Andrew Gordon

Memo

When charged with coming up with a style guide, I initially thought the New Hazlett Theater would benefit most from a detailed style guide, featuring word choice, buzz words and words to avoid, and things along this line. Basically like the AP Style Manual, only customized for the theater. As I began to work, however, I realized that I would have to just invent the majority of the decisions I was making, or parse through countless memos and other written communications from the New Hazlett Theater in order to reverse engineer a style guide. I didn’t think this would benefit Eric Sloss or the New Hazlett Theater, mostly because I did not think he was necessarily satisfied with the current communications, so modeling the manual off of them might not have been useful.

I decided instead to create a value-based style guide. This would essentially be a manual teaching people how to communicate like the New Hazlett Theater on a macro scale. In the document itself, I describe this as follows:

In order for an organization to establish a strong identity, the written style, the visual design, and the organization’s mission must all work in unison to promote the greater values. Although there are a lot of key elements that make the New Hazlett Theater unique, the four strongest are the themes of approachability, versatility, historicity, and community centeredness. This guide provides an outline for how to work each of these core principles into the written and visual communications.

A “style guide” in the strictest sense of the word would provide picky guidelines as far as word choice, capitalization and punctuation, and how to properly use the New Hazlett Theater’s name in writing. While this type of guide is important to make writing professional, the Value-Based Style Guide is different. The value based guide focuses on usage choices on the macro level, impacting how the organization is perceived in the eyes of the public. The Value-Based Style Guide is not designed to replace a traditional style guide, but rather to augment it and to help communicators unify their communications in their representation the larger-scale identity of the New Hazlett Theater.

I could perceive the core values of the New Hazlett Theater from looking through the website and various written communications, and my perspective as an outsider to the organization gave me a unique perspective with which to evaluate the organization. I figured that this choice would benefit Eric and the New Hazlett Theater more than generating a detailed wording guide.

Another benefit of my choice of design was that this document could work alongside of a style guide. I knew that at least one of my classmates was generating a style guide too, so I decided that rather than competing with him, I could create a piece that went along with his. This way, Eric wouldn’t have to pick only one of our documents, but instead, if he saw both as appropriate for the organization, he could use both of them in conjunction with one another.