from the artisans we interviewed, indicated that artisans and retailers strongly desire an easy way to post and search products (Bell et al., 2015). With the recent implementation of the ability to add products and product catalogs to one's profile on ATAU, artisans and potential buyers likely expect to be able to easily find products they like by searching different types of products. Due to this, we recommend the implementation of an advanced search feature, and the necessary profile options that would go with it, such as region

and product type. Figure 18 below shows an example advanced search feature that is present on ATA that can be used as inspiration for ATAU.



SEARCH ARTISANS

Business Type

Export Capability

Material

Organization

Product Types

Program Type

Region

Skill

Tool

Go

Figure 18: Advanced Search Feature on Aid to Artisans

Add Product Categories

Building on top of the advanced search function, we recommend that ATAU add product categories, likely in the form of a drop-down menu, for the products that users can add to their profiles. As a consequence of the way that the product section was implemented, the current categories are the same categories that are offered when submitting a new course. The majority of these categories are not relevant to products, and could confuse a user who saw “marketing” as a choice of categories when adding what they thought was a product to their profile. From our conversation with the ATAU web team project manager, our understanding is that this limitation is a result of the way the site was developed, but we feel that, if possible, the separation of these categories would work hand in hand with the addition of the Advanced Search to enable potential users and buyers to more easily find what they are looking for. For example, the categories “textiles”, “furniture”, or “art”, if searchable, could improve the site’s ease of use.

Create a Site-Wide Discussion Forum

An important aspect of Aid to ArtisansU is the ability for users to communicate effectively with each other. Currently, ATAU has a separate discussion board for each group in the Connect section which lists all the questions. Only members of a group can participate in that group's discussion questions. Our recommendation is to create another discussion forum that is more globally accessible to users in the Connect section. In other words, any user should be able to post a question in this discussion forum and any user can answer the question. One of the main reasons for creating a global discussion forum is to allow user content to be created organically. Once a question is posted and answered, a new resource is created for others to reference. Another reasoning behind this recommendation is to remove the redundancy and inefficiency that exists within the current system. For example, if a discussion question doesn't exactly pertain to a specific group, it must be posted in each group. However, with the new discussion forum, the discussion question will be separate from the groups, and anyone can reply to the question.

5.3 General Recommendations

Communicating with Members

One of the recommendations last year's WPI group had was to move away from surveying users and rely more on interviews. Despite our efforts to improve the survey response rate with various methods, surveys are not an effective method for obtaining feedback from ATAU users. However, when we emailed users directly one by one requesting for a Skype interview, we received a much higher response rate. Therefore, we recommend for future efforts on obtaining feedback be placed on interviews as opposed to surveys. As is evident from two successive WPI teams, artisans will respond more readily to personal contact than they will to an impersonal, anonymized survey.

Regular Interns Working on Aid to ArtisansU

According to Maud, efforts are being made to enable future interns to work directly on the site by granting them administrator privileges on ATAU. The single most cited suggestion by

all of our interviewees is that, if the site was regularly updated, they would be more likely to regularly visit it. As such, we recommend expanding ATA's internship program if possible to ensure that there is at least one intern working on marketing and curating the site as frequently as possible in order to ensure user base growth and to prevent stagnation. The ability to directly post and add courses to the site would help make this process easier, since a significant roadblock we faced was the frequent case that a deliverable that we had developed, such as the Imports Course, required admin authorization for posting; once we were granted access to certain administrative functions at the end of our time here, we were able to expand on the site ourselves.

6. Conclusion

Over the past seven weeks, we worked closely with Aid to Artisans to help improve their web-platform, Aid to ArtisansU, in order to bring it to a wider audience, as well as to increase its effectiveness in helping craftspeople around the world promote and market their artisan goods, so that they may increase their quality of life. Initially, we faced some difficulties; communicating with the web team in Egypt proved harder than we anticipated, and as a result, much of our work directly on the site, as well as our plans to survey the majority of site users within the first one or two weeks, were delayed significantly. Despite this, we were able to shift the direction of our project by directly interviewing a list of key site users who have shown significant involvement with ATA and ATAU. Each interview gave us insight into the goals and desires of the artisan community, allowing us to provide in depth, specific recommendations for ATA and future ATAU interns. We also found success going out to events such as the Empowering Women International Marketplace and the DC Downtown Holiday Market, where we found many artisan groups who were very enthusiastic about using ATAU when they were introduced to the concept. As was demonstrated by Google Analytics site metrics, we had a very clear positive impact on the usership of the site during our time here in Washington, DC by increasing the sessions on the site over two times, and already a number of the easier-to-implement features that we suggested to the web team have been added to the site. We hope that Aid to Artisans sees further success in improving the ATAU platform through continued updates to the site's features, regular curation of content on the site, implementation of our high-priority suggestions, and frequent promotion of the site to current and future ATA partners.

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Appendix A: Case Study: Monash University's Low Survey Response Rates

Survey response rates in general have dropped in some places due to survey takers feeling as though their opinions were not being listened to or having no impact (Nair, Adams, & Mertova, 2008). Nair, Adams and Mertova (2008) investigated Monash University, a university in Australia which has been receiving low response rates on surveys, who enforced certain strategies to improve survey response. In order to tackle this problem, Monash University created a call center which called all the non-respondents of the survey in which they were asked given several options: take the survey through phone, or fill the survey online. Almost 16% of the non-respondents took the survey through the phone, while 43% asked to fill the survey online. During the phone call, some of the most common questions asked by the recipients were about the purpose of the survey and incentives. By adding the call-center and implementing the feedback received from the calls into their surveys, Monash University went from a mere 36.6% and 26.5% response rates of their surveys to nearly 55%, the highest response rate they have had in several years (Nair et al., 2008).

Appendix B: Survey Questions (ATAU Users)

1. How did you learn about ATAU?
 - a. Artisan Organization
 - b. Email
 - c. Web Search
 - d. Trade Show/Events
 - e. Friend
 - f. Other _____
2. How often do you use the website?
 - a. Never
 - b. Less than once a month
 - c. Once a month
 - d. Once a week
 - e. Multiple times a week
3. How many classes have you taken?
 - a. 0-4
 - b. 5-9
 - c. 10-15
 - d. 15-20
 - e. More than 20
4. What function/feature is your favourite about ATAU? Please rate each aspect of the site listed below.

Never used	Strongly Dislike	Dislike	Neutral	Like	Strongly Like
a. Courses & Articles					
b. Connect with Users					
c. Badges					
d. User Profiles					
e. Calendar					
f. Product Catalog					

5. Rate the site in each aspect (1 star to 5 stars)
 - a. Navigation
 - b. Design
 - c. Personalization
 - d. User Friendly
6. Have you attended the Market Readiness Program?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
7. Did you take the Market Readiness Introductory course on Aid to ArtisansU?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
8. Have you checked out ATA on Facebook?
 - a. Yes, I follow them on Facebook
 - b. Yes, but I am not a follower
 - c. No, I have not
 - d. I did not know they were on Facebook
 - e. I don't use Facebook
9. Is there anything you would like to see on Aid to ArtisansU?

Appendix C: Interview Questions for ATAU Artisans

1. How did you find ATAU?
2. How often do you use the website?
3. How helpful are the courses on ATAU? Are there any areas you would like courses on?
4. Have you tried any of the new features like creating and sharing events on your Calendar, or posting your product catalog on your profile?
5. What function/feature is your favourite about ATAU?
6. Are there any features you would like to see on ATAU?
7. Have you attended the Market Readiness Program?
 - a. Did you take the Introductory to Market Readiness course on Aid to ArtisansU?
8. Have you checked out ATA on Facebook?
9. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about ATAU?

Appendix D: Interview Questions for CreativeU's Web Development Team

1. What are you currently working on? Any new functions to add?
(Catalog/Calendar/Communication)
2. What major updates have you made recently?
3. What is their timeline for implementing Calendar? How can we make the process faster?
4. Can we put a survey on ATAU?
5. Are we able to access the emails/contact information of the users?
6. Are there any limitations that we should be aware of?
7. How can we help? Do you have any questions for us?

Appendix E: Interview Questions with Maud Obe

1. What are Aid to ArtisansU's goals and expectations?
2. How is ATAU currently doing in comparison to their goals? What obstacles are ATA currently facing?
3. What are the other similar nonprofit organizations that could be competing with us? Compared to them, what advantage does ATAU have?
4. Similar to question 3, what nonprofit organizations in the area can potentially benefit from us, and us benefit from them?
5. What areas do you think ATAU needs to improve and we can help with?
6. What is ATAU's current marketing plan? How do they attract users?
7. What is the feedback like from the users? How often does ATAU communicate with them? Do you have any complaints from the users of ATAU?
8. What trade shows and events has ATA gone in the past and what are ones we should be looking to present in this year?

Appendix F: Interview Questions with Monika Steinberger

1. What is your role with ATA?
2. What are Aid to Artisans' goals and expectations?
3. What are the other similar nonprofit organizations that could be competing with us?
Compared to them, what advantage does ATA have?
4. What is ATA's current marketing plan?
5. What is the feedback like from the artisans? How often does ATA communicate with them?
6. We are trying to promote ATAU. Do you have any suggestions for reaching out to new members for ATAU?

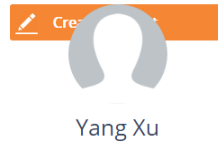
Appendix G: Interview Questions with Abeer Abdulkareem

1. What parts of ATA/ATAU did you work on while you were here (marketing, outreach, web development, etc.)?
2. Which suggestions you made ended up on the site?
3. What challenges did you face while you were there?
4. Is there anything you would like us to add onto ATAU?
5. If you had more time, what would you have done?

Appendix H: List of Site Improvements

Minor Changes to be Made:

1. After clicking products in profile, the “Create a Product” button is covered by the profile picture.



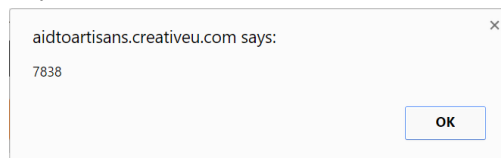
2. “Create your first product” should be centered on the button. No “...” after.



3. Can't actually share events with others + Notify other users when an event is shared.
4. In “Products” when you edit a product, there is a button called “Add new file”. It should say Images above it.
5. In “Create your First Product”, remove Categories section and set it to Product by default.



6. Show when user has a notification on site.
7. Capitalize “description” for all courses
8. In the Products section on the Main Profile Page, Add another link under all the “Latest Products” for adding new products.
9. An error message (7838) pops up when you try to share the article to facebook, twitter, etc. After you hit OK it allows you to share.



10. When you view a friend's profile, the text at the bottom for Message/Profile is hard to understand.



11. In Edit Profile, instead of having a question for each group for visibility, make it a 2D table to reduce space. Move Country/Location information higher up. Move visibility questions lower.
12. “0 Posts Last Month” → “# Posts” for Groups in Connect
13. List of all possible badges under “Badges”
14. In “Message”, when you get a message it always says “He says” instead of looking at their gender/being genderless.
15. Allow users to un-select a category after selecting one while looking at courses/articles
16. Let clicking the picture on the edit profile do the same thing as the “Upload picture” option.
17. Badges come up once enrolled, have it so that it is after you have gotten credit for the course?

18. When you create an article, the categories list on the right should disappear (confusing)
19. When you upload a resource and exceed the size, you should be able to try again, and not have to refresh
20. Sort by # of members for groups in Connect section.

Big Changes to be Made:

1. Nonfunctioning Courses:
 - a. Intro to Survey Monkey
 - b. Present.Me
 - c. Introduction to WordPress
 - d. Introduction to Social Network & Social Media for Organizations
2. ATA events on calendar
3. Search people by country/product.
4. General Discussion in Connect
 - a. We will give you more details about this soon
5. Signing up email goes to spam always. Any way to reduce the chance of it going to spam?
6. When there is an attachment with your product in your product catalog, no one else can see your product (access denied)
7. Verifying email is not sending

Appendix I: New Features Email

Join us at
Aid to Artisans U



Hello Rachel,

Thank you for your continued interest in Aid to Artisans and its e-platform Aid to ArtisansU! We are pleased to announce that we have added some new features to ATAU. We strongly believe that these features will help you stay organized and promote your business to others.

Now you can:

 Share your [product catalogue](#) on your profile and view other members' catalogues.

 Add events to your [personal calendar](#), and share events with others.

We highly encourage you to try out these features and let us know what you think!

If you need more information about Aid to Artisans U, please email us at atauboard@gmail.com

Regards,
ATAU Team

Appendix J: Survey Email

Join us at
Aid to ArtisansU



Hello Rachel,

Thank you for your continued interest in Aid to ArtisansU. Since ATAU's launch in 2015, we've been thinking on the best ways to make this platform more beneficial for you. Getting your valuable feedback will do just that! The survey below aims to obtain your opinions about ATAU. Our hope is this process will help us meet and refine your expectations and improve our services. It should take you only 5 minutes.

Click [here](#) to take our survey!

or Copy and Paste the following URL into your browser:

http://wpi.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_8djuj4ERqr4Xjdb

Should you have further questions about ATAU, please do not hesitate to contact us at atauboard@gmail.com. We would love to **speak with you over Skype** if you are interested.

Thank you in advance for participating and helping ATAU continue to grow.

Regards,

ATAU Team

Appendix K: Importing to the US Market Course

Tips for Importing Handmade Products into the US

WHY IMPORTING ARTISAN GOODS CAN GROW YOUR BUSINESS

Across the world, hundreds of thousands of men and women have taken up artisanal work in order to improve their standards of living, by producing high quality, hand-made craft goods. Many of these artisans have achieved further success by partnering with individuals or organizations who will import their goods to other, larger markets, such as the United States, where the goods will be resold to eager consumers. Such a relationship is beneficial to both the exporter, and the importer; while the exporter gets the aforementioned benefit of access to foreign markets, while importers gain new, exciting products, as well as the benefit to public image that comes with helping artisans in developing nations improve their lives. In today's global society, importing goods is easier than ever. This introduction course will tell you what you need to know in order to begin importing beautiful handmade goods from artisans around the world.



Quiz: Getting your goods shipped to you

This short quiz will assess your knowledge of the middlemen involved in importing. Passing this quiz is not required to advance.

Question

If you are concerned about experiencing delays due to failure to communicate with customs officials, who should you consult?

Answer

- Foreign Agents
- Customs Brokers
- Freight Forwarders
- Freight Insurers

Question

Who of the following will typically determine the best packaging for your imported goods?

Answer

- Foreign Agents
- Customs Brokers
- Freight Forwarders
- None of the above

Appendix L: Tutorial Video

