

Web 2.0 for Association Marketers

by Scott Oser



I recently had a brief, but very enlightening, conversation with Andy Stegges, CIO at Risk and Insurance Management Society, Inc., and one of the most knowl-

edgeable people I know about Web 2.0 in the association space and beyond. I asked Andy two questions and I truly believe his responses are very important for association marketers to hear. The questions are as follows:

What are the five things that every association marketer should at least be thinking about when it comes to the social web?

Collaboration. We need to start thinking about more than traditional list-serves or forums. Try a much richer, Web 2.0 environment that allows people to view richer HTML. For example, ASAE has eight list serves that cover a variety of topics, but if they were using the web they could post pictures and bios, blog, connect to friends and more. It also provides a great environment for advertising association products and services.

Demographics. Traditionally, we record hits, unique visitors, etc. Now we need to measure more details—for example, the types of communities people are involved with and the types of activity they are undertaking—so we can target them appropriately.

Engagement. Don't just look at ROI (return on investment) but look at ROE (return on engagement). Instead of recording hits on a site, record actions (add a blog posting, rate a blog, add comment, rate comments, post an eGroup message, share a file, etc.) and then reward members for their engagement. Recognize where you need to focus on promoting engagement and learn from where you have succeeded.

Usability. You need to make sure you are utilizing the latest Web 2.0 technologies or your impact and engagement will be limited, at best. The latest technologies such as AJAX or Flash will improve the user experience or performance.

Integrated marketing. Integrate in a way that covers everything in one through four above. Use videos and other web 2.0 activities to market your services and products in appropriate ways in appropriate environments. Start looking at utilizing video or podcasts to promote your brand and mission.

What is the next step for associations in using Web 2.0?

Social integration with traditional marketing. Many associations are already using social networking, but they don't realize how to leverage the content that's being generated in the search engines. With the right strategy, an association can generate a huge amount of user-generated content (UGC) and then attract search engine traffic from it—all without giving away member benefits. Most, if not all, associations know they need to start developing a strategy for using Web 2.0. In a world that is changing rapidly, I firmly believe Andy's tips will give all association marketers some things to think about as they put their own strategies together.

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