Web Sites For Advocacy and Community Organizing: Basics, Essentials, and Best Practices

Web Site Maintenance

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Learning Goals

► Emphasize importance of web site maintenance
► Raise awareness of staffing considerations
► Remember technical considerations
► Discuss hosting options
► Understand essential domain registration practices and issues
Web Site Maintenance & Upkeep

► Common misconception:
  ▪ Creating your website is “most of the work”

► Maintaining and evolving your website is the larger challenge in successful web presence
  ▪ Content and graphics need to change on a regular basis to sustain use and traffic
  ▪ Stale websites can be a significant liability

► This requires organizational commitment
Staffing Considerations

- Budget both time and money for ongoing maintenance
- Make sure you designate a specific staff person to “own” website maintenance
- Have organizational check-ins on a regular basis about website direction and content
- Anticipate ongoing graphic design and software development support
Maintenance Best Practices

Content Considerations

- Develop a message and action calendar for the front page of the site and other landing pages.

- Freshness
  - Consider new graphics as frequently as possible in order to encourage repeat traffic.
  - Remove or archive out-of-date events or action alerts.

- Ideally, have “quick response” content ready, or at least planned, for various campaign evolutions.
Maintenance Best Practices

- Technical considerations
  - Security patches and upgrades to software
    - Take patches seriously
    - Hopefully your hosting service or web person handles this
  - Backup Procedures
    - Local and remote files and database
  - Verify 3rd party software integration
  - Test for compatibility with major browser releases
Maintenance Best Practices

► Web hosting

- Don’t host your own site!
  - It's like having an electronic pet that needs 24/7 supervision

- When selecting a host
  - Compare disk storage, bandwidth limits, email hosting, security, “shell access”, traffic analysis tools

- Understand “Shared” vs. “Dedicated” hosting
  - Shared doesn't work for high-volume sites or peaks
Maintenance Best Practices

Web Hosting Services We Like

- Progressive
  - ElectricEmbers.org
  - Gaiahost.com
  - Riseup.net

- For-profit/corporate
  - Opensourcehost.com
  - MonkeyBrains.com
  - VerioHosting.com
Maintenance Best Practices

► All about domains

- Domain names are essential internet real estate
- All organizational internet activity should take place within domains you control
  - Never let staff email from personal accounts such as hotmail and gmail
- Keep domain registration up to date
  - Registrant email contact addresses must be current
  - All address/contact info must be “real”
All about domains

- Never host a website or campaign on a domain you do not control
  - e.g., don't use URLs like myorg.wordpress.com
- Always register domains yourself, don't let your hosting service or web consultant do it for you
- Consider buying .org, .com and .net variants for each domain name you own
  - If you don't, your opponents will, or else spammers and squatters will
Maintenance Best Practices

All about domains

- Registrars: buyer beware
  - Domainsite.com is pretty good: cheap with good tools
  - GoDaddy.com, Network Solutions: Avoid
  - Beware “slamming” tactics, like Domain Registry of America

- Registering for multiple years is a good idea
  - In most cases; campaigns may be exception

- Consider “locking” your domains at the registrar
End Of Section

▶ Questions?
▶ Comments?

Thank You!

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