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Will holds masters degrees in business administration, human-computer interaction and cognitive science. His interests and studies have focused on design, information architecture, human factors and information visualization. He earned his undergraduate degree in mathematics and philosophy.

## Position Statement

My goal, if elected to the IAI Board of Directors, is to use this Social Brand Strategy as a conversation starter with existing and newly appointed board member, as well as to open the dialogue up to the membership in the spirit of transparency so that we can all be heard and contribute.

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## A SOCIAL BRAND STRATEGY

- Build a more passionate, active and engaged IAI membership by enabling connections that generate relevant and valuable conversations.
- Establish the community with principles of **welcome**, **energy**, and **usefulness**.

This is the cornerstone of a strategy to bring “A Community of Passion” to the IAI Brand.

Reaching across the entire web ecosystem and integrating various channels of conversations, currently disjointed and haphazard, will drive membership, create cohesiveness in the community, and further the profession of practitioners. It will drive membership because there is a value the IAI can provide to people that are part of this community by serving as an aggregator, curation center and a hub of conversation.

This community includes everyday Information Architecture and UX practitioners who bring wisdom, new voices who bring energy & inspiration, and seasoned professionals who bring the value of experience over time.

This community will help the IAI stand above and apart from its competitors by positioning it as the best participation-driven and expert-led organization.

The IAI will build a stronger, more vibrant community that will become the heart of a new IAI web presence.

### **the overall role of the community to the individual practitioner**

*It will let members share and connect, create a balance between the expert voice and the practical wisdom of everyday practitioners, and bring to life the idea of the IAI as a place where people learn, mentor, instigate, connect and grow.*

### **the overall role of the community to the profession**

*A supported ecosystem of members will ultimately lead the profession. It is a necessity for evolution.*

### **the overall role of the community to the outside world**

It will provide ambassadors that can be endorsed advocates in the public discourse.

### **the overall role of the community to the IAI**

*It will be the fuel that fires a breakthrough brand experience and drives membership by showing clearly the value of taking part in the conversation.*

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## **BRANDING GOALS**

A strong social strategy for the IAI depends upon a clearly articulated brand. This identity will frame a discussion about the role of the Social Brand Strategy and how it contributes to achieving those goals.

We have divided the IAI brand goals into two groups: external and internal brand stories.

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## **EXTERNAL BRAND THEMES**

These stories summarize and represents how the Information Architecture Institute should be perceived by members, associates, recruiters, and employers.

- **IAI should be perceived as a “Passionate Community” Organization.** There is a saying: “You can tell a lot about a person based on the company they keep”. Passionate brands (and by extension, communities) consistently get premium members (or customers) that align their goals with the organization. This should be the core / foundation of the IAI’s brand messaging: It is a premium membership organization that offers real value to practitioners passionate about the UX profession which, in turn means members can charge premium prices for their services.
- **IAI Members should be perceived as both Thought and Industry Leaders.** In the marketplace of ideas, the IAI, their leadership, and by extension – their members, must be perceived as leaders that understand the profession, can identify and predict trends, and articulate solutions that drive the practice forward. Leadership has premium value.

- **IAI should be perceived as an organization stewarding a community worth participating.** People should want to become members because of the people they meet, things they learn, cache it offers, doors it opens.
- **IAI should be perceived as community focused and socially responsible.** Brands that lead do so in the community and through causes that they believe in. In that context, leadership is demonstrated through recognizing the responsibility to others that comes with success. The IAI will **interact** with the community, **contribute** to the professional development, and **empower** members to participate in these learning and teaching activities.
- **IAI members should be perceived as ‘practice stewards’.** As a passionate community, the IAI should communicate a simple but profound brand promise to members: “We are only successful if our members are successful.” In other words, the success of IAI’s members is the foundation that the organization is built upon. Member success is the core of the mission, and the IAI’s projects, initiatives and activities should be measured against it’s contribution to the ensured professional success of it’s members.
- **The IAI should be perceived as a transparent organization.** As a premium community, the IAI should communicate without fear internally among members as well as externally with it’s constituencies including members, recruiters and hiring employers. The IAI should consistently communicate content, context, and relevancy to push the profession forward.
- **The IAI should be perceived as a champion of excellence in all it says, does, and produces.** Any asset, communication, or product of the IAI and it’s members should have the hallmarks of excellence attached to it: consistency, quality, accuracy, uniqueness, and value.

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## INTERNAL BRANDING THEMES

These stories summarize and represent how The IAI should be perceived internally by leaders, mentors, and organization members. Please note that these stories include the external brand stories described above.

- **The IAI demands a commitment to excellence in all facets of its business.** The IAI should demand excellence from its members, and members should be able to speak to this social contract, why it exists, and how it benefits both the organization and the members.
- **The IAI enforces a model of shared success that benefits both the organization and members.** As a community, the IAI fosters a culture of partnership with its members. The IAI rewards members that become invested in the IAI and contribute to its success, and provides a structure to empower members to reach their professional goals.
- **The IAI empowers members to participate in this model.** As a community that invests in their members, the IAI works with members to design a model of collaboration

that challenges them to achieve and rewards when achievements are accomplished.

- **The IAI expects all members to be able to express, share, and communicate practice stories.** With an organization-wide understanding of how important brand presence is, the IAI empowers and expects leaders to be able to speak about IAI's core brand principles, and share stories that communicate the qualities of IAI as a Community.
- **The IAI provides leadership and direction to empower team members to contribute to the brand.** Recognizing the need for consistency, accuracy, and context when brand stories are told, the IAI empowers leaders and members to contribute and create brand awareness through a number of defined initiatives (ex. blogging, speaking, tweeting, etc).

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## IAI BRAND STORY CHANNELS

A key element of brand stories is that a story, on its own, usually only supports a single or subset of the themes identified. As an example, a blog post cannot address every brand theme. Neither can an article, a video, tweet, or link. Collectively, though, these stories reinforce the Community perception and collectively support each of the brand themes important to the IAI.

The vehicles used to tell IAI brand stories are called channels. Channels are common communication and publishing mechanisms used to tell stories about the community and the profession. The following are examples of common mediums:

- **Narratives.** Narratives include blog posts, forum threads, articles, presentation decks, and books. Narratives are used to tell brand stories with a specific purpose. All posts should have a clear purpose, a point of view consistent with that of a Passionate Community, and involve the IAI, its members, its audience, or issue of the moment.
- **Micro-Blogging.** Twitter as a medium can be used to engage members, customers, and communities online. Tweets will be used to promote narratives, provide member and organizational context, and engage in thoughtful / authentic conversation with the communities to which the IAI is connected to.
- **Authority Acknowledgment.** Authority can be expressed and acknowledged using social media by citing content that is authoritative, as compared to authoring it. This will be accomplished by tweeting links, bookmarking and tagging links, and commenting on narratives that each contain relevant and authoritative content.
- **Relationship Management.** As stated in the opening of this document, you can learn a lot about a person by observing the company they keep. The IAI will make its relationships visible in a manner that "socially proves" the organization as a Premium Community on LinkedIn, Twitter, Google, FriendFeed, and Facebook.
- **Profile & Portfolio Management.** The IAI will enforce and reward the impeccable display and upkeep of social media profiles belonging to IAI members. Collectively, this creates the perception of an organization that appreciates detail, quality, and consistency
- **Audio / Video.** Online media content (audio, video, Acrobat recordings, etc.) will be created to promote and support issues, concerns, professional development, evangelism, authority, best practices, continuous learning and healthy debate within the community.

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## HUB AND SPOKE MODEL

Currently, conversations and communication are distributed across multiple websites and channels including UXMatters, Boxes and Arrows, LinkedIn discussions, the IAI mailing list, as well as SIGIA, the Journal of IA, the IxDA website and a multitude of other sites as well as personal and corporate blogs. Social software sites benefit by driving communication through their own systems. This permits some amount of meta-data capture (who's messaging whom, how often, when, related to whom, in what forum, privately, publicly, etc.) while also creating traffic. These systems facilitate a type of interaction that is no longer bound to space and time, but can also feel disjointed, unconnected, adrift – we need to find a mechanism to aggregate, share, and elevate all the voices while instilling a sense of community.

One of the advantages of driving communication through a single IAI platform is that technology can be designed to differentiate message types. And that makes getting through it that much easier. The more communication is differentiated, the less work users have to do to qualify communication themselves (technology can distinguish greetings from invitations, replies, postings, private messages, comments, etc.). That said, differentiation adds complexity. User response to complexity is often apathy or laziness. Users abandon threading formats, subject lines, distinctions between posts and listings, between private and public messages, and so on. The core goal should be the centralization of differentiated content that adds value through authority and trust.

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## BASIC QUESTIONS

I think user experience issues related to implementation of a social software strategy for the IAI website must involve not just the usual matters like functional and business requirements. Members are not just trying to find and interact with the information; they're trying to interact with other members. For some examples of how social software can present unique design challenges, we should consider these questions as it relates to a member-driven IAI community of UX professionals:

- ❖ What are some of the new ways in which IAI members relate to each other online, given that they are not physically present to each other?
- ❖ In a medium that produces endless interruptions and distractions, how do members get one another's attention?
- ❖ In a medium that "flattens" distinctions (all messages look the same), how do people and their voices stand out?
- ❖ What kinds of "talk" and interaction are unique to online community and interaction?
- ❖ What risks can threaten an online community as it scales in size? Right now the IAI community is about 2,000 members, what would the community look like with 10,000 members?
- ❖ What interaction strategies and tactics, and what community features, practices, and tools can the IAI employ to create better connections?
- ❖ What kinds of "social" performances and dynamics occur in online communities?
- ❖ Will the new social platform serve distance learning, knowledge management, project management, and other organizational needs?
- ❖ What kinds of bias and structure emerge in online communities, and are they the product of technical or organizational factors?
- ❖ Why are the reasons that members join communities rarely the reasons they stay—and how can these outcomes be better anticipated?