



ELEMENTS OF A GOOD ROTARY CLUB WEBSITE

By the D-3830 eMedia Team, PR and Rotary Image Group, Nov. 22, 2008

Representing your Rotary “business” on the Internet requires preparation and a well thought out strategy, because an effective website reflects not only the image of your club, but also its objectives. A well done website is a perfect marriage of **form** (how it looks) and **function** (what it does). It must convey a message about your “business” to your audience. That is, effectively spreading the good word that is Rotary, especially to non-Rotarians.

The succeeding sections on this document provide helpful guides on implementing a good website. For your immediate reference, however, following are the basic elements that you need to consider for your club website.

1. **Club Background** - include as much information about your club as possible to make your audience get to know you better, such as:
 - a. **Club History** – how and when the club came about, achievements, milestones, and other worth mentioning
 - b. **Current Officers** – name/nickname, position, with photos as much as possible
 - c. **Council of Past Presidents** - name/nickname, tenure, with photos if possible
 - d. **Roster of Members** – list of active members, with photos if possible
 - e. **Contact Details** – include phone numbers, email and postal addresses, usually of your secretariat, to enable easy communication with your club

Depending on the length of the contents, the above may be presented in individual pages.

2. **News and Features** – highlight your projects and activities and **keep them current**, i.e., “news at it happens...” and update them at least weekly or every 2 weeks. Keep your audience informed about your club projects, meetings, district events, fellowships, etc. and enhance them with photos. Post articles in individual pages, as much as possible, and maintain an archived listing so you and your viewers may be able to review them anytime.
3. **Other Enhancements** – include items that will be of interest and useful, not only to your audience, but also to your members, such as schedule/calendar of events, downloadable forms, announcements, photo gallery, club song in audio or video format, and other items of interest.

Keep Your audience Interested

To keep your audience coming back to your site, keep your contents interesting in both form and substance. Unless they're just simply for design, add short write-ups on photos or images to describe their significance to be better appreciated.

PR Writing Tips

For your news/features articles, here are some tips on things to consider in putting together a good Public Relations write-up:

The object is to

- Grab the reader's attention
- Convey information quickly
- Invite the media to cover your story.

.... *write easily, logically, and succinctly*

Inverted pyramid – On top is “The Lead”

- The most important and relevant information at the top
- The headline and the first sentence are the two most important parts
- Make sure they're compelling

“The Lead”: the 5 Ws

- **Who?** - the main focus of your story; a person or group at the center of the story
- **What?** - the event or project with which your club is involved
- **Where?** - the location of the event, including a street address
- **When?** - the time, day, and date of an event, or the time period involved for a person or project
- **Why?** - the reason the event, person, or project is significant to the general public
- *In subsequent paragraphs, provide details about the event or project, or describe how the person or group achieved something extraordinary*

Pictures are worth a thousand words ...

- Plan ahead, determine message
- Use high-quality digital camera
- Action shots, images of hands-on activity create more interest than posed shots
- Timely release of photos is critical for story to become news

BUILDING A GOOD WEBSITE

Adapted from *Best Practices for Developing a Website* by Paul Chin, Jupitermedia Corp., 2008

Settling for a cheap and amateurish site will decrease your value and may do more harm to your image and reputation than not having a website at all. With a lot of commercial and freeware do-it-yourself tools available in the market, building a website might be easy, but building a **good** website is not.

The site must be aesthetically pleasing and sometimes even entertaining, in order to catch the audience's attention. But the site must also be informative and functional in order to provide value for the audience's time and to get them to come back. Unfortunately, many website owners place too much emphasis on the *flash* and not enough on the *substance*. The purpose of your website's design is to complement its message, not overshadow it.

The most challenging part of building a website is not so much the nuts and bolts of development; it's the **planning** and **conceptualization**. Before any actual designing and development can take place, you need to define your website's main purpose, what message you wish to convey, and how this message will be conveyed.

Choosing an Effective Domain Name

The domain name plays a very important role in the establishment of your online "brand" identity. It's important to consider how your domain name will be interpreted not in print, but in speech. In print, there's very little possibility for error because the domain is spelled out. But when you're trying to give someone your website address verbally – such as when you're speaking with someone on the telephone and don't have the luxury of handing them your business card – there's far too much room for misinterpretation. Keep it short. For clarity, avoid using more than three or four separate words. AcmeDesigns.com is OK, but AcmeIncWebSiteDesignAndDevelopment.com is too much.

Website Components

When people hear "website" they immediately think of its design, the flash and the wow-factor. But websites are made up of many interrelated components that are dependent on your specific goals. Although every owner has its own website vision, most sites have a basic set of components that need to be included and issues that need to be addressed regardless of the business:

Design elements: Design elements define a website's look and feel. They include **layout** (e.g., minimalist, spacious, multi-columned), **typography** (e.g., traditional, modern, unconventional), and **color scheme** (e.g., bold, subdued, monochromatic).

Site navigation: Site navigation type defines the logical organization of content. It's the mechanism by which users navigate from one location to another. Common navigation types include **tiered menus** (parent-child), **sequential menus** (brother-sister), and **site maps** (overview).

Site navigation mechanism: The manner in which the navigation is carried out and represented. Common navigation mechanisms include **static menus**, **dropdown menus**, and **pop-up windows**. Whatever mechanism you choose, it must remain consistent throughout the site. Don't use a drop-down menu on one page and a pop-up window in another.

Site and content architecture: Site and content architecture defines the **physical organization components** (such as applications and databases) and **content**. Site **administration**, **manageability**, and **security** will greatly influence your architecture.

Content: The content you wish to present to users. This can include information about your club's **history**, **membership** and **mission**, information about your **activities**, current and past **projects** and **beneficiaries**, and **contact information**.

Content formats: The format of your content. Common website content formats include **text**, **images**, **PDF files**, and **audio** and **video** files.

Style and tone of content: The **style** of your design elements and the **tone** of your web copy will define the overall mood of your website. Style and tone can be **formal**, **casual**, **humorous**, or **offbeat**.

Hosting

Where your website will be hosted depends on your site components and business needs. There are plenty of service providers to choose from, each trying to outdo its competitors and promising to offer more for less money. Your job is to wade through all the marketing and find a website host that meets your current needs while still having enough wiggle room to accommodate future expansion.

Take a bird's eye view look at all potential website hosts and evaluate:

Cost: Most website hosts charge by the month but will offer substantial discounts for one year or multi-year contracts.

Disk space: Large documents, high-resolution images, audio files, and video files can take up a lot of disk space in a short period of time. If your website is going to be content and multimedia heavy, you need to ensure the website host provides adequate storage for your current and future files.

Transfer limits: website traffic will vary from month to month, but if you're expecting a lot of traffic, or you plan to stream multimedia content like audio and video, you must make sure the host's transfer ceiling isn't too low. You'll most likely incur additional charges for exceeding your allotted monthly transfer limit.

E-mail support: If your business doesn't have its own dedicated mail server, you'll need to make sure the website host provides an adequate number of e-mail boxes for all your employees as well as adequate storage per mailbox.

Technology support: If your website is going to contain user applications (e.g., PHP, Perl, .NET) and/or databases (e.g., MySQL, MS-Access, PostgreSQL) check to see if the website host actually supports them.

Backbone security and failsafes: The more fail-safe measures a host has, the more likely your website will survive a system crash or failure. Fail-safe measures also help minimize service interruptions associated with blackouts. Typical fail-safe measures include regularly scheduled data backups, uninterruptible power supplies (UPS), backup generators, and a formal disaster recovery plan.

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