

TEAMWORK NEEDED FOR WEB SITES: BLOWING UP THE ORG CHART



BY SUZANNE MCGANN

President, Voyageur I.T.

Web 2.0 and all its spoils bring new opportunities to drive Web traffic and revenue. The content-rich applications of Web 2.0 — think blogs, podcasts, RSS feeds, social media and more — infuse fresh content to Web sites.

At the same time, an increased reliance on search engines is a fact of life. Both consumer and business-to-business Web users are increasingly turning to search engines to find what they are looking for. For instance, during the month of March 2007, comScore Inc. reported Americans conducted 7.3 billion searches, up 14 percent from the previous year.

The trouble is that it takes a village to create and maintain effective Web sites today — whether it's in-house staff, ad agencies, interactive shops, Web developers, copywriters, search-engine or other tech specialists. The too-many-cooks problem can make any online effort fail fast, or at least go quietly into the abyss of Web site mediocrity that plagues many enterprises today.

No matter where you fall in the chain of command for creating or maintaining a Web site and all its attendant duties, consider these recommendations:

1. Throw out org charts and old chains of command. Large companies, by their nature, tend to take a siloed approach to Web development. Often, this puts the kiss of death on the creation of a great Web site that produces results because of the lack of collaboration and sharing of information between departments and outside firms. More orchestration is required among these disparate groups. Small to mid-size firms often have a handle on what they want to accomplish online but may not be organized or staffed to do so. The solution is to put one person, department or firm in charge of online strategy.

2. Top-down approach with a leader and project manager. Our experience has found that firms with \$40 million or less in revenues, or fewer than 100 employees, do best when online marketing is directed from an owner or CEO. At larger enterprises, online strategy is best directed from a chief marketing officer (CMO) or a centralized marketing function. If the client outsources part of its online activities, one firm — such as a full-service Web development firm or the interactive division of an ad agency or marketing firm — should be appointed as project manager. The project manager, reporting directly to the client leader (CEO, CMO, etc.), is there to help guide online strategy and manage activities across the client side and any other outsource partners.

3. Better outcome. Define online-related roles using a top-down flow for best project outcome. Again, traditional pecking orders or lines of reporting might go out the window.

cont. on 18 ►

VOICE

EVERYONE'S GOT A VOICE. LET YOURS BE HEARD. LOUD AND CLEAR.



Just picked up your magazine, and I am blown away by its philosophy, direction and huge promise.

Bravo! Having taught creative for 20 years, I've watched a social network of brainiacs grow in the most interesting ways. Sure, connected by profession, but more connected by ideas and lifestyle and tools. Your publication taps into that.



Deborah Morrison

Chambers Distinguished Professor of Advertising
University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communication

DID YOU KNOW?

More than two-thirds of the members of the Visual Effects Society have 11-plus years in the visual effects field.

Source: Visual Effects Society

VOICE

WHERE IN THE WORLD?



Above: Jeremy A. Carrus takes *Create* with him every time he travels.

Left: Mieko Mahi in Iquitos, Peru recently working on the Amazon River photographing a ship unload heavy vessels.



Right: Lee Crowe, an animation instructor at the Art Institute of Atlanta, recently went to New York City and took the NOV+DEC issue of *Create* with her. She and the mag found the Art Institute of New York City in Tribeca.



Create Magazine is popping up around the corner and across the globe! If you've got a picture of yourself with a *Create Magazine* in hand while traveling, we want to see it! Snap a picture and e-mail the photo and caption to buzz@createmagazine.com.

QUESTION OF THE ISSUE

What is the best part about the new Create Network?

E-mail your answers to feedbackmw@createmagazine.com and sound off!

◀ cont. from 17

For example, Web developers often work closely with project leadership and marketing to develop a keyword glossary to ensure site content reflects current and popular keywords. This produces Web sites that are visible and easily found on the Web. It might entail a business analyst role from the operations side to feed weekly sales figures to marketing, which then informs the team on adjusting keyword and related search-engine activities.

4. Marketing directs IT. Web site design and development is a marketing function today because it's all about creating a user experience. So marketing, whether dictated from the client side or the lead outsource partner (in the project manager role), drives online initiatives. Aesthetically pleasing sites are easy to navigate and feature smooth graphics and rich presentations, not clunky or overly technical functions. Again, ensuring customers find the Web site places more emphasis on search-engine marketing (SEM) than ever before, requiring continuous feedback between marketing and the technical team.

5. Frequent SEM activities. SEM includes activities such as link building, creating and promoting new content, and making optimization refinements. The Web team needs to ensure keywords show up in natural (organic) search results or as paid search results when pay-per-click programs are used. SEM activities need to be performed regularly and frequently as significant new content has been posted to the site. Also, take into consideration whether the business is seasonal or cyclical when doing SEM. We recommend incorporating SEM into the client's regular business activities whether that's weekly, monthly or quarterly.

Some of the best ROI is easily captured with tighter, more frequent SEM — which begs for organizational changes or outsourcing the function. Even large enterprises tend to put ongoing SEM on the backburner so this is one area outsourcing to a specialist in a managed service provider role makes business sense.

In summary, Web users today demand fresh content and cool content-rich presentations. Advances in Web technologies and evolving Web user habits have raised the SEM bar. At the same time, dynamic content created from e-commerce and database-driven sites makes SEM all the more challenging. All require more frequent and focused attention on the execution of the online strategy. ■

Want to sound off about your market? Contact contribute@createmagazine.com.

Suzanne McGann is the visionary leader, majority owner and president of St. Paul, MN-based Voyageur I.T., a Web design, development and branding firm. She brings expertise in technology and project management to deliver clients thoughtful, customized solutions. In 2005, McGann was named "Young Woman Business Owner of the Year" by the Twin Cities Chapter of the National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO), and in 2004, one of the "Top 25 Women to Watch" by "Minneapolis-St. Paul Business Journal." Visit www.voyageur.com or call 651.292.8838.

LET YOUR VOICE BE HEARD.

Got any comments, feedback, statistics, questions, thoughts or photos that you would like to share with us? Send them to feedbackmw@createmagazine.com.