

Content strategy recommendations for the Seattle Film Institute



Key Points

Our user research and deep dive into the SFI online presence revealed two main areas for improvement:

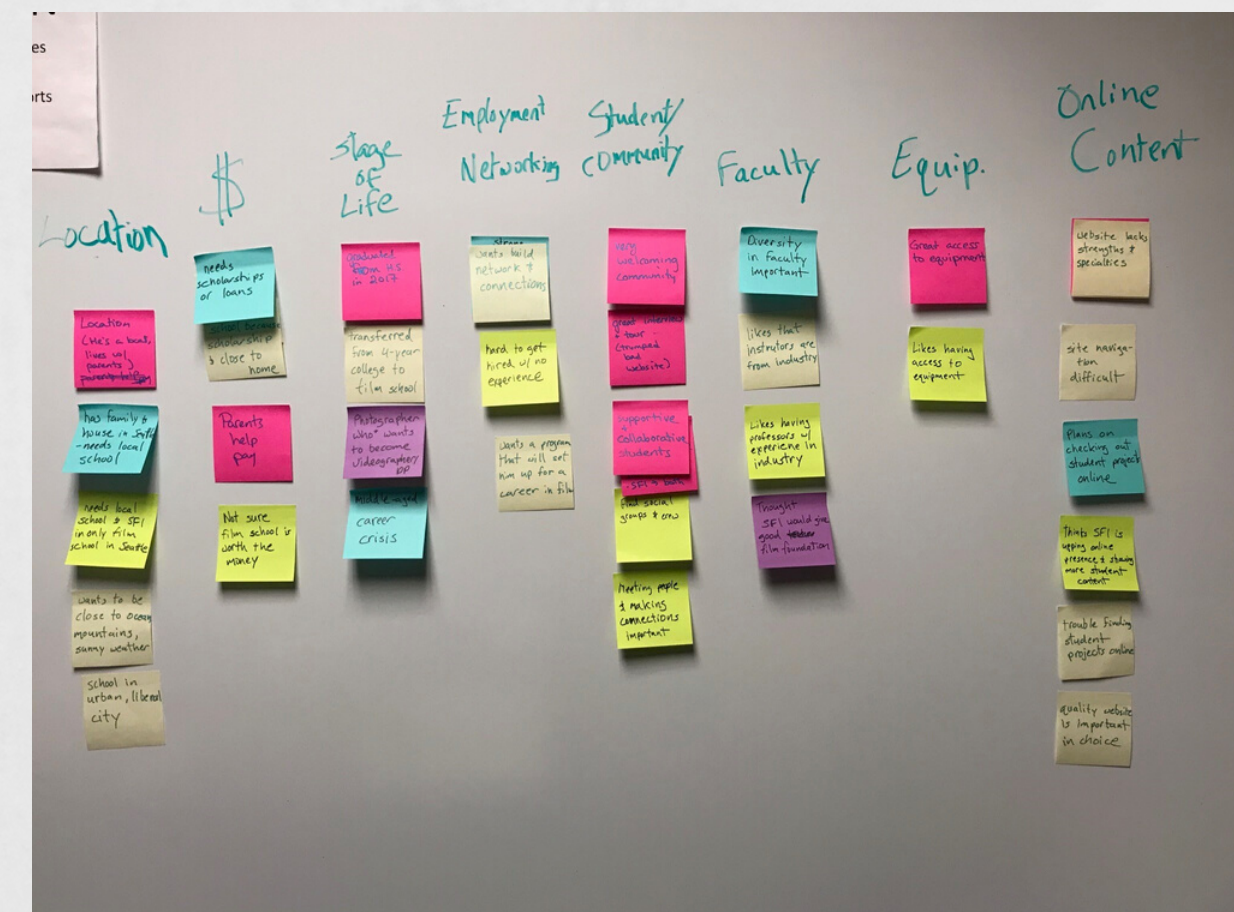
1. Make it easier for potential students to find the information they're looking for.
2. Give them confidence that SFI is a cutting edge film school by modernizing your online presence and making it visually stunning.



User Research Overview

We did phone interviews with potential, current, and past SFI students, as well as students of other film programs. Here's an overview of what they're looking for in a school's website and social media:

- A visually impressive experience
- Easy to navigate
- Lots of student projects
- A sizzle reel for the school
- In-depth faculty bios, including head shots and IMDb links
- How students collaborate and build community
- Post-graduation help networking and getting work
- The percentage of graduates that get jobs in the industry
- Success stories of graduates



Personas - Evan, mid-career mover

Using our user research, we came up with two potential SFI student personas. These personas can be used to focus messaging to specific audiences.

The first is Evan, a middle-aged tech guy who's burned out on corporate America.



Traits

- Aspirational
- Creative
- Optimistic
- Pragmatic
- Results driven

Preferred Channels

- Google search
- School websites
- Social media
- Face-to-face interviews

Demographics

- Age: 45
- Work: Software developer
- Family: Married, no children
- Location: Greenwood, Seattle, Washington
- Character: Mid-career mover

Goals

- Get a job in the film industry
- Obtain more fulfilling and creative work
- Get hands-on experience
- Build a network for future employment

Frustrations

- The lack of film school options in the Seattle area
- The need to stay in Seattle while earning an education and switching career

Evan is a Pacific Northwest native who owns a home in Greenwood with his wife. He's been working as a software developer for 20 years and enjoys the creative and collaborative aspects of the job. Yet, he's feeling burnt out: He's tired of being chained to a computer all day.

A film buff and long-time volunteer at the Seattle Film Festival, Evan has been thinking about a career in the film industry for years. Moving to Los Angeles or New York is out of the question: His wife has a terrific job in Seattle and their aging parents live nearby. He's heard there are job opportunities for filmmakers in the greater Seattle area, both in independent film and the corporate world, but he doesn't have the connections or experience needed to break into the field and get a job.

Personas - Maddie, community college student

Maddie, a young barista who lives with her parents, represents a younger, more financially precarious demographic.



Traits

- Ambitious
- Creative
- Excited to be starting a new chapter
- Individualistic, striking out on her own: a trailblazer
- Focused on the future

Preferred Channels

- Google search
- Social media (Instagram)
- Word of mouth

Demographics

- Age: 20
- Work: Barista/student / -
- Family: Single and living with parents
- Location: Magnolia, Seattle, Washington
- Character: Community college student

Goals

- Get an education and hands-on experience in filmmaking
- Get a job in the film industry
- Build a community of fellow creative students

Frustrations

- Overwhelmed by the student loan process
- Luke-warm parental support; she needs to convince parents film school is a good idea
- Traditional university isn't a good fit

Maddie applied to the Seattle Promise program when she was a senior in high school and is currently taking classes at North Seattle College, working toward obtaining her AA. She lives with her parents in Magnolia, where she grew up, and works part-time as a barista at Diva Espresso.

A traditional 4-year college never appealed to Maddie, but she doesn't want to just tread water or live with her parents forever. She wants a career — one that's creative and flexible. When a regular customer at Diva told her about working in video and film production throughout Seattle, a new world opened to her. She's excited to have a direction, to meet like-minded people, and ultimately, to work in a field that requires artistic collaboration.

A potential sticking point: It could be a hard sell for her parents. They've been paying her tuition at North Seattle College but have told her they expect her to help pay for what comes next. They're also not convinced she can make a steady living in film.

How do you reach these people?

We created a user journey for Evan as he makes his decision about film school and where to enrolling. Below are content opportunities for each step. (Full user journey included in the addendum.)



Content Opportunities



Modern website that has a seamless information funnel.

Paid ads featuring students who have made career changes.

Organic social posts.

Sizzle reels of students that have attended SFI.

Blogs about the students and what they have learned/ are currently learning at SFI.

Consideration

School Reel that showcases the entirety of the school (BTS, interviews, completed projects, awards, etc.)

A wide variety of online student projects that are easy to navigate.

A blog/newsletter that includes graduate success stories.

Robust social media that leads users back to the site/projects/blog.

Conversion

White paper about alumni success rates for job placements.

Blog about current students/ alumni projects.

Emails from administration regarding classes, financial aid, starting dates, and what to expect after enrollment.

Faculty emails to the students that are about to enroll in specific programs (get to know me content).

Evangelize

Student social media groups.

Student work.

Student current job statuses.

Website

SFI is a school of visual arts. The website is most people's first impression of the school. It's got to make a statement about the amazing things that are happening there. It's got to be visually stunning, bold, and most importantly, there's got to be video on the first page.

Here's some [award-winning college websites](#) that make strategic use of images and video.



Social Media - 1

Social media is a place where SFI can connect with potential students in a real-life way. Younger prospects often start their search there. This section will give recommendations for going forward, and look at how past posts could have told more engaging stories.

SFI is about teaching people how to tell visual, compelling stories. Make sure this mission is represented in your social posts. Many of the current pictures posted are interesting, but lack context or story. Two intentions should be considered with each post:

- **What is the story you're telling about SFI?**

Posts don't need to be long to tell the story of student experiences. Usually, an extra sentence or two is enough. What is this film about? What are the students learning? What's a funny thing that happened during this shoot? Why was this a particularly difficult shot to get? Details like this will engage your audience, make them curious, and hopefully give them a feel for SFI's brand/voice -- in this context, friendly, welcoming, exciting. Letting readers know this could be them making films.

- **What do we want the reader to do?**

Usually, you want them to want to learn more about SFI. And possibly follow the social media of a student filmmaker. Again, details and a compelling call to action will entice them to do this.

Social Media - 2

Great shots on this post. We get a hint of what this film is about, but readers might not be enticed to look through all of the images without context.

Something like, “Masai was inspired by his grandparents, who were jailed during riots in the 60s, to make this thoughtful piece about the civil rights era,” or “Cast and crew only had this location for 4 hours, but still managed to lay a dolly track and get all their shots,” could get them to take a closer look.



Social Media - 3



Seattle Film Institute

February 24 at 7:00 PM · 🌐

Our next info session is just around the corner! Learn about careers in the entertainment industry and how SFI can help get you there.

Feb 29th at 11am. More information and RSVP on our events page or info.sfi.edu ✓



Again, a few more details can go a long way towards getting readers to click.

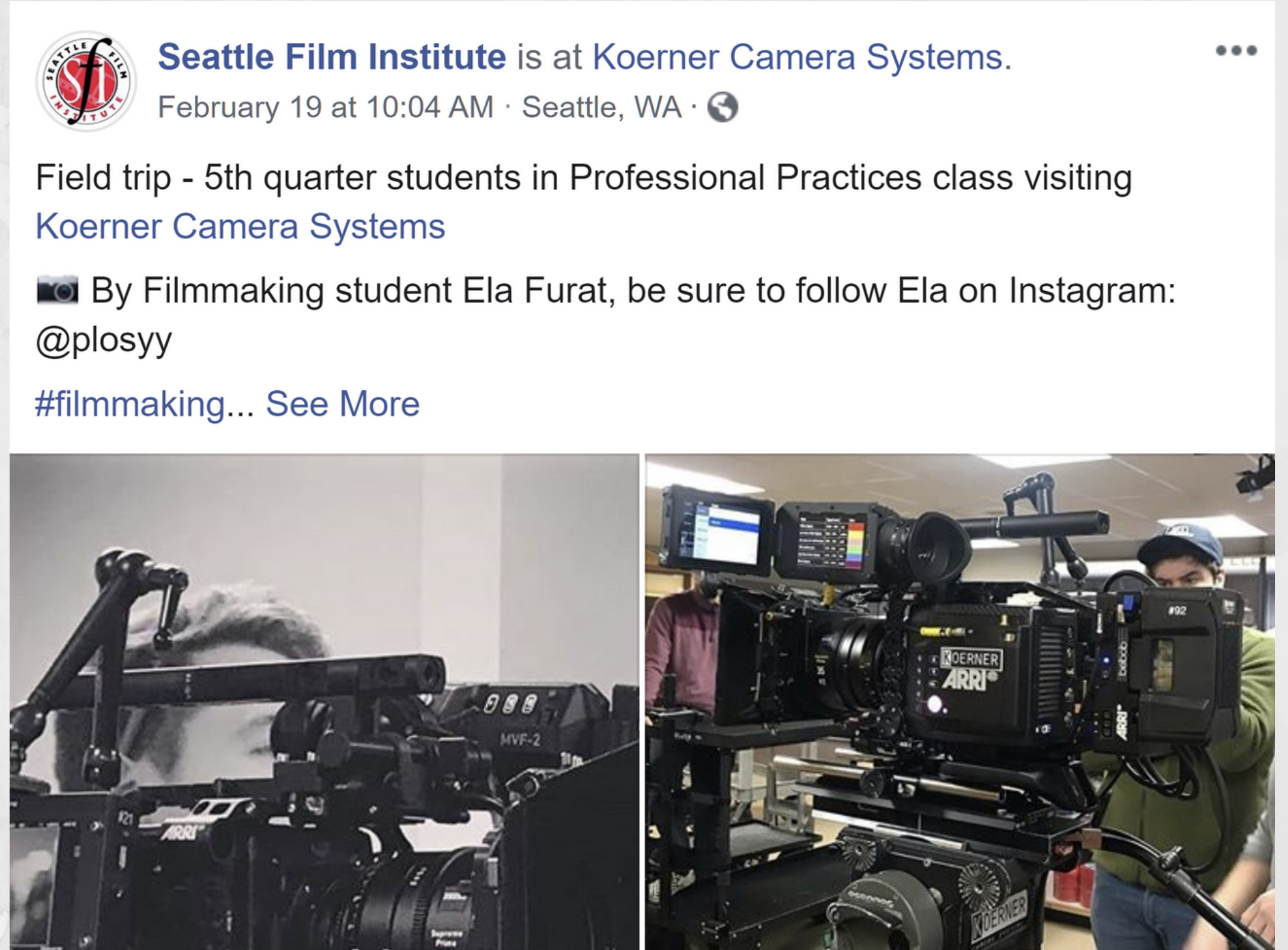
“Talk to faculty members who’ve worked on projects ranging from ‘Bowling for Columbine’ to ‘Silver Linings Playbook.’” Or “We’ll be screening a collection of award-winning short films from SFI graduates.”

Also, don’t mention the events page without a link. One destination is enough.

Social Media - 4

Posts about what students do in class are great! But don't forget the details.

“They were thrilled to get some time with state-of-the-art gear. Quality equipment is key to a successful film production. At SFI, students learn to use the latest video and audio equipment through hands-on experience.”



Video

The thing we heard most from our conversations with potential students is they wanted to see more video – student films, sizzle reel, BTS – that was easy to find on the website and in social media. More than any other content, videos are SFI putting its money where its mouth is.

Potential students need to see what's possible to create in your programs, so you've got to show them the best results of every cohort – especially the award-winning pieces. Put it on the home page. Make a video carousel. Have a link to a student gallery with lots of choices. Keep your YouTube channel up to date (the most recent video is 2 years old).

Make it easy for them to see what they can achieve at SFI.

While adding more student projects to your content may be relative easy, creating a sizzle reel is a heavier lift. However, we believe it will be worth your investment, whatever you have to spend on it.

Your visitors are looking for a visual, compelling story about why this is the right place for them. It should be one of the first things they see on your site.

