

Frequently Asked Questions (“FAQ”)

What is content bankruptcy?

Content bankruptcy is a legal procedure in which a publication such as *Washington City Paper* requests that a court give it time to restructure its model for reporting, editing, and publishing, in order to forestall a catastrophic loss of readers.

Why has City Paper filed for content bankruptcy?

Recent changes in the economy and readership have made numerous elements of content production unsustainable as currently practiced. Among those elements are expenses for travel, expenses for court document fees, expenses for listings databases, expenses for notebooks, expenses for notebook-related accessories (including but not limited to pens, pencils, notebook spiral bindings, notebook front covers, notebook back covers, and notebook paper), time for reporting, time for writing, time for editing, ledes, kickers, some punctuation and diacritical marks, photography, illustration, cutlines, headlines, and, probably, the crossword.

Savage Love?

Full steam ahead.

Who’s responsible for this content bankruptcy?

You.

I see. Blame much?

Not *you* you. You’re fine. It’s more of a *collective* you that’s causing the problem, the collective you that decided to get content online from sources like Yahoo News, the New York Times, DCist, Gawker, whatever. I mean, we know you’re all over AdultFriendFinder...

Now you just hang on a second!

We’re not saying *you* do the AdultFriendFinder thing. It’s clear to everybody that you’re a charming, attractive, sociable person who doesn’t need to go online to get action. But it’s one of the few pure Internet content companies making a profit, so one of you has gotta be dropping money on it.

Here’s the point. The more attention to all the blogs and sites you read means less attention for us, which means fewer ads for us, which means less money for us, which means fewer staffers and less content. And in terms of content, the sole thing that has increased in recent years is the number of commenters who assert that we were better

back in [INSERT YEAR COMMENTER ARRIVED IN D.C.], register complaints about typos, vent grievances about story that ran in [INSERT YEAR COMMENTER ARRIVED IN D.C.], and voice certainty of a “liberal left-wing” tone. (Hereafter “haters.”) So, in sum, we’re forced to acknowledge that we’re broke and default on content.

Geez, OK. That’s bad. Sorry. I have this coupon for a dollar off at Subway. Will that help?

Is it good for the one on 18th Street?

So how does content bankruptcy get you out of this mess?

Under the terms of the content bankruptcy plan, City Paper has 120 days to reorganize its content and craft a plan to make money.

What does reorganized content involve?

You.

Gosh, I’m just the answer for everything, aren’t I?

We’re trying not to be too demanding here. We’re mainly hoping that you’ll lower your expectations somewhat. Sometimes we’ll feature a deeply researched, elegantly written story about an element of District life that’s gone unreported by other media. Other times, though, the cover slot will be filled with something slightly less substantive---say, “The Best of Creative Commons-Licensed Flickr Uploads Relating to Washington, D.C.” or “Thanksgiving Sudoku Frenzy!” or “Listings.”

That sounds like a crummy content model.

Then you should totally complain about it! All we’re asking is that if you must complain, complain on *our* Web site. If you must complain elsewhere, please make sure to link copiously to our site. If you happen to be, say, at a bar complaining about City Paper, please make sure to mention our URL as often as possible, even writing it down on a napkin, using a pen with our URL on it. Swing by our offices. We have plenty.

This sounds dire. Does content have a future?

Absolutely. This is what everybody is doing. Look at Huffington Post. Look at Yahoo. Look at Google. Look at Drudge. Or Yelp. Or the Daily Beast. None of these places are spending much energy on making their own content---they’ve just gotten good at parlaying others’ content. With a new model of others’ content, we can find our way in this brave new world together.

But if everybody is just using content from everybody else, where will the original content come from?

That's a very good question! Would you consider posting your thoughts on this on our Web site?