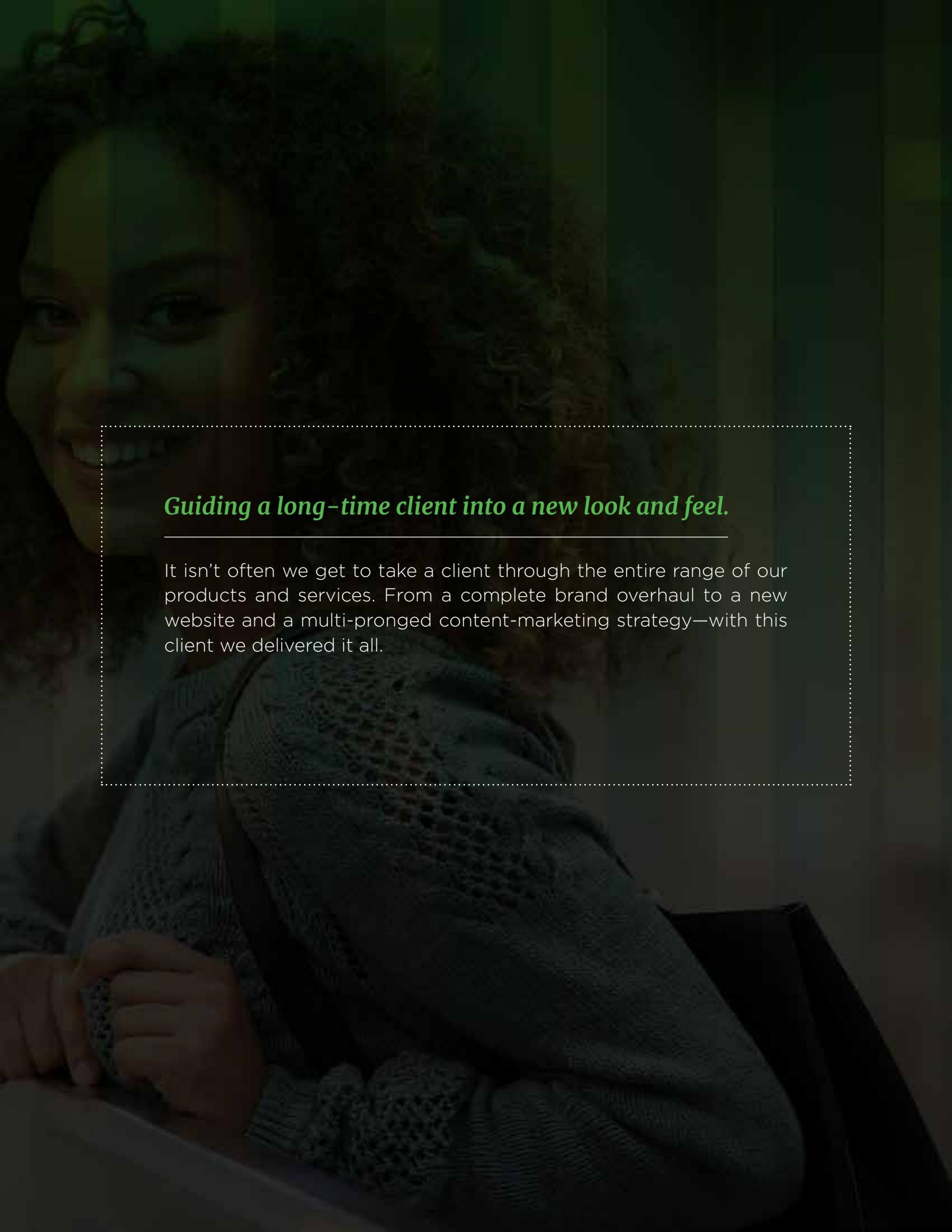


CASE STUDY

APERTURE CONTENT MARKETING



build create



Guiding a long-time client into a new look and feel.

It isn't often we get to take a client through the entire range of our products and services. From a complete brand overhaul to a new website and a multi-pronged content-marketing strategy—with this client we delivered it all.

THE SITUATION:

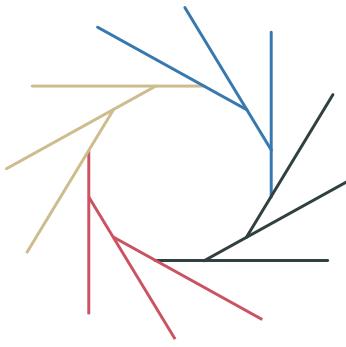
Brand confusion, too many web domains, and no marketing strategy.



Our work with Aperture Content Marketing began years ago with their previous brand imprint, Academic Marketing Services. At the time, they required a special piece of custom development—their Campaign Builder—that would help customers publish customized mini websites for each issue of their CareerFocus magazine.

However, after many years of success in the world of academic marketing, it became clear that their business had hit a wall. Their brand recognition was spread across too many names for most of their customers to keep track of who they were. They also had their website split across three different domains, most of which did not properly demonstrate the full range of their services or accurately represent their brand. Furthermore, they had ambitions to grow into new markets, and they knew the word “academic” in their brand name would prevent them from doing so.

We knew we had a lot to bring to the table, and were excited when they gave us the green light for a complete overhaul.



APERTURE

CONTENT MARKETING

PHASE 1: BRAND DEVELOPMENT

Our first challenge to tackle was the most fundamental of all: their name. They were called Academic Marketing Services, which, through a loose group of community colleges known as the CareerFocus Consortium, wrote and distributed two marketing magazines for community colleges—CareerFocus and SmartStart—through their association with Grand River Printing.

For those of you who were counting, that's five different brand names. If ever there was a case of brand confusion that needed straightening, this was it.

ESTABLISHING A NEW BRAND

We knew we needed a new, more flexible name, but we didn't want to stray too far from the original so that long-time customers would retain some familiarity.

We also quickly realized that their flagship publication, CareerFocus, had potential for other uses by swapping out "career" for another industry-based word. From there we hit on the word "Aperture" to describe their new brand.

Aperture is a camera setting that controls the depth of field in an image, allowing the photography to home in on a tiny detail, or widen to put the entire shot into focus. Aperture Content Marketing would do the same for its clients.

VISUAL IDENTITY

In creating a visual identity for Aperture, we began with a strategy session to understand the core of their brand persona. We wanted to create a brand that exuded trust and reliability without stating so outright.

To do this, we identified a series of core attributes, such as optimistic, collaborative, and practical, that would form the character and perception of the brand. We then developed a color palette combining warm neutrals with bold color choices that we felt would exemplify these characteristics.

Finally, we established a series of typefaces that combined the feel of a modern website with the look of an academic print publication.

LOGO

Having completed the groundwork, the final step was to refine all these concepts into an icon that would encapsulate the brand in a memorable logo. We landed on a spiral symbol with an open center to resemble the aperture control on a camera.

This design also incorporated all the new brand colors, as well as black and white variations for added versatility. The spiral aperture symbol combined with a wordblock logo meant that we could grow brand recognition of the symbol along with the new brand name, and eventually have more options for using the symbol together with the wordblock or on its own.



PHASE 2: WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT

With the new brand established, it was time to move forward with the website. We have always recognized websites as being integral to the growth of any business. However, Aperture was facing a unique challenge: their old websites were spread across three separate domains, each with a different design and different messaging.

We knew that it would be important for us to establish with clients the connection between the old brand and the new—and why these changes were good news for them. And we had to accomplish this while also delivering a beautiful, user-friendly design. It was a tall order, but one we were prepared to deliver.

DESIGN

One of the reasons we enjoy doing brand work is a natural extension of that work. By the time we had established the look and feel of our brand resources, we knew how to implement them on the site itself.

We took care to use imagery across the site that matched a range of demographics, and struck a careful balance between the warm and welcoming color palette and the clean, academic look which we felt would give visitors the most confidence in our site. Then we tested everything for mobile-friendliness and usability to be sure it followed best practices.

USER FLOW IMPLEMENTATION

A key part of any design involves understanding how users will move through the site, from one page to the next. We discussed with Aperture their visitor goals, including where they would most like to direct traffic.

We decided that the three paths we wanted to guide visitors along would be through a feature list, a closer look at CareerFocus, or a downloadable PDF. Ultimately, our goal would be to interest and engage visitors through these materials so that they would sign up for a demo of the CampaignBuilder, or contact Aperture directly.

SITE CONTENT

Finally, with the design in place and the user flow objectives established, we set to work writing the copy. The words that go on a web page not only provide visitors with the information they need, but help persuade them to take actions based on that information.

Writing site content is also helpful to us any time we're preparing a marketing strategy. As the core marketing content on the website, we know that getting that copy right is of utmost importance. But once we have it right, we can also market to it with absolute confidence.





ACM WEBSITE



PHASE 3: DIGITAL MARKETING

As a company, Aperture is well-versed in the content marketing world—it's in their name, after all. But they decided to work with us to promote their business for two reasons. First, their expertise primarily lay in academic marketing, whereas our skillset lay in the digital marketing world. And second, they wanted to focus their internal marketing resources on client relations.

This was a perfect arrangement for us, as it allowed both our teams to focus on our areas of expertise. We created a marketing strategy that included high-value content in the form of blog posts and downloadable content, email blasts, SEO, and remarketing ads.

BLOG

As a service, Aperture delivers high-quality content to community colleges that they can distribute through their marketing channels to help their prospective students make more educated decisions. We wanted to create a blog that would do the same for their clients—community college presidents and marketers.

Using a detailed persona template, we planned a content calendar that would provide engaging content on a range of interests for this demographic. We also took extra care to develop a scholarly, academic voice and to include references where necessary to back up our research. The added effort has been well-received by readers.

With the increase in blog content, we saw impressions on the website grow from 377 impressions in the month of July 2018 to a year-over growth of 11.3K impressions in July 2019.

SOCIAL

Our blog content also gave us a lot to share on social media. We used Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter to share this new content, as well as to announce upcoming presentations. This social activity contributed to our overall website growth, and helped build brand awareness.

DLC

As a lead generation tool, we wrote and designed a PDF that we felt would appeal in particular to community college presidents. Our article, titled “Changing the Narrative: How Community Colleges Use Content Marketing to Transform Public Perception and Build Enrollment,” was based on Aperture’s own experience working with community colleges.

Through interviews with their team, we were able to learn what message would resonate most with college presidents. We then laid it out in a beautifully-designed format that we knew would be attractive to visitors.

EMAIL

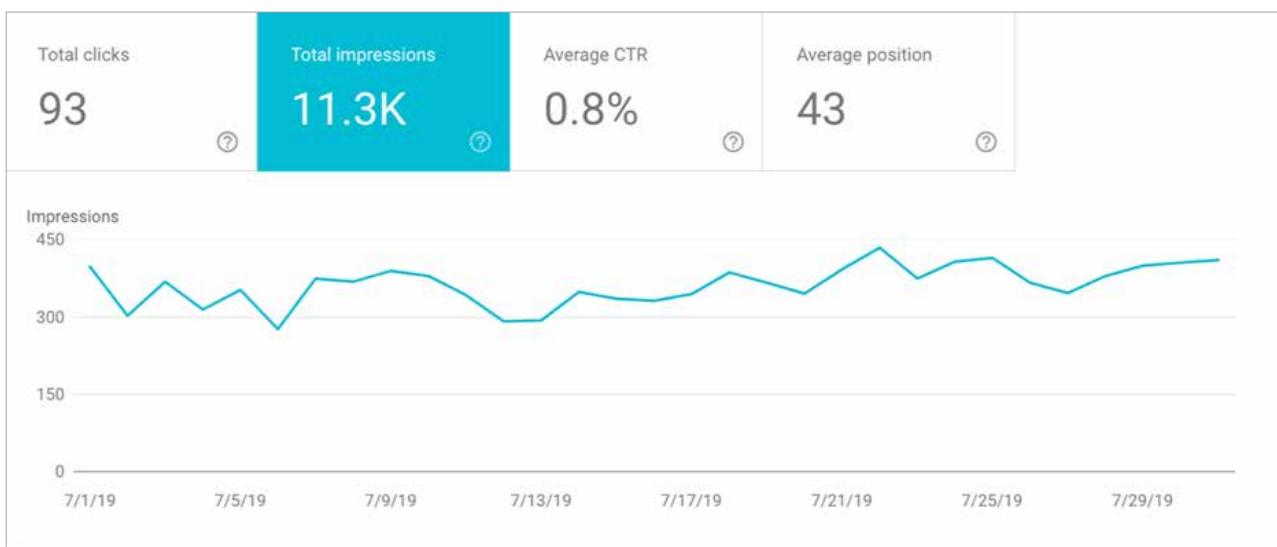
From the beginning, email has been a key part of Aperture’s marketing strategy. Because they spend a lot of time at events, they often want to send out blasts to announce their speaking schedule, or to send informative materials after a major conference.

We connected them with marketing automation services so that they could streamline this process and maintain better contact with leads who responded to these eblasts. We also helped them develop a monthly newsletter to further improve customer relationships.

Email marketing proved to be particularly effective for Aperture, especially when it came to industry events. Because Aperture often spoke at conferences for community colleges, they were able to use email to both announce the upcoming appearances, and send the slides of their presentations after the event to those unable to attend.



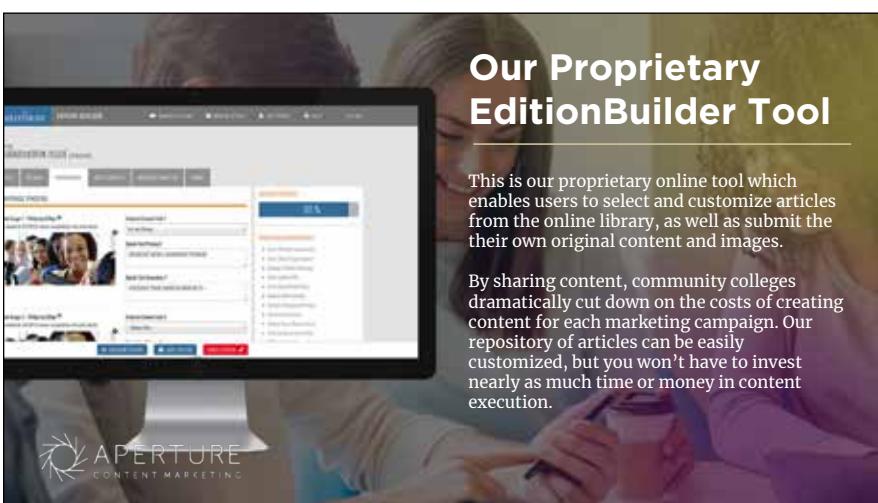
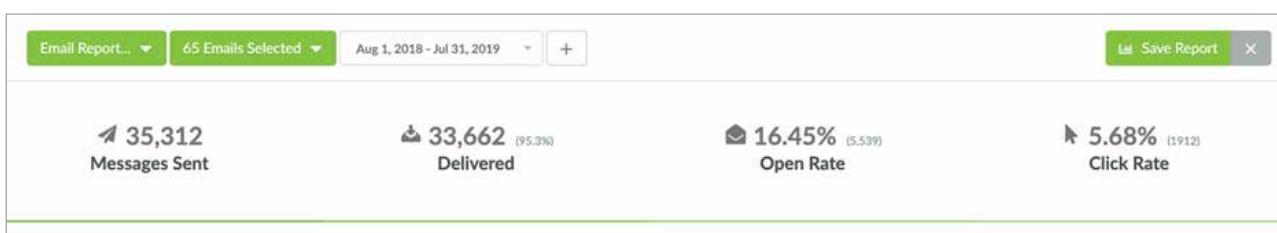
BLOG ENGAGEMENT



SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

Social Network	Sessions	% Sessions
1. Facebook		
Aug 5, 2018 - Jul 27, 2019	322	62.40%
Aug 6, 2017 - Jul 28, 2018	12	100.00%
% Change	2,583.33%	-37.60%
2. LinkedIn		
Aug 5, 2018 - Jul 27, 2019	127	24.61%
Aug 6, 2017 - Jul 28, 2018	0	0.00%
% Change	100.00%	100.00%
3. Twitter		
Aug 5, 2018 - Jul 27, 2019	64	12.40%
Aug 6, 2017 - Jul 28, 2018	0	0.00%
% Change	100.00%	100.00%

EMAIL ENGAGEMENT





SEO

With so much content on the site, we had our work cut out for us with SEO. Our specialist not only optimized pages and took care of technical work on the back end, she also implemented schema markup to help blog posts appear in position 0 of Google's results.

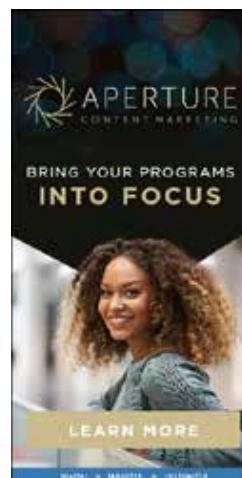
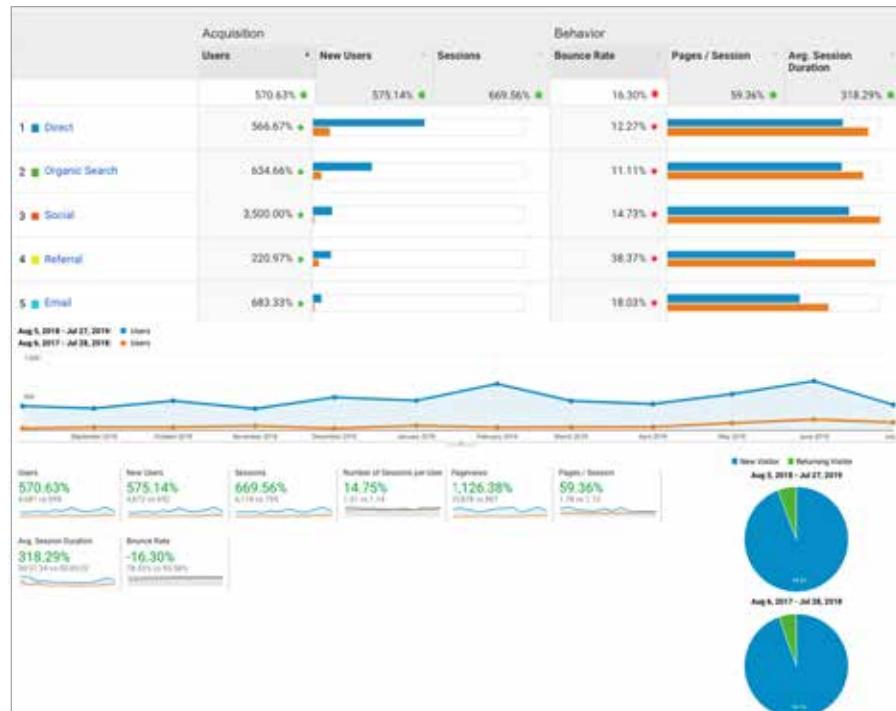
This work has not only raised Aperture's search engine rankings, it's improved their profile as thought leaders in their field.

It's no surprise that visitor data skyrocketed with the new site. Aperture's traffic grew from nearly nothing, spread out over multiple domains, to numbers befitting a high-powered, content-driven website. Nevertheless, watching the metrics leap this high after a year of hard work is a satisfying sight.

REMARKETING

Finally, we initiated a remarketing campaign so that visitors to Aperture's website would see banner ads elsewhere on the Internet after they left the site.

Remarketing allowed us to reinforce brand awareness while keeping the company front of mind. It also sends a subtle signal to visitors about the overall professionalism and trustworthiness of the service.



THE RESULTS:

Tremendous growth in traffic and brand awareness.



Aperture Content Marketing is a perfect example of what your business can achieve when your branding, web design, and digital marketing work in unison. Take any piece away, and the whole endeavor suffers.

We're proud of the work we did to create a new brand for Aperture, but we're even more proud of the way they've put their site to use. As the hub of their ongoing marketing efforts, it has pulled more than its weight when it comes to building up the new brand. And this work has paid off in an explosion of traffic and increased engagement across all their platforms.

Are you ready to turn your brand into an online powerhouse? If so, we're ready to work with you.

With ten years of experience in web design, branding, digital marketing, and SEO, our team has all the resources you need to bring your business to the next level and start seeing meaningful results.

Contact us today to get started.