

Northwest Democrats Political Workshops 2007

***Role of the Internet and Media in Campaigns:
Developing your Campaign Web Site***

Introduction

TradeMark Media is an interactive design agency. We specialize in Web site design, e-commerce development and online applications.

Introduction

Successful political sites that we've developed:

- Texas Senator Kirk Watson
- US Congressman Lloyd Doggett
- State representative Donna Howard
- State representative Ellen Cohen
- Houston city council member Peter Brown
- Austin city council members Lee Leffingwell, Sheryl Cole and Betty Dunkerly
- Austin Mayor Will Wynn

Introduction

Today's Agenda:

- Developing your Web site using Software, A Friend or A Professional
- Questions to ask when choosing a Web developer
- Starting the Web development process
- What to do after your site launches

Introduction

Housekeeping:

- My contact information will be displayed at the end of this presentation.
- This presentation will be made available at <http://www.trademarkmedia.com/presentations>

Developing Your Web Site

You have three different options when developing your Web site:

- Software
- A Friend
- A Professional

Developing Your Web Site

Advantages of Using Software

- Low Cost
- Very quick setup time
- Low involvement – few decisions to make
- Examples
 - Network Solutions
 - Go Daddy
 - Register.com
 - Web.com
 - Off the shelf software

Developing Your Web Site

Advantages of Using A Friend

- Low Cost
- Close personal relationship & trust
- Emotional stake in your campaign
- Little red tape

Developing Your Web Site

Advantages of Using A Professional

- Proven processes
- Experience
- Reliability
- Wide range of capabilities
- Long-term support and consulting
- Robust tools (i.e., content management systems, email programs, site statistics, etc.)

Choosing a Web Developer: Questions to Ask

What are your capabilities?

Make sure developer has the skills to develop the site and integrate some modern technologies. Examples:

- Blogs
- Online contribution form
- Volunteer registration
- News and press releases
- Mobile version
- E-mail newsletters

Choosing a Web Developer: Questions to Ask

What technology will you use to develop the site?

- Only a major issue if the Web site will last a long time
 - Don't want to be stuck in a technology that is outdated.
- Advantages of Open Source Technology:
 - Continuous development
 - Inexpensive deployment
 - Good support
- HTML vs. Flash
 - Major disadvantages of Flash
 - Slow loading time
 - Inaccessibility
 - Low visibility to search engines
 - Usability concerns

Choosing a Web Developer: Questions to Ask

What is your development process?

- Make sure developer has a clear process for planning, designing, developing, testing, launching and supporting your site.
- Make sure the timeframe meets your needs.

Choosing a Web Developer: Questions to Ask

Who owns the files after my Web site is complete?

- Many Web developers own the files after they have been completed.
- Make sure you own the rights to all the files.

Choosing a Web Developer: Questions to Ask

Where will the Web site be hosted?

- Make sure hosting arrangements meet your needs.
- Find out the cost of hosting up front.

Choosing a Web Developer: Questions to Ask

Do you follow modern coding standards?

- Following coding standards will make your site more visible to search engines.
- It will make your site easier to update.
- It will be more accessible to people with disabilities.

Choosing a Web Developer: Questions to Ask

Will my Web site follow accessibility guidelines?

- This is a very important issue, especially for government Web sites.
- Section 508 of the Americans with Disabilities Act sets accessibility guidelines.

Choosing a Web Developer: Questions to Ask

What is your strategy for Search Engine Optimization?

- Make sure the developer includes basic search engine indexing information.
- The developer should register your site with all major search engines.

Choosing a Web Developer: Questions to Ask

Do you offer a content management solution?

- Decide if you will need to update your content.
 - My recommendation is to update your content frequently.
- Find out the additional cost of the CMS.
- Find out how long-term the solution is.

Choosing a Web Developer: Questions to Ask

What is your support policy after my site is launched?

- Find out the cost – does the developer bill hourly or is there a monthly retainer?
- What's the usual turn around time on requests?
- Who should you contact for support?

Starting the Process

If you're using a professional, they should help you through most of the process.

Starting the Process

Research

- Research other sites to find design elements and features that you want.
- Look at other campaign sites so that you can keep up with your colleagues and competition.

Starting the Process

Goals

Set some very tangible goals that will allow you to measure the success of your site. Examples:

- Get at least 200 unique visitors to my site every day.
- Get 1% of visitors to fill out my volunteer form.
- Get 20% of visitors to view my Issues page.

Also, set major goals that you want people to accomplish when they visit your site. Examples:

- I want people to donate online by filling out my contribution form.
- I want people to volunteer for my campaign.
- I want people to read my bio.

Starting the Process

Content

Start gathering the content that you need for your site right away.

- Text and images for pages.
 - Look into copy writers.

Expect coming up with content to be your largest homework assignment.

Starting the Process

Branding

Your Web site design should fit into your overall branding strategy.

- Logo
- Color Scheme
- Other branding guidelines

After your Site Launches

It's important to stay active after your site launches. If done right, your Web site can be your most powerful marketing tool.

- Keep the Web site fresh by adding new content. Good content to add is News stories, press releases and events.
 - This will keep people coming back and will let them know that your campaign is active.
 - Search engines like sites with fresh content.
- View your site traffic statistics and compare them with the goals you established up front.
- Start an e-newsletter program to directly market to your constituents.

Conclusion

- You have three options for developing a Web site: Software, A Friend or A Professional.
- If you use a developer, make sure you ask the right questions up front.
- When you start the process, be prepared with all the assets you or your developer will need.
- Don't stop working after your site launches.

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