

NANPA 2003 Summit

Breakout Session #1

How to Improve Your Website

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Introduction

Why Change Anything?

- Your website represents you and your work
- Changes in business environment
- The web is an “image” medium
- Good Design = Credibility – www.consumerwebwatch.org/news

“...nearly half of all consumers (or 46.1%) in the Stanford PTL study assessed the credibility of sites based in part on the appeal of the overall visual design of a site, including layout, typography, font size and color schemes.”

Three Steps to Improving Your Website:

1. Re-evaluate Purpose –
Portfolio of Work?
Business Brochure?
New Business/Projects?
Direct Sales?
Vanity?
2. Solicit Feedback –
From clients/customers
From friends & colleagues
Grow a “thick skin”
3. Develop a Plan –
Maybe nothing to be done
Maybe too expensive (time/money) to do
Identify areas needing work to fulfill purpose
Integrate feedback and ideas (using common sense)

Design Guides

Match Website to Your Business Image:

- Casual or Formal?
- Emphasis on photos, writing, or both?
- Environment/Conservation, Fine Art, Stock, Books, etc.
- Coordinate with existing marketing material, if appropriate (or vice-versa)

Avoid Clutter:

- Control ad placement and number & other distractions
- Aid navigation while reducing complexity
- Reduce choices to less than 10 at once (preferably 5-7)
- Focus viewer's attention on what's important

Avoid "Special Technology" for Critical Areas:

- No Java or Flash for navigation buttons
- Avoid plug-ins for viewing photos or content
- Flash is OK, but use sparingly
- Use Adobe Acrobat PDF for larger documents

Avoid "Frames":

- Frames are multiple pages displayed within the same window
- Problems with rendering properly on all platforms
- Can't save bookmarks or favorites
- Search engines don't index frames well or produce valid links
- Good for certain presentations, but don't build your entire website in frames

Don't Forget About Printing:

- Print still valid for filing, reference, offline research, etc.
- White type on dark backgrounds a problem when printing, most browsers don't print backgrounds by default
- Pages wider than 750 pixels may get chopped on the right

Useful Web Statistics

Monitor Resolution Usage:

- 49% @ 1024x768
- 47% @ 800x600
- 2-3% @ 640x480
- 2-3% @ Other (higher or lower)

Color Depth Usage:

- 49% @ 16M+ colors
- 43% @ 64k colors
- 8-9% @ 256 colors (AOL worst offender, see below)

Connection Speeds:

- 51% use high-speed connection (Cable/DSL/Satellite)
- 49% use dial-up (Phone line)
- How long will they wait?
 - 84% will wait 10 seconds
 - 51% will wait 15 seconds
 - 26% will wait 20 seconds
 - 5% will wait 30 seconds

Browser Usage:

- 90% using Microsoft Internet Explorer 5 or 6
- 5-6% using AOL (as MS-IE)
- 3-4% using "Gecko-based" browser (Netscape, Mozilla, etc)
- <1% using Opera, MSN-TV, older browsers, etc.
- AOL owns Netscape, usage will swing 20+% if adopted

Language:

- English is not the native language of 63% of web users

Simple Tips

Visit Often – Check your own website daily, or at least weekly

Test on Other Platforms:

- Test other browsers (most are free)
- Test other screen types (laptops, bigger/smaller screens)
- Test other machine types (Mac vs. Windows)
- Test AOL especially!
 - AOL issue with image compression, get AOL users to turn image compression off
 - See www.relevantarts.com/aol_info.html for details

Get the Most From Your Domain Name:

- Make sure e-mail originates from it (mary@naturephoto.com rather than marylou789@yahoo.com)
- Use a “sig” on all e-mail that includes your web address
- Use domain everywhere you would use a phone number (and then some)

Put Contact Info on Every Page:

- Phone/Fax/Email
- Remember printed versions!

Content Improvement

“Content is King”:

- 75% of viewers return for high-quality content
- 54% of viewers return for frequently updated content

Identify/Refine Your Writing Style:

- Choose one and stick with it
- Factual, conversational, 1st person, 3rd person, etc.
- Keep text passages short, break up with photos/whitespace

Know Your Audience:

- Identify your target viewers
- Design and write for their needs
- Humor is most engaging content element
- Allow for “least common denominator”, viewers don’t want to think too hard or read too much.

Photographs as Content:

- Be sure to show your photographic “style” and highlight it
- Change photos frequently
- Add copy to signature photos, interesting stories, personal thoughts
- Again, humor is most engaging content element

About Search Engines

The “Big 10” – Concentrate on these:

1. Google
2. All the Web
3. Yahoo (paid)
4. Lycos
5. Ask Jeeves
6. Inktomi
7. LookSmart (paid)
8. Open Directory
9. Teoma (paid)
10. Alta Vista

Avoid the scams:

- “*Get listed in 1,500 search engines ...*” (there aren’t that many)
- “*Top 10 placement guaranteed ...*” (nobody can guarantee that)
- “*Your website may not be visible ...*” (or it may be, they don’t know)
- “*Increase your web traffic ...*” (whether it’s relevant or not)

Do Your Research:

- Search Engine Watch – www.searchenginewatch.com

Use Software Aids:

- Web Position Gold - www.webposition.com

Portals vs. Vortals

- Yahoo is a “portal”, covers many subject areas
- Nature Photographers Online Magazine is a “vortal”, covers a specific subject area
- Appearing in “vortals’ is more effective than “portals”

Pay-per-Placement:

- Yahoo, Google, etc. most offer some program
- Can get very expensive

Pay-per-Click:

- Overture – Bid for placement per click
- LookSmart – Establish monthly budget of clicks

Websites for Further Reading

Consumer Web Watch – www.consumerwebwatch.org

Consumer-oriented articles, research, and information on web usage

Web Style Guide – www.webstyleguide.com

Excellent “start-to-finish” articles on web development, writing, usability

Search Engine Watch – www.searchenginewatch.com

All about search engines and how to make them work to your advantage

Web Usage Statistics –

Browser News – www.upsdell.com/BrowserNews

CyberAtlas – www.cyberatlas.com

Web Design Group –

Nuts and bolts stuff for the DIY crowd - www.htmlhelp.com

Other Resources

More copies of this document:

Microsoft Word format –

www.relevantarts.com/docs/NANPA_Web_Breakout.doc

Adobe Acrobat format –

www.relevantarts.com/docs/NANPA_Web_Breakout.pdf

Copies of the PowerPoint presentation from the Breakout Session –

www.relevantarts.com/docs/NANPA_Web_Breakout.pps

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