Expanding Our Horizons: How we were empowered to launch a new journal

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Objectives
1) To show how to identify a void in the content being provided to your audience and the audiences of your competitors.
a. We looked at growing technology trends to recognize the need for a new medium to present educational/clinical cases.
b. We determined that scholarly publishing in our visually based field offered little in the way of audio-visual content.
2) To offer advice on how to overcome the challenges of starting a new journal, which obstacles to avoid.
3) To determine how to measure the success of the new journal.
a. We will look at a range of statistics, including number of submissions, turnaround time, and social media growth.

Background
Current trends in technology are creating a generation of doctors who expect audio-visual sources of information. Many journals are addressing this by increasing their online presence, but few are fully embracing the idea of offering a video-based journal. VideoGIE began in August 2013 as a section in GIE: Gastrointestinal Endoscopy that presented readers with high-quality videos related to endoscopy used in the diagnosis and management of digestive diseases. The section quickly gained in popularity, and by 2016, we had received 906 submissions and accepted 473 articles. After a strategic meeting, the section editors and GIE Editor-in-Chief presented a proposal to the ASGE Governing Board in February 2016 recommending that the section become its own standalone journal, VideoGIE. This new journal would be entirely online and open access and would publish case reports and case series, all with a video component.

We took a unique approach to establishing this new journal by acquiring content, including a pre-established submission site, from an already-existing, but now defunct, online video journal. This saved us time in the development stage and allowed for a quicker launch. While a good idea in theory, adapting these materials to meet our needs proved to be quite a challenge, and we realized that developing our content from scratch would have been an easier process. An ambitious launch date was set for May of 2016 during our annual meeting, Digestive Disease Week. We quickly got to work composing the Editorial Board, organizing an in-person Editors’ meeting, creating author instructions, and discussing the journal workflow. Prior to launch, we created a communications and marketing plan that included e-communications, flyers and signage, and a social media campaign. We specifically targeted previous contributors to the VideoGIE section in GIE.

Conclusion
We successfully launched VideoGIE in May 2016 and began accepting submissions with the goal of publishing our first issue when we had about 20-25 accepted articles in the pipeline. Our first issue was released in September 2016 and was accompanied by a special edition print version that was included in that month’s copy of GIE mailed to subscribers. Freely available videos now provide educational content for doctors, nurses, trainees, and patients. No longer limited by the confines of GIE, we now have the opportunity to try new things and the freedom to explore new technologies. We have seen great success in our first year. Submissions are steady, turnaround times from submission to decision are low, and our popularity is on the rise. We have overcome many obstacles and learned a lot during the process of launching a new journal and look forward to watching VideoGIE grow and develop over the coming years.

Take-It-From-Us Tips
1) Develop your new journal’s identity by identifying an underused medium/format or an information gap that is not being addressed in your field.
2) A well-thought-out proposal and in-person presentation can help obtain leadership buy-in.
3) It is easier to start from scratch and build from the ground up rather than to reconfigure content and structure if you are considering acquiring a pre-established journal.
4) A well-thought-out communications/marketing plan and a target audience are essential to promoting a good launch.
5) If you have publication charges or any other fees, communication is key. It is also important to have a policy in place and to stick to it (no exceptions).
6) Don’t try to do too much or make too many changes right away when authors/readers are still trying to figure out what the new journal is about. Try to establish a firm foundation for the journal’s brand first before introducing new things.
7) Be flexible! As new processes and workflows are being established many things might be trial and error. What worked on the flagship journal might not work the same way on a sister journal.