



## ZONCOMM E-NEWSLETTER July-September 2009 – Part II

### CREATING EFFECTIVE ZONTA CLUB WEB SITES

The first thing that most people do when they want to learn more about an organization, product, or service is to look on the Internet. The Web plays a huge role in the communications of just about every kind of organization.

A Web site should be set up the same way as any other offline business. Successful Web marketing requires a combination of methods: an awareness of business principles, a combination of marketing techniques, and an unwavering focus on customers. The customer (i.e., potential Zonta members, Zonta-supported service organizations, or recipients served) is the key to a successful Web site – from site design to marketing.

The marketing budget may need to be redistributed to free up funds for online marketing. Basic marketing principles still hold true, so capitalize from that success online. Reaching current members online involves researching their demographics (age, gender, income level, education, geographical region, or job title). Design the club's site and implement the Web marketing campaign using those profiles to decide what to do and where to spend online marketing dollars.

When using the Web to attract new members, decide whether the goal is simply to expand the club's geographic reach (going after new potential members within the same demographic classification) or to seek a completely new target audience. Target one narrow market segment at a time; don't dilute marketing efforts by randomly trying to capture all segments. Create a profile of the new target members (in the same way mentioned above for current members).

#### Characteristics of Successful Web Design

- **Draw new visitors to the site** – With only seconds to make a first impression, it's only enough time for visitors to react to color, layout, design, maybe navigation, and perhaps a headline. If visitors' attention hasn't been captured by then, they're gone – probably never to return. Fonts, images, activities, everything on the site must appeal to the target audience, so find a web designer who knows about marketing communications
- **Keep them there for several pages** – Ideally the average visitor should stick with the web site for a minimum of three pages and at least five minutes. If visitors stay on the site less than that, most of them see only the home page and leave because they haven't spent enough time to figure out what the site is about. Lay down a trail with content, calls to action, and interaction with site elements. Every action users take, every click they make, binds them to the site.
- **Bring visitors back for repeat visits** – Many people use the Web simply for research before making a purchase or taking action. Offer viewers several reasons to return, from enticing music clips to an excellent calendar of activities

- **Answer “What’s in it for me?”** – The answer must be apparent immediately and repetitively. A Web site has to make clear what Zonta can do for the visitor – not what they can do for Zonta. As long as visitors are having a good time, finding useful information or locating products or services that appeal to them, they will stay on the site. Sell benefits to visitors through graphics, content, interactive opportunities and appeal text. Include benefits statements and calls to action to tell visitors the advantages of joining Zonta.
- **The order in which navigation items appear on the screen is crucial** – The viewer’s eye goes first to the upper right corner, so place the most important action desired for the audience to take there. The top-left corner of the navigation screen is the second most important spot. The less-important activities should go in the middle of the list of activities on the left sidebar or in the middle of horizontal navigation across the top.

### **Professionally Designed Web Site Templates**

Templates are not as flexible as a custom site, but they can save significant money while maintaining graphic integrity. A template site can be launched very quickly with confidence that navigation will work. With a template to take care of design and programming, the focus can then be placed on content. A graphic designer can be hired for custom work. Select a template with navigation and customize it with color selection, logo, text, and photographs. Choose templates based on three factors: cost, customizability, and skills required. Search the Internet for Web templates for non-profit organizations.

### **Format Design**

The easier it is for people to read the content, the more of it they absorb. The low resolution of computer screens causes eyestrain. While they might not know why, visitors will reward efforts to make the screen easier to read. Consult a Web designer about these suggestions:

- **When using HTML, select fonts that were designed for the Web:** Verdana and Trebuchet for sans serif type and Georgia for serif. Avoid italic in HTML. (This doesn’t apply to text that appears within graphics.)
- **Keep the length of a text line to less than half the width of the screen,** even though that means only eight to twelve words per line, so that viewers will not have to scroll or cut off words if they decide to print information from the Web site.
- **Surround text with white space.** Allow margins to rest the eye rather than push text to the left or right edge of the page.
- **Only use underlined text to represent links.**
- **Limit use of reversed-out text** (light colors on a dark background). It is too hard to read and might complicate printing.
- **If using different colors to distinguish visited from unvisited links or navigation, be sure that there is enough contrast to set apart the two colors.**
- **If targeting an audience of people older than 40, default to a larger size font because it’s easier to read.**

### **Use Pictures to Tell Stories**

Well-selected and appropriately positioned images can tell a story about your Zonta club. Good photos are good sales tools. When viewers see pictures with people, they can imagine themselves visiting that place, doing that activity, or using that product, which moves them one step closer to taking the desired action

Many sites omit photographs, perhaps because of concern about download time. While faster access has made it easier to use photos, a page that takes more than eight seconds to download will lose much of its audience.

- **Save photos in jpg format to reduce download time** – Jpg files should be no more than 85K – less if there are multiple photos on a page. Use thumbnail photos to reduce download time.
- **Photos that work in print don't always work online, especially as thumbnails (shrinking photos can make them harder to see the subject).**
- **Crop photos to remove extraneous background details that detract from the message being communicated.**
- **Some photos might need additional processing in Photoshop to improve quality** (Note: Ethical and professional constraints limit manipulation of images for reasons other than quality.)
- **If photographs are an integral part to the story being told or the appeal being made, they need to be good ones** – Hire a professional photographer, buy stock photos from a source like [www.istockphoto.com](http://www.istockphoto.com), or look for images in the public domain (meaning not subject to copyright) at [www.images.google.com](http://www.images.google.com).
- **Start with a high-resolution photo resized and saved for the Web as a jpg file** – It's not possible to make a low-resolution photo better, but it's easy to make a high-resolution photo smaller while maintaining image quality.
- **If users are expected to print pages with photos, be sure the photos are easy to see in black and white.**

### **Multimedia (or Rich Media)**

Multimedia, sometimes called *rich media*, has increased in use. Audio clips, music, video, virtual reality, and Flash animation all fall into this category. Establish a reason, an objective measure of value, and a way to measure impact. If you're uncertain about rich media, apply the KISS principle (Keep It Simple, Stupid). Be sure that sophisticated rich media will be worth the investment of money, time, and effort that it will take.

Things to consider about rich media:

- **The media adds marketing value.**
- **It makes the site easier to use or otherwise enhances the user's experience.**
- **The Web site's goal demands it to keep visitors on a site longer, encourage more page views, or attract repeat visits.**
- **The target audience wants or expects it** – Younger audiences are much more attracted to multimedia than older ones; a consumer audience with time for entertainment is more susceptible to rich media than a busy, B2B audience of engineers (unless there's a reason for the rich media, such as a demo).
- **Multimedia is needed to stay even with, or ahead of, competitors.**
- **Will the target audience have the plug-ins, know-how, and access speed to take advantage of rich media?**
- **Can the club afford the cost of doing it right?**
- **Find professionals to create the multimedia.**
- **Can the Web site be launched without multimedia and be added later – or is it essential to the purpose and design of the site?**
- **Can Flash, video or other rich media be displayed on a page other than a splash page?** Splash pages are usually graphically intensive or use rich media, but lack

navigation other than a link to enter the site. A splash page with navigation is called an *entry page*. Search engines can't read Flash pages.

- **Can visitors be given the choice of viewing a Flash versus non-Flash version of the site?**
- **Can viewers control turning on both video and audio?**
- **How much use would justify the expense?**

## **Marketing Communications and Web Design**

A good Web designer will integrate marketing communication principles, branding considerations, and the targeted audience into the Web site concept. Marketing communications integrates marketing and sales principles with graphic design to achieve business objectives. Combining these principles recognizes that the presentation of information affects emotional responses and influences buying decisions. Web designers should then ask about intended target audiences to ensure they select or create the appropriate design elements.

Marketing communications is particularly critical because of the short window of opportunity for grabbing attention on the Web. Experienced Web designers intuitively adjust the font and graphic styles, colors, images, and white space to have a positive impact on the marketing process while reinforcing the brand.

Color connotations are culturally dependent so if the Web site will be viewed internationally, be sure to research the meaning of colors in the target country. For instance, in many Asian countries, white – not black – signifies death; red – not green – symbolizes prosperity.

Place the Zonta logo on the Web site, the same way as any other club advertising or promotion, because it is an essential part of the Zonta brand. The upper left corner of a Web page is the standard location for a logo or *logotype* (a logo that is done completely with lettering). However, that may vary depending on the overall design. Typically, clicking the logo takes the user to the home page.

## **Web Site Secrets for Marketing Success**

- Attract attention with your home page and headline.
- Maintain interest with text that's about the Web site visitor – not about the organization.
- Build desire with frequently updated content.
- Include many *calls to action*.
- Make your site easy to use and navigate.
- Post the club's contact information on every page.
- Collect e-mail addresses to communicate with prospective members.
- Test the site prior to launching it.
- Use results of Web visitor statistics to improve the site.

## **Common Mistakes of Web Marketing**

- Not setting business goals
- Not planning
- Underestimating the time and money it will take
- Not building a search engine-friendly Web site

- Thinking about Zonta rather than potential members and service organizations
- Not updating the Web site
- Waiting for traffic to come to your Web site
- Ignoring statistics
- Being unwilling to change

### **Assessing Web Site Design**

The most important criterion for successful Web design is whether it accomplishes its objectives. It doesn't have to be beautiful or cutting edge as long as it ultimately has a positive impact on Web visitors. The second most important criterion is how well the site works from users' perspectives. The easier it is for users to achieve what they want – obtaining information or connecting with others – the more likely the site is to succeed.

### **Choosing a Good Domain Name**

- **Easy to say in person**
- **Easy to understand over the radio or on the phone**
- **Easy to spell** – Using homonyms might be a clever way to get around a competitor who already owns a name you'd like to have; however, you're just as apt to drive traffic to your competitor as to gain some for yourself.
- **Easy to type** – The longer the URL, the more likely a typo.
- **Easy to read in print and online ads** – You can insert capital letters or use a different color for compound domain names to make them easier to read. Be sure your domain name can also be easily read in black and white, and in a logotype.
- **Easy to read in the address toolbar**
- **Easy to remember** – Words or phrases are easier to remember than a stream of letters in an acronym, unless your target audience already knows the acronym from extensive branding (for example, AARP).
- **Search engine friendly** – The best URLs are short, fixed addresses using only lowercase alphanumeric characters, hyphens, and underscores. <sup>1</sup>

### **Developing Web Content**

*Content* refers to everything provided for the Web site – from written copy to photographs database information to a calendar of events. Content production can be outsourced to a copywriter, a few Zonta club members can be designated as *content experts*, or any combination of the two solutions. Whatever method is used, be sure to allow time to provide a rough draft or raw materials, offer guidance, and review content for accuracy and quality. No outsider knows the club like Zonta members.

Writing and photography for the Web face different constraints than they do with print or video. However, they are just as critical online as offline when it comes to moving Web prospects through the site. Attention-grabbing headlines, interesting copy that builds desire, and calls to action that move Web visitors to take the desired next step are all still needed.

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<sup>1</sup> Web Marketing for Dummies by Jan Zimmerman, copyright 2009, Wiley Publishing, p. 166.

## Writing for the Computer Screen

Capturing and holding readers' attention on a Web page or site is much more difficult than it is in print communications because it's so easy to click away from a Web page. So the biggest challenge is to make the copy current, relevant, informative, and interesting.

Many types of pages can be written for a web site, including:

- **Front (or Home) page** – This is the first page a visitor sees when entering the site and is by far the most important on a Web site. If it doesn't gain attention and motivate visitors to click around, explore, and then download – whatever the objective is – then the whole site fails. Perhaps the biggest mistake that writers make on a home page is focusing too much on the organization and not enough on the visitor.
- **Product or Service page** – This is the page or section that describes the organization's products or services in detail.
- **Transaction page** – This is the page or section where a visitor can request more information or take some other desired action.
- **Club (or Company) page** – This is the page or section to provide information about Zonta. It often includes historical information, officer/board member biographies, club news, and more. This is the online equivalent of a club brochure.
- **Other pages** – There may be several other pages and sections of the Web site used to convey needed club information, such as membership requirements, projects, club-supported service information, FAQs, etc.
- **Contact us** – As the name implies, this is the page visitors click to when they need phone numbers, addresses, and other contact information about the club.

## Web Site Writing Essentials

- **Focus on the objectives** – What is the Web page trying to do: generate leads? provide information? Whatever the objective is, focus the copy on achieving it.
- **Use lots of headers** – Great headlines and subheads are the real secret to success in writing for the Web.
- **Use short paragraphs** – No more than five or six lines each. It's difficult to read large chunks of copy on screen.
- **Keep things current on a Web page** – Information ages fast on the Net. The Internet is evolving so quickly that users tend not to trust information that is even just a couple of years old.

## Writing Effective Marketing Copy

People don't read online; they skim to save time. That makes sense because it takes longer to read the same material onscreen than it does to read it on paper. Writing style should be adapted for the Web because of the limitations of time and screen space. Follow these guidelines:

- **Place the most important information at the beginning of each page with a strong lead (the first sentence on the page)**
- **Grab readers with headlines**
- **Stay above the fold** – Keep the most important information *above the fold* – that is, above the part of the page that users have to scroll to see.
- **Avoid long scrolling pages** – Many short pages of 150 to 200 words are preferable to a few long pages.
- **Limit use of PDF files** – As a general rule, restrict PDF files to distributing long documents intended for print, not for reading online.

- **Use active voice and emphasize second person**
- **Use first and third person judiciously** – Slip in some first person (*our* or *we*, especially in sentences like “We offer a money-back guarantee”). Just don’t spend a lot of time talking about yourself because readers don’t care.
- **With few exceptions, an informal, conversational tone works better than dissertation-style, proper English** – That’s no excuse, however, for obvious grammatical errors such as subject/verb agreement.
- **Keep it short** – People are busy and don’t have time to read everything. Use short words, short sentences, short paragraphs, and short pages, always placing the most important words and information near the beginning.
- **Use bulleted lists**
- **Include text links** – Link liberally to other parts of the site within the text.

The basic principles of good writing still apply. Keep these points in mind:

- **Use specific nouns and verbs** rather than strings of gratuitous adjectives and adverbs
- **Skip the jargon**
- **Be yourself** – In spite of all these directions, let the club’s personality shine through.
- **Check spelling and grammar**
- **Have others read what’s written** – It’s easy to get too close to your writing. Have someone else read it for clarity, accuracy, and omissions.
- **Proofread text** – A site full of errors gives visitors the impression that the club is sloppy.

### Microsites

A *microsite* is a special Web site built around a specific marketing campaign (i.e., a fundraiser, special event, etc.). It is usually completely separate from an organization’s main site. Most people will go to a microsite only once and never return, so every word must do the job right the first time. Things must be accomplished very quickly in the short time available with the reader, so make every word count,

- **On the front page, make sure there is a logical link between the main headline and the promotion that brought the visitor to the microsite screen**
- **Provide all the information that the reader needs to make a decision**
- **Include a link to the final transaction page on every page**
- **Summarize the benefits on the final transaction page**
- **Be informative** – Make it a true information center for the product or service being promoted.

### Updating Content

This is a must-do option. Updated content keeps the site fresh and impresses visitors. It demonstrates the club’s commitment to the Web site, and even more so, respect for Web visitors’ time. An updated site helps attract new visitors in those first crucial seconds and brings them back for repeat visits. Some search engines consider updated content when ranking sites in search results. The more often a site is updated, the more relevant search engines consider it to be.

### Establishing an Update Schedule

The content update schedule depends on the nature of the site. At the bare minimum, review all site content at least once a year, and budget a complete site overhaul every few years. During that time, viewers’ expectations of a contemporary site change as technology

improves and graphic styles evolve. Updating some content at least once a month is much better for search engines and very do-able for most organizations. Whatever the frequency of updates, decide who is responsible for doing them and who will confirm that they've been done.

### **Determining What Content to Update**

Even small changes can keep the site current. For example:

- The Home page might need changes, perhaps because a new project is introduced or there's a special offer or event to promote.
- The About Us page might need to reflect changes in club officers. Perhaps there is a new meeting location or new e-mail addresses for Contact Us.
- The Events pages might need to be amended with changes, additions, or deletions.
- The Media page might have new press releases, newsletters, or mentions in other media to add.

Remember:

- Viewers are interested in what affects them - not necessarily what's important to Zonta. Some organizations create a What's New page specifically to collect all the changes between site updates, which is helpful when there is a constant stream of changing news.
- Keep the site current to maintain Zonta's professional image.
- Appoint one club member to be responsible for updating the site.
- Consider quarterly deadlines for posting new articles.

### **Web Promotion**

Because there's only one chance to make a good first impression, it has to be a good one. Consider using tried-and-true techniques for self-promotion: direct marketing, advertising (internal banners), testimonials, reviews, awards, and linking to other Zonta-supported Web sites (with reciprocal links back to Zonta). Driving viewers to additional pages increases the time they spend on the site and the likelihood that they'll remember Zonta.

Don't count on visitors logically following any type of path through the Web site. Visitors might not arrive on the home page, and they might skip all around the site. Not every visitor wants the same thing, so juggle appeals to multiple sub-segments of the target audience.

Incorporate internal banners and testimonials because they're cost effective to implement. Follow the KISS maxim whenever doing anything on the Web. Note any options to implement later in the Web development plan. When it comes to choosing initial Web marketing techniques, consider these factors:

- **What Zonta is trying to accomplish with the site.**
- **The target market**
- **How much money is budgeted for site development**
- **How the Internet server is configured**
- **What the developer knows how to do**
- **How much time there is before site launch**
- **How much time is needed to maintain the activity**
- **Member availability for maintenance**

- **How much interest or knowledge the Webmaster has in the technique**
- **Whether the potential payoff makes the effort worthwhile**

## **Build a Search Engine-Friendly Site**

Search engines apply sophisticated algorithms to produce relevant results quickly. To produce good data, they need good input. A well structured, search engine-friendly site allows search engines to crawl or spider Web sites easily. It's much easier to plan a search engine-friendly site from the beginning or during redesign than to retrofit it.

Not all search engines are alike. Focus efforts on the search engine used by the target market. For instance, different socio-economic strata use different search engines. The search engines listed below are free and cover well over 90 percent of the natural search market. In general:

- MSN users are more likely female and older, and the most likely to convert to buyers (<http://search.msn.com/docs/submit.aspx?FORM=WSD2>). MSN neither feeds nor receives other search engines.
- Yahoo! searchers are younger and less affluent (<http://search.yahoo.com/info/submit.html>). Yahoo! feeds three other engines.
- Google users are more often male, older, and wealthier ([www.google.com/addurl/?continue=/addurl](http://www.google.com/addurl/?continue=/addurl)). Google feeds four other engines.<sup>2</sup>

## **Search Engine Rankings**

A major influence on search engine rankings is what is called SEO (search engine optimization). This is simply finding and placing certain words and phrases in copy that will help push the Web site to the top of the heap whenever someone types in a particular search phrase at a search engine site. SEO copywriters make sure that copy includes the most popular words and phrases typed into search engines by people who are looking for whatever product or service is being promoted.

SEO techniques can also include strategically placed text within the HTML code (the underlining code used to create most Web sites). One of the most effective techniques in SEO is integrating certain words and phrases into the text. This is called *keyword placement*. Search engine companies use software programs called *spiders* to regularly crawl the Internet and analyze Web sites. Spiders glean information from each site visited, making judgments about the content and determining how best to categorize and describe the Web site in search engine results. This is the data that search engines use to rank a Web site.

## **Zonta Club-Specific Web Information**

- Club name and Zonta logo
- Zonta mission and goals
- Introductory paragraph about your city, area, and club, with photos
- Brief history of your club
- Club philosophy
- Your meeting day, venue, time and contact e-mail address
- Any annual or recurring fundraisers
- Any ongoing service projects

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<sup>2</sup> Web Marketing for Dummies, p. 162

- Events/calendar
- Dates and details of upcoming events
- Press releases
- Scrapbook and summary of your club's successful events
- Club newsletters (remember that this is accessible to the public so members' personal contact details should be omitted)
- Zonta club leadership
- Links to District 5 and ZI (do not include information maintained and distributed at the International level since it is available on the ZI web site, which is updated by their webmaster.)

### **Important Points (from ZI Web site Policy)**

- Club sites should be hosted under the District domain – contact your District Webmaster for instructions.
- Club sites should have distinctive headers so as not to be confused with the *official* ZI site.
- Establish a generic e-mail address for contact purposes.
- Each club is required to have a link to the Home Page of the ZI site.
- Submit your club's web address and/or pages to [webmaster@zontqa.org](mailto:webmaster@zontqa.org) for the site to be approved and the link to be established.
- Create links to [www.zonta.org](http://www.zonta.org) for information on Zonta Award programs and ZI service projects.

### **Web Marketing Glossary**

- **Above the Fold:** Content and/or ads that appear on a page before a viewer needs to scroll.
- **AIDA (Attention, Interests, Desire, Action):** The direct marketing acronym for steps to purchase.
- **B2B (business to business):** Companies and sites that market to other businesses.
- **B2C (business to consumer):** Companies and sites that marketing to individual customers.
- **Banner Ad:** A graphic ad that appears on a Web page. When Web visitors click on the ad, they're taken to another Web page, which can be a sales page, a microsite, or the organization's main Web site. Regardless of where the campaign leads the visitor, the overriding purpose of a banner ad is to get clicked.
- **Call to Action:** A marketing technique that asks prospects to take a specific action to move toward a sale.
- **Click-Through Rate (CTR):** The percent of people viewing an ad who click on it.
- **Concept:** The underlying design theme that holds the site together, closely connected to the brand and target audience.
- **Content:** All the words, products, pictures, audio, interactive features, and any other material on the site.
- **Conversion rate:** The percent of site visitors who take a particular action or make a purchase, often called *converting browsers to buyers*.
- **Cookie:** Identifying code downloaded to a user's machine to recognize repeat visitors or track online activity.
- **CPC (cost per click):** Amount actually paid for a click-through to a site from an ad.

- **CPM (cost per thousand):** The advertising cost to reach 1,000 viewers or listeners; allows comparison among various advertising methods.
- **Decoration:** All the supporting design elements such as buttons, fonts, and graphics that the Web designer creates.
- **Entry Page:** A splash page with navigation
- **Favicon:** Short for Favorites Icons, which are tools used for secondary branding. They are displayed in the URL in the browser address bar, the Favorites drop-down menu, in the history bar, and in the links toolbar.
- **Marketing effectiveness:** Methods such as calls to action or signup forms that get users to take the desired action.
- **Microsite:** A special Web site built around a specific marketing campaign (i.e., special promotion). It's usually completely separate from the main site and is usually visited only once.
- **Natural or Organic Search:** Search results produced by a search engine's algorithm (rules) when indexing unpaid submissions.
- **Navigation:** The way users move through a site by using menus, links, and sitemaps.
- **Paid search:** Results for which a submission fee or bid has been paid to appear in sponsorship banners at the top of a page, in pay per click (PPC) ads in the right margins or in some cases at the top of the list of search results.
- **Pay Per Click (PPC):** Payment method for online ads in which advertisers pay for each click-through, rather than by number of impressions or flat rate (see CPM).
- **ROI (Return on Investment):** The amount of money earned (or lost) as a percent of the amount invested, usually stated for a period of a year; can compute for a Web site, an ad campaign, or an entire business.
- **Search Engine Marketing (SEM):** Combines SEO with paid search marketing through PPC, paid inclusion, or paid appearance.
- **SEO (Search Engine Optimization):** The process of making a Web site search engine friendly to improve ranking in search results.
- **Site Index:** A linkable outline of a Web site.
- **Spiders, Crawlers, or Robots (bots):** Automated programs used by search engines to visit Web sites and index their content.
- **Splash Page:** An introductory Web page used as a lead-in to the home page
- **Social Media/Networking:** Sophisticated group-bonding sites that allow visitors to connect to one another with personal profiles. Successful social networks sites include MySpace.com, Facebook.com, Twitter.com, Friendster.com, Plaxo.com, and Classmates.com. Social networking is a great icebreaker application to help people get to know each other quickly.
- **Thumbnails:** Small jpg images of 10-20K that people can click to view an enlargement in a pop-up window.
- **Uniform Resource Locator (URL):** Address designating the location of information on the Web; includes a registered domain name.
- **Widget:** Small application tool placed on a Web site to add value.
- **Wikis:** Related to blogs, but instead of one primary writer with other people responding, wikis allow multiple users to add, delete, and edit each other's Web content quickly without much technical knowledge. Wikis are especially suited for collaborating writing.