



# **“A Closer Look” Executive Column and Blog Communications Strategy**

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# Research

*“A Closer Look” Executive Column and Blog  
Communications Strategy*



# Research

## Overview

“A Closer Look” offers an opportunity to leverage executive-level leadership perspectives and personal branding by providing transparency and insights into IRS initiatives, policies and services.

However, the blog has seen limited updates recently, with the last post published in September 2024. As a result, taxpayer engagement and visibility have likely declined leaving an opportunity to re-establish the blog as a go-to resource for timely, relevant and actionable information.

The relaunch will aim to modernize the blog’s approach, incorporate new content strategies and better align with the evolving needs of taxpayers and stakeholders

## Objectives

- Assess current state of “A Closer Look,” blog.
- Assess best practices from other government blogs or financial institutions.
- Analyze blog performance of previous posts to understand what resonated most with audiences.

## Methods

- Review recent posts and previous publishing cadence.
- Examine similar blogs for structure, tone and content strategy.
- Review historical engagement metrics and identify top-performing and underperforming posts.





## Product Analysis – Key Terms

Key Terms	Description	Significance
<b>Views</b>	Refers to the total number of times a webpage is loaded, including repeat visits from the same user. This metric helps gauge overall traffic and content visibility.	<p>A high number of views suggests strong reach and interest, but without engagement, it may indicate users aren't finding valuable content.</p> <p>A lower number of views could mean poor discoverability or ineffective promotion.</p>
<b>Active Users</b>	Represents the number of unique visitors interacting with a website within a specific time frame. This metric helps track audience growth and retention.	A high number of active users indicates strong interest and returning visitors, while a decline may signal reduced relevance, poor user experience or lack of fresh content.
<b>Engagement Rate</b>	The percentage of visitors who take meaningful actions on a webpage, such as clicking links, scrolling, filling out forms or spending more time on the page. It reflects how interactive and compelling the content is.	A high engagement rate suggests that visitors find the content valuable and engaging, while a low engagement rate may indicate that the content is uninteresting, unclear or irrelevant to the audience.
<b>Bounce Rate</b>	The percentage of visitors who land on a webpage and leave without taking any further action, such as clicking a link, filling out a form or navigating to another page. It indicates how engaging or relevant content is to visitors.	A high bounce rate may suggest that users aren't finding what they expected, while a lower bounce rate typically means visitors are engaging with the site.



# Research

## Product Analysis

The screenshot shows an IRS website article titled "A closer look at the IRS Direct File pilot". The article is dated December 20, 2023, and is written by the Direct File Team. The main headline reads: "IRS is rolling out a new Direct File pilot – Find out about this new service, how we are introducing it and some of the features". The article text explains that the IRS is piloting a new tax filing service called Direct File for the 2024 tax season, which will allow eligible taxpayers to file their taxes online, for free, directly with the IRS. It also mentions that the IRS is collaborating with the U.S. Digital Service and 18R government teams to develop new digital services like Direct File. The article includes a "Related content" section with links to "Direct File", "IRS advances innovative Direct File option for 2024 tax season", and "Direct File Fairbairn". There is also a "Subscribe" section and a "A Closer Look" section with a link to "Read all our open about a variety of timely issues of interest to taxpayers and the tax community".

### Top Performing Post – 2024 Direct File Pilot

**Views:** 87,939 ▲ <.01% from total  
**Active Users:** 71,133 ▲ .02% from total  
**Engagement Rate:** 78.75% ▲ 29.66% from avg  
**Bounce Rate:** 21.25% ▼ -45.87% from avg

Opportunity to capitalize on this media channel during filing season based on historical data. This post was shared last year at the top of filing season and trended better than average metrics with an engagement rate of ~30% over the average rate and a bounce rate ~46% below the average rate.



# Research

## Product Analysis

The screenshot shows the IRS website with a blue header and navigation menu. The main article title is "The 2023 Tax Season has begun - IRS offers tips to accurately file your return". The author is Ken Corbin, IRS' First Chief Taxpayer Experience Officer. The article discusses the challenges of the 2023 filing season and offers tips for taxpayers. The page includes a sidebar with navigation links, a list of related content, and a "Subscribe" section.

### Second Best Performing Post – 2024 Executive-contributed post on tax season kickoff

**Views:** 26,081 ▲ <.01% from total  
**Active Users:** 25,167 ▲ .01% from total  
**Engagement Rate:** 84.94% ▲ 39.19% from avg  
**Bounce Rate:** 15.06% ▼ -61.36% from avg

Another example of how to capitalize on this media channel during filing season based on historical data. This post was shared last year at the top of filing season and trended better than average metrics with an engagement rate of 39% over the average rate and a bounce rate of 61% below the average rate.



# Research

## Product Analysis

The screenshot shows a blog post on the IRS website. The main headline is "The IRS is improving the taxpayer experience, with many more improvements on the way". The post is categorized under "A closer look" and "Financial and budget reports". It features a photo of people holding up American flags and a circular profile picture of Courtney Kay Decker. The text discusses the IRS's commitment to improving taxpayer experience through various initiatives, including the creation of the Customer Experience Office and the implementation of the Taxpayer Experience Act. It also mentions the IRS's goal of delivering exceptional service every day and highlights several ways the IRS is improving taxpayer experience, such as providing better customer service, enhancing the online experience, and making it easier to file taxes.

### Benchmark Performance Example – 2024 Executive-contributed post

**Views:** 9,438 ▲ <.01% from total  
**Active Users:** 9,991 ▲ .01% from total  
**Engagement Rate:** 82.74% ▲ 35.1% from avg  
**Bounce Rate:** 17.26% ▼ -55.47% from avg

This executive-contributed post came out of the IRS Taxpayer Experience Office, signaling readership interest in content that lets them know WIIFM (What's in it for me?). This post acts as an example of what a strong performing blog post looks like outside of filing season.





# Research

## Audience Analysis

The blog represents and serves a diverse group of stakeholders, each with specific interests and informational needs. Below is a breakdown of the key audience segments and their priorities:

Audience Segment	Description	Informational Needs
<b>Primary:</b>		
<b>Taxpayers</b>	Individual filers, families and self-employed individuals seeking clear, actionable tax-related guidance.	Filing tips, tax law updates, common filing mistakes, refund guidance.
<b>Small Business Owners</b>	Entrepreneurs and small business leaders navigating tax responsibilities for their businesses.	Tax credits/deductions, filing deadlines, tax preparation for businesses, compliance resources.
<b>Secondary:</b>		
<b>Tax Professionals and Advisors</b>	CPAs, enrolled agents and other tax experts requiring technical and policy updates to better serve clients.	Technical updates, regulatory changes, compliance guidelines, IRS program details.
<b>Nonprofits and Community-Based Organizations</b>	Organizations advocating for taxpayers in need of assistance.	Taxpayer assistance programs and community outreach updates.
<b>Tertiary:</b>		
<b>Government Stakeholders</b>	Policymakers, federal and state agencies, and local governments seeking collaboration and transparency.	Policy impact, partnerships, updates on IRS initiatives affecting government programs.





# Research

## Competitor Analysis – SBA.gov Blog Insights

The U.S. Small Business Administration's blog offers actionable, well-timed content aligned with specific initiatives, cultural observances and business milestones. Below are key takeaways from their approach and how “A Closer Look” can leverage these strategies:

SBA Blog Approach	Insights for IRS Blog	Examples for “A Closer Look”
<b>Timely Content:</b> Posts aligned with relevant months, events and trends	Plan posts around tax-related themes and seasonal taxpayer needs	“A Closer Look: How to prepare for tax season before year-end”
<b>Resource-Driven:</b> Practical guides for specific action, like starting a business.	Focus on actionable tips, checklists and guides to help taxpayers navigate processes.	“Step-by-step guide to understanding IRS payment plans”
<b>Storytelling and Relatability:</b> Analogies, such as comparing running a business to coaching a football team.	Use relatable analogies or scenarios to simplify complex tax concepts.	“How filing taxes is like building a strong foundation for your future”
<b>Trends and Forward-Thinking Topics:</b> Focus on future trends and insights, such as business trends for 2025.	Include forward-looking topics related to tax policy, technology or economic impact.	“The future of tax filing: What the IRS is doing to streamline processes in 2025”
<b>Celebrating Success:</b> Highlights achievements, such as growth among women and Hispanic entrepreneurs.	Showcase IRS programs that contribute to taxpayer success and compliance.	“Celebrating success stories: How RS programs are helping taxpayers thrive”





# Planning

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# Planning

## Goals

1. Reinforce transparency and trust by highlighting the IRS's efforts to improve taxpayer experience.
2. Educate taxpayers and stakeholders about IRS initiatives, tools and services.
3. Position the blog as a go-to resource for reliable tax-related information.

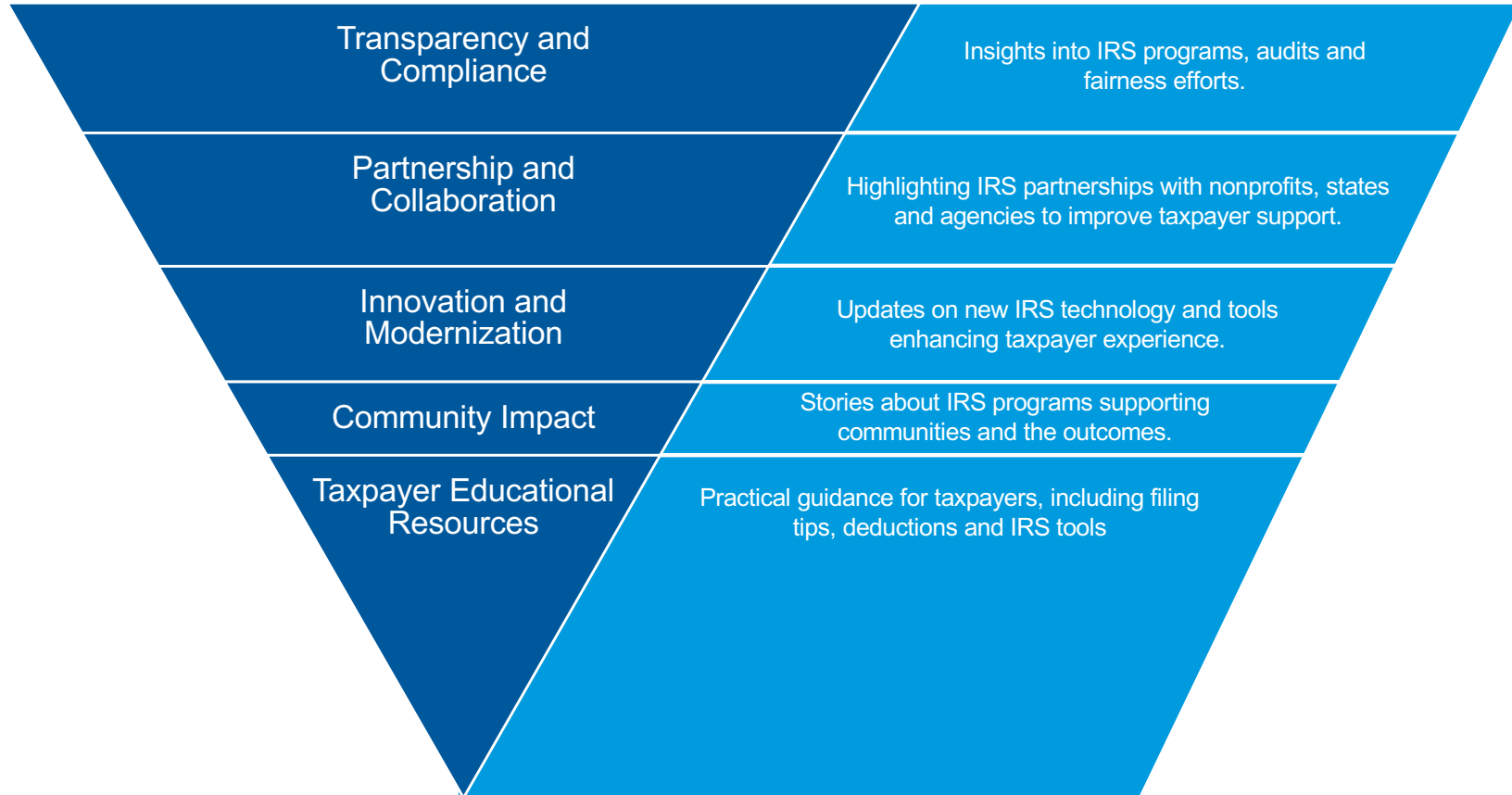
Content Pillar	Examples for "A Closer Look"
Transparency and Compliance	"A closer look at how the IRS ensures compliance and fairness for all"
Partnership and Collaboration	"How the IRS is collaborating with nonprofits to support taxpayers"
Innovation and Modernization	"How the IRS is using artificial intelligence to enhance fraud detection"
Community Impact	"Empowering communities through free tax filing assistance"
Taxpayer Educational Resources	"Tips for filing your 2024 tax return accurately"





# Planning

## Content Pillars





# Planning

## Core Messaging

- “A Closer Look” gives taxpayers a clear window into the IRS’s efforts to improve the tax experience and support every taxpayer.
- By showcasing transparency, modernization and community impact, the IRS builds trust and helps taxpayers succeed.

## Key Tactics

- Post 1-2 blogs weekly.
- Focus on timely, accurate and community-focused topics.
- Collaborate with key IRS officials to provide expert insights.

## Content Pillars as Blog Tags

Content pillars can serve as effective blog tags to categorize posts. By tagging posts under these pillars, the IRS can provide a more structured and user-friendly experience, allowing readers to easily navigate the blog and locate information relevant to their interests or needs.

### Benefits

- Improved navigation
- Search engine optimization (SEO)
- Enhanced content strategy:
  - Categorizing posts enables the IRS to identify gaps in content coverage and maintain balanced representation across its mission-driven initiatives.
  - Tracking post engagement by tag can reveal which topics resonate most with audiences.



# Implementation

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# Implementation

Channel Type	Examples	Purpose
<b>Owned Media</b>	IRS website, newsletter, email subscriptions	Serve as the main distribution points for blog content.
<b>Internal Distribution</b>	IRS employee newsletters, SharePoint	Ensure employees are aware of the blog's content for consistent messaging with stakeholders.
<b>Shared Media</b>	Partner organizations sharing blog content	Amplify reach by leveraging trusted networks.
<b>Earned Media</b>	Media coverage and publications	Increase credibility and broaden reach.

## Content Strategy

- **Format**  
Blog posts of 600-800 words, with occasional long-form pieces (1,000-1,200 words) for in-depth topics.
- **Publishing Cadence**  
Weekly posts with seasonal peaks (e.g., tax season) featuring bi-weekly updates.
- **Contributors**  
Subject-matter experts (e.g., IRS executives, commissioners and division leads)) with clear, jargon-free writing and a conversational tone.

## Promotion Plan

- **Launch Campaign**  
A blog series introducing each content pillar.
- **Interactive Content**  
Add polls and surveys to blogs to engage readers and gather insights.
- **Multimedia**  
Incorporate infographics, short videos and other multimedia to complement blog posts.







# Evaluation

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# Evaluation

## Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

### Engagement Metrics

Page views, unique visitors, time on page, engagement rate and bounce rate

### Audience Feedback

Sentiment in blog comments and social media responses

### Reach

Growth in email subscribers and social media followers

### Conversion

Clicks or downloads/usage of IRS tools promoted via the blog

## Evaluation Methods

### Community Feedback

- Quarterly surveys for readers to assess the blogs usefulness and identify areas for improvement.

### Reporting

- Monthly analytics reports and insights.
- Year-end report summarizing performance, key learnings and recommendations.
- Use insights to refine content strategy and publishing frequency.





# Thank You

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