THE NIPPON FOUNDATION-GEBCO

Seabed 2030

MEDIA STRATEGY

prepared by

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INTRODUCTION

A few months ago, we presented some strategic thoughts for Seabed 2030 media engagement, with an emphasis on social media. Since then, we have interviewed program leaders, partners and affiliates all over the world in order to get a better, deeper understanding of the work being done - and planned - in support of Seabed's ambitious mission. As a result, we are more confident than ever that, with a new Project Director firmly in place and a host of exciting projects in the pipeline, this is the perfect time to step up our messaging and engage a global audience. More than ever, people around the world are pining for global, collaborative solutions to the great challenges we face. Mapping the vast ocean floors is just the kind of moonshot-scale project we *all* want to be a part of right now.

2020 GOALS

Speaking with scientists, explorers and other members of the "oceans community," we were struck by the level of recognition and respect that the Seabed 2030 project has garnered. Now is the time to build on that achievement and introduce the project to the wider, non-expert public. This year we will focus on launching the "platforms" to reach all three audiences through three distinct channels.

1. General Public - Media Channel

Social media is, of course, the main way to engage a wide global audience. The project's current footprint on social media is negligible (802 followers on Twitter, no Instagram account and a six-month-old post on Facebook) so our first goal would be to create sustained *engagement* and grow the project's *reach* by creating a sustained and consistent stream of original, engaging content across all channels of distribution.

A second goal would be to redesign and relaunch the website, which serves not only as a repository of all the content and information we create but also as the project's "front door," which means it should look and feel as modern, ambitious and up-to-date as the project itself.

As a third goal we would aim to place some television and print stories. These traditional media engagements can play a key role in jump-starting the project's visibility, but it's vital that we have the social media presence, an updated website and content streams in place to capture and engage new audiences as soon as they go online and seek more information about Seabed 2030.

2. Education - Classroom Presentation

Reaching young audiences is a great way to engage a future audience and an important part of the project's educational mission. We propose the production of a 30-minute presentation designed to introduce young people to the exciting journey of exploration that is the mapping of the ocean floors. Designed to educate by igniting the imaginations, the presentation will target school children (10-to-15-year-olds) from all over the world and invite them to join the adventure. Working with the academic institutions affiliated with the project, we would

suggest that we pair the presentation with passionate local academics who would answer some questions and share their own personal experiences with the school children (in person where possible and on Zoom where it isn't).

3. Interested Parties: Direct Mailing & Video Cards

Conferences, once a perfect opportunity to present the project to specific audiences including government officials, business leaders and policy thinkers, are now on hold and may never fully return. This means that these once "captive" audiences will be harder to reach and engage. We aim to create specific content that will help Seabed 2030 and its impressive roster of influential experts reach these groups in a targeted and effective manner. We would like to create videos, presentations, industry press releases and webinars that will recapture and re-engage these audiences in new and innovative ways by diverting some of the energy and resources from travel and hospitality to the creation of compelling and meaningful content that can be consumed remotely.

The people we used to reach in conferences are, in their professional fields, "influencers." Reaching and engaging them is a key part of our strategy. There will naturally be quite a bit of overlap, which will only enhance the impact and reach of these combined efforts.

As a first, cost-effective way to bolster Seabed's visibility, we propose sending the 300 video cards we prepared for the Tokyo conference out to select individuals in government, industry and academia around the world.

PR and Social Media

This team will start by relaunching the social media accounts across all platforms. While still in “dark” mode, we will add new and improved graphic designs and strong images to create a coherent “identity” across all channels. A start is being made with a logo. Working with the Communications Committee, our dedicated social media curators will create model streams of content in order to understand, one message at a time, what the priorities and sensitivities are before taking over the live accounts. Then, leveraging Raitt Orr’s deep network of connections with the traditional press, we will aim to place stories in a few carefully-selected outlets in order to give the social accounts a head-start.

Once the accounts are up-and-running the key is the continuous creation and posting of high-impact content. Social media is a crowded marketplace where the bar for quality content is set much higher than for cheap viral content. To position Seabed 2030 as a leading global effort of scientific and social significance, we will need to generate a steady stream of carefully curated content that is both engaging and accurate.

Video and Animation

This team will pursue a multi-platform approach, aiming to capture and document the work of as many of the teams working on the project as possible. The aim here is to create a steady stream of video content for the social media channels

while also building up the narrative elements that will be used for the educational presentation, the targeted content for industry and policy bodies and, eventually, in a full-length documentary.

While we are all still under lockdown, we have found a treasure trove of video filmed by Martin Jakobsson on the two expeditions he and Larry Mayer conducted in Greenland. This gives us a great opportunity to start editing material right away. We would start there and also begin working on a comprehensive animation that will show every facet of the process - from the history of deep ocean mapping to how a multi beam scanner works to the potential benefits of autonomous submersible vessels. This animation project will adopt much higher production standards than the current animations in use, most of which were created by NOAA.

As soon as the global lockdown is eased and ocean-going expeditions are relaunched we will be ready to join some of the groundbreaking work being done by Seabed 2030 and its affiliates. We are already discussing filming opportunities with:

- The Two Oceans Challenge - Larry Mayer hopes to be testing the autonomous vehicle for this mission on the West Coast of the US in the late summer crossing the Pacific.

- SEA-KIT International- The unmanned vessel, which last year was a part of the GEBCO-NF Alumni team which won the prestigious X-Prize, successfully carried out an autonomous crossing of the North Sea in May. Next, it will be setting course for an even bigger challenge: an autonomous crossing of the Atlantic Ocean, possibly in August or September.

- The Great Barrier Reef - Kim Picard hopes to get a mapping mission launched later this year to the reef which, now more than ever, is a glorious example of what is at stake under the waters.

- Victor Vescovo, who's "Five Deeps" expeditions were filmed exclusively for the Discovery Channel, is now free to collaborate with Seabed 2030 not only on mapping but also in terms of filming and we are in discussions to get a crew on board his vessel as soon as he is able to relaunch his expeditions.

- Fugro, the world's largest commercial mapping company, is about to relaunch its own video showcasing the work it's doing with Seabed 2030 and will be happy to help us plan a cost-effective trip to film their work on the high seas as soon as restrictions are lifted.

- The New Zealand Regional Center - Kevin Mackay told us about an expedition to Antarctica that is in the planning stages. This would be a tremendous filming opportunity that we will try to accomplish if the expedition goes ahead this year.

- The GEBCO-NF Alumni Team is led by alumni of The Nippon Foundation/GEBCO Ocean Bathymetry training program at the Center for Coastal and Ocean Mapping at the University of New Hampshire. The team brings together individuals from over 14 countries with expertise in ocean mapping, hydrography, geology, and software development. Last year, the team were the recipients of the four million dollar Shell Ocean Discovery XPRIZE for their entry which utilised the SEA-KIT USV Maxlimer. Linking up with key alumni will be a major part of our outreach strategy.

Educational and Institutional

This is an area for which we are going to need some assistance. We need to identify partners in each of these fields who could help us shape the messaging for these important groups.

We would hope to assign a lead contact in each area - education, government relations and corporate partnerships - who could act as our “client,” guiding us as we shape content for each of these highly-specialised areas.

Our goal for this year is modest - we would like to establish the team and start planning ahead with a view for starting production early next year. Content for these audiences requires, in our experience, more planning time than that designed for a general audience and we would need much more guidance from subject-matter experts before we can start production.

Social media is a powerful medium through which to reach, inform and engage a global audience. At its best, social media is an opportunity to reach, educate and engage millions of people and turn the ambitious goal of mapping the floors of all the world's oceans in a few short years into a movement. But, at its worst, social

media can be an enormous waste of precious resources. It is devilishly difficult to create content that is scientifically and socially responsible while also being engaging enough to gain traction. Building a lasting relationship with an audience online is much harder than placing a story in a high profile traditional news outlet. It will require the creation of consistent, high quality content and the patient building of a community of passionate and enthusiastic supporters.

Getting the Science Right

The emerging field of science communication is focused on finding better ways to communicate scientific work to a wider audience. Scientists often struggle to find the words when asked to avoid jargon and communicators, both marketing professionals and journalists tend to oversimplify in ways that distort the facts. To bridge that gap, what's required is a combination of skill and systems designed to ensure that the messaging is both accurate and compelling, while being accessible to the widest possible audience.

Strategically, this means Seabed 2030 should only entrust its social media accounts to professional science communicators with a meaningful scientific background and a proven track record in communications. These professionals should also be guided by carefully researched and structured guidelines, processes and feedback loops, to make sure that they never stray too far from the science.

Quality at Scale

Each message posted on a Seabed 2030 feed is an official communication that must reflect the ambition, scale and scope of the mission while also rigorously adhering to the best science available. Just as important, each message should be crafted to ignite imaginations, to inform and engage a global audience.

We will be successful only if each video is stunning, each image perfectly captioned and every post carefully crafted and edited. However, it is equally important that we create a constant stream of content and engagement across multiple channels in order to build a following.

Strategically, this means resourcing and structuring the social media operation with the capacity, skill and scope to generate quality content at scale.

Reaching People Where They Are

Social media is a fragmented and ever-changing marketplace. Each site has a slightly different audience, style and "flavour." Creating a consistent presence on every single platform is a monumental task, and so we advise a focus on the three major sites - Twitter, Facebook and Instagram with possible additions of LinkedIn and WeChat (see "feeds" section below for detailed reasoning for this recommendation).

Reaching people where they are also means aiming for content created in - and translated into - major languages. Research shows that audiences engage much more intensely with content in their own language. We would also recommend a complete redesign of the website with a much greater focus on fast updates and slick, autoplay media content optimized for viewing on a smartphone. The recently proposed E-newsletter is another key way of reaching a targeted audience with a monthly wrap-up of Seabed 2030 news and updates. This will be a valuable information source for Seabed 2030 updates.

The key strategic goal here is to create content for each of these channels that is uniquely tailored to the demographics, style and timing that works best on that specific platform.

More Video Please

Research shows that audiences are much more likely to engage, absorb and share video content than text. The larger the share of messaging that is delivered through videos the more reach that messaging is likely to achieve.

Video, of course, is just the start - motion graphics, infographics, live interviews with Seabed 2030 experts in the field, Q&A sessions and virtual reality clips - the opportunities are endless. The more varied and unique our offerings the more engagement we will gain from audiences.

The strategic takeaway is that - while it is more expensive to create - multimedia content is key to building and growing a social media presence.

Let the Data Guide You

Much like good scientists, good communicators are constantly interrogating the data and adjusting their assumptions. Every interaction, every “like,” comment and retweet offers a data point that we can use to hone the message and expand our reach. The most beautifully crafted, scientifically significant blog post will have no effect if no one reads it. If the goal is to communicate, speaking over the audience’s heads (or just past them) won’t work. The science can’t be changed but the words and images can and should be refined again and again to enhance the understanding of the science.

The strategic takeaway is to use powerful software analytics to collect as much data on our interactions as possible and be willing - even eager - to constantly reshape the messaging to enhance reach and engagement.

CHANNELS

Feeds That Feed The Imagination

Globally, people are now spending an average of 2 hours and 24 minutes per day on social networks and messaging apps. The social media market is increasingly fragmented though Facebook is still the most owned account, with YouTube in a strong second place. If we narrow our focus to people who have visited or used the service in the last month, YouTube rises to the top position. Instagram, once seen as a potential Facebook-killer is now owned by Facebook and the two platforms increasingly share the same DNA.

It is harder to quantify the impact of each individual platform on a global scale, as most research is targeted at specific markets. However, taken together, the data leads us to a strategy that focuses on three main sites - Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, along with a consistent youtube presence, a slick and constantly updated website and - potentially - a LinkedIn profile. Each of these platforms caters to a slightly different set of users and has a slightly different style and feel driving successful interactions.

Facebook

The original social network has a way of recovering every time its growth is challenged. Most recently, it started to feel alienating to younger people with content feeling “inorganic” or “inauthentic” to a that demographic, especially in the global West. One study in 2018, showed that more than 34% of millennials had

either deleted the apps from their phones or are “taking a break” from social media.

Facebook responded by changing its algorithms to show users less of what Mark Zuckerberg called “public content” and more “from your friends, family and groups.” This caused a sharp drop in the efficacy of content produced by brands, including commercial companies, NGOs and even governments. But what is a challenge for others is an opportunity for Seabed 2030.

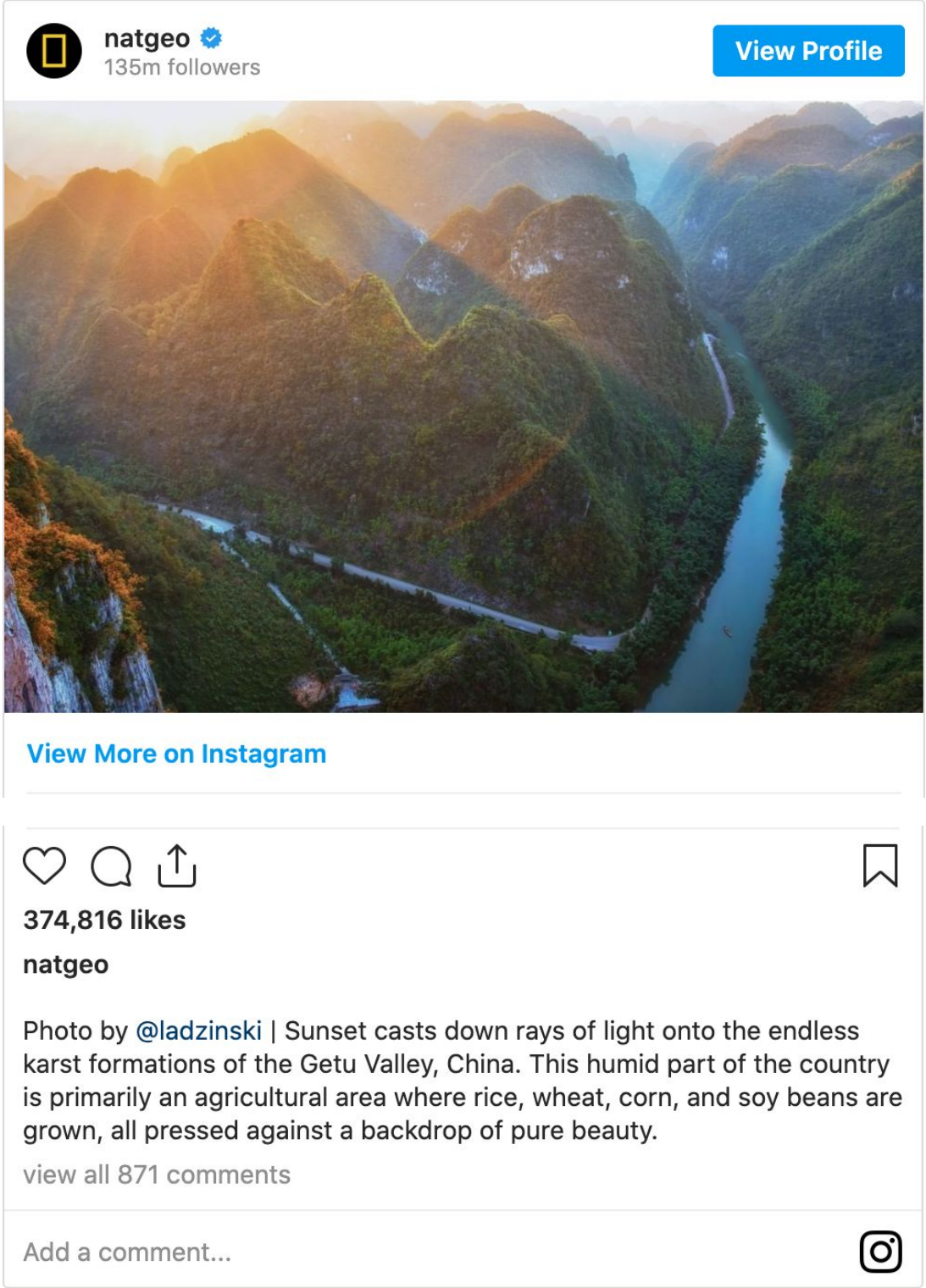
The new algorithms promote content that spreads organically, through families and groups of friends and colleagues. This means that authentic, high-quality content, shared by real users tends to beat out the messages posted by marketing bots.

We see Facebook as a perfect place to reach an older and more global audience. It is also a convenient platform on which to share longer texts from contributors, videos and multimedia content. Our target level of engagement is two original posts per day.

Instagram

Once the up-and-coming site, Instagram now has more than a billion users and, critically, almost half of them will visit the site at least once on any given day. But, despite its explosive growth (and acquisition by Facebook) Instagram has managed to continue to give users a greater feeling of authenticity. It attracts a younger audience than Facebook and is spreading quite evenly across mobile phone users everywhere around the world.

Instagram is the perfect place to put visual story-telling on display. Videos, infographics, 360-degree clips, etc. will all do well here and Instagram users are especially likely to engage with a still photograph with a well-written caption, a format that outlets like National Geographic have perfected:



Target level of engagement - two to four original posts per day (more for stills, less for videos) and as many re-shares as possible.

Twitter

Twitter is an important arena because it is here that we are likely to engage the scientific community, policy makers, industry experts and - crucially - journalists. Brevity, obviously, is what defines Twitter so this is less of a platform for the sharing of content than a place to *call attention* and link to content posted elsewhere. The goal is to create a must-follow stream of news for anyone who is interested in seabed mapping, ocean topography and underwater discovery or ocean conservation and management. This will mean that the account will cover major developments in the field, while also reporting regularly on Seabed 2030's own efforts and achievements.

Building a Twitter following takes hard, persistent work. With a recommended rate of six to ten posts a day (depending on how many are retweets or links to other orgenization's stories) and a premium on interactivity and direct engagement, it requires consent monitoring and quick responses. The investment, however, will be rewarded when the Twitter feed becomes a way to reach, in real time, large numbers of journalists, scientists and industry experts with updates on projects, breakthroughs and partnerships.

LinkedIn

The professional social media site is an additional option we would urge you to consider. It presents a unique opportunity to target and communicate with professionals in specific fields and adds a layer of professional transparency and legitimacy to the organization.

The first step in creating a successful LinkedIn presence is designing a winning page for the organization as well as creating or fine-tuning the personal profiles of leading members of the team.

In terms of content, LinkedIn tends to reward short, serious pieces of professional writing like a condensed summary of a scientific paper. By targeting content to professional communities and groups on the site, content can reach influential audiences and raise awareness and recognition in a professional setting.

Strategically, a strong, effective LinkedIn presence, with two to three professional text contributions per week in addition to multimedia content that we create for other platforms could raise Seabed 2030's profile in professional circles and foster new connections with the wider ocean community.

WeChat

With more than 1.2 billion active monthly users, WeChat is the most popular social media platform in China and a key component in any media strategy that aims for a truly global audience, which is why it is our second recommendation for an additional platform beyond the "big three."

Creating content for the Chinese market will require significant resources as studies show that translated content does not do as well as original content, created by native Mandarin speakers, on the platform. With the Chinese government exercising strict controls over all online content and especially over stories that touch on international issues, we would work with trusted Chinese colleagues to create versions of both tet and multimedia content that are customized for the Chinese market.

Reaching a Chinese audience is a challenge but it's one that we would happily take on because, with its growing influence over global policy and scientific inquiry, China is a major stakeholder that can no longer be ignored. At a time when narrow national interests are threatening global scientific cooperation, Seabed 2030 could offer younger Chinese audiences an opportunity to engage with and support a global effort that knows no national boundaries. WeChat, where 50% of monthly users are

between the ages of 25 and 35, is the perfect place to reach that target audience, with carefully crafted content in Mandarin.

Strategically, reaching a Chinese audience is a resource-intensive endeavour but one that we would recommend.

Website

The Seabed 2030 website is, effectively, the project's "front door" and, as such, needs to reflect the ambition, dynamism, and achievement of this extraordinary endeavour. This will require a major overhaul of the existing website, with a shift in emphasis from logos and static organizational information to a dynamic, up-to-date source of connection, information and, most importantly, inspiration

With an emphasis on mobile-ready design and a striking visual palate, the new website will feature clean and modern flash-based imagery that will change frequently. The news feed will include a long archive but be topped with very latest news and information (at the moment, the "latest news" section leads with an article from December 2019). The site will also offer visitors an immediate chance to connect with the project in meaningful ways by signing up to receive emails, join the feed, or connect with their local centre.

Visitors to the website should be inspired, then informed and finally recruited (or "converted") with a specific and concrete call to action. Both in design and content, we will rebuild the website to perform this "conveyor belt" process of

turning visitors into supporters. Using analytics, we will constantly update both content and design to strengthen that conversion rate continuously.

Newsletter

With social media connecting billions of people at the same time, it may seem quaint to use a mailing list to reach hundreds, or maybe thousands of direct-mail recipients. However, just getting the message “out there” on social media is not the same as *reaching* them. Studies show that emails are opened about 20% of the time, against an “engagement rate” of less than 1% for social media.

A highly targeted email campaign, with a well-crafted roundup of news and information going out to stakeholders, policymakers, journalists and key supporters once a month will, over time, build a base of support and engagement with Seabed 2030’s most important allies. It will also become an opportunity for Seabed 2030 leadership to directly message key stakeholders with strategic announcements, announce new partnerships and celebrate achievements.

Using the latest software platforms to deliver the newsletter will also allow us to track engagement, effectively manage a growing distribution list and segment it to offer Seabed the opportunity to target email messages by sector or area of interest.

Strategically, the email newsletter provides the highest level of long-term engagement with the project’s most prized audiences.

Step 1: Research, Redesign, Reshape

We would start by putting together a social media team, made up of trusted science communicators we've worked with on previous projects. Most with advanced degrees, they will start by doing their research: reading up on the science and technology of seabed mapping, interviewing key members of the teams around the world and identifying those who could serve as sources for content and sounding boards for ideas and editorial advice.

Meanwhile, our graphics studio will be working on building new "looks" for the account pages and the website (which, at this point, will be in "dark mode") and creating approved brand style guides for each channel of communications.

We will then implement a software rollout with management, approval and analytics functions, driven mainly by a Hootsuite enterprise solution with three "seats" allocated to Seabed 2030 leaders.

Next, we will roll out a stream of content while the accounts are still "dark" to allow Seabed leadership and the Communications Committee to weigh in and adjust the messaging. Once our social media team has a good understanding of Seabed 2030 content we will be ready to move forward.

Step 2: Launch

With a cache of prepared content, including multimedia content, we will turn the accounts and the new website to “live”. It would be great if, working with the communications committee, we could time this release to coincide with an attention-grabbing moment for the project. Raitt Orr’s contacts with mainstream media outlets will be invaluable in creating some “buzz” around the project and the social media accounts and website will be ready to capture the attention generated.

We don’t expect immediate, explosive growth in the numbers of interactions. The goal, at this point, is to get the messaging right as we start interacting with experts and lay people alike on open platforms.

With data flowing in, this early “live” phase is the moment to learn how users interact with our content and refine our messaging with their help. The key is to stay open and engage with supporters and critics alike in a constructive manner, aiming to understand and incorporate their valuable feedback.

Step 3: Numbers

At this point, with the accounts and the website up and running, all the focus will be on generating great content. Whether it’s video from far-flung ships, interviews that reveal groundbreaking work, or infographics that spark people’s imaginations, we will continuously drive the production of content to higher standards.

With a roster of world-beating scientists and exciting projects with partners around the globe, there is no shortage of great stories to tell. We will aim to give each and every one of those projects the coverage it deserves and solicit content from team members on a continuous basis.

Feedback

At the end of 2020, we would hope to present an analysis of the data we have collected and the growth we have achieved. Of course, we will provide live access to the analytics to Seabed 2030 leadership throughout the process but it is valuable to take a step back, assess the big picture and see how well we delivered on two key values: *quality* and *transparency* and two measures of success: *engagement* and *reach*. These are not just buzzwords. Together, they form a structured and specific strategy that will drive growth in engagement around the world while protecting and elevating the stellar reputation that Seabed 2030 and its backers already have.