

How to create an excellent progressive website strategy

I am still ruminating about the 'lessons' of the SISO Executive Conference as I go about my business. As I speak to some of the leaders of the event industry post-event(including a very interesting chat with Darrell Denny of Penton and follow up conversation with Ted Doyle of FuelDog Media), the subject of dynamic, interactive websites keeps coming up. I mentioned in past columns about the Tradeshow Website Awards in New York City last month, and it seems that how to get from a static webpage which provides limited information and standard registration functionality to a fully interactive community building, content renewing portal for information has become imperative for SISO member companies.

At the risk of being repetitive to the SISO Executive Conference, here are some of my, Darrell and Ted's thoughts on the matter....

- 1) The company needs to make a long term commitment to supplying content if the goal is to provide the chosen market with periodic new and valuable information. This means investment of money, time and resources, and patience through the early stages.
- 2) The company needs therefore to plan to get staff on hand who can intelligently address that marketplace, whether that be a Chairperson, or General Manager, or staff responsible for content who can be active participants in posting news or information or comment to such a website...

Assuming you have the above(or at least the commitment to get the above), how do you start the transition?

- 1) Pick a niche community to address. I assume here that the niche community is the parameters of the conference or event you are holding or starting;
- 2) Have a plan to create multiple reasons to visit the site(news page, blog entries, etc).
- 3) Partner with others(associations, publications or other events) for additional content and website functionality;
- 4) Have a plan to have buyers meeting sellers through the website, perhaps by having a more active sponsorship program where more click throughs occur because you are providing content that readers keep coming back to.
- 5) Look at search engine optimization once your new site is up and running to help you become a de facto standard for that market.
- 6) Establish a blog which is active at least weekly and especially when interesting industry news occurs. I know some companies are uncomfortable in letting readers post information that could be negative about your company's products potentially, but it's better to give your company an opportunity to address the comments where you have attention of the readership, if necessary.
- 7) Be OK with the fact that with the fact that for the site to be totally interactive, some content should be driven by the reader.

Easy? No. The good news is that the event industry already has trailblazers who can be modeled, and technology is available to assist companies to get started. As the motto of the British Special Air Services(SAS) correctly states, 'who dares wins'.

What's stopping you getting started?

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