

The New Online - Building a Better Website

By Katie Clancy, U of C Communications Student

"Think of your website like a lobby," says Albert Jame, Creative Director of zu.com Communications, "If a website gets 10,000 unique visitors a month, that's like having the same amount of people go through your lobby. And if you had 10,000 people going through your lobby every month, you'd spare no expense to make it the best possible reflection of your company. The same should go for your web site."


Many people Google a website before contacting a company directly so it is important to manage your identity online. "If you think your company doesn't have an online identity you're kidding yourself. You can either manage your own [online] identity or else let other people (possibly your competitors) do it for you." notes Darron Froese of nonfiction studios inc.

Your website is normally the first online point of contact for potential clients. Carefully consider your target market. Working with an experienced web team can help to concentrate your online brand and maximize your web exposure. Whether you decide to hire a dedicated web team or outsource to a design firm, check their portfolio. Are they utilizing the web medium to its full advantage? Print design is very different from web design,

and capitalizing on the interactivity of the web medium makes your website the most effective.

The experts agree – usability is incredibly important in a website. The visitor should have easy access to the most important parts of your website, and you should be careful to keep it simple and easily navigable. Nicole Guillot of CNW Group says "It is crucial to get feedback, look at statistics and analytics and make sure the website is maintained and updated – constant communication will help determine what is working and not working."

Interactive content like RSS feeds, podcasts, wikis, blogs and videos should be used carefully but often. If a video is the best way to communicate to your users, use it. Start small at first and gradually integrate the content into your website. It helps to personalize your website and your company. Some of the content may seem gimmicky at first, but it is usually very effective when implemented.

The more time and effort you spend on your website and dynamic content (such as blogs, wikis, etc.) the more effective your online presence will be. 

BEST PRACTICES

- Web design does not equal print design. Work with someone who is familiar with the interactive qualities of web design to make the most of the medium.
- Web 2.0 content like blogs, wikis and videos are some of the most popular and effective resources for an online brand if used correctly. Know why and how you want to utilize dynamic content and make it a targeted tool.
- Keep your website simple and polished. It sounds easy until you put it into practice. An outside opinion is often the best when it comes to deciding the kind of content you put online.
- Use an actual designer to design your website, not a programmer doing double-duty.
- Stay away from bad typography.
- Keep images small
- Have goals and objectives for your website, and constantly review them and your website itself
- Make sure your website is user-friendly and easily navigable.

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If you are interested in submitting an article, have a story idea or would like to volunteer on the HOTwire committee, please contact Doug Lacombe at 403-444-3400 or communications@cprscalgary.com

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The Newsletter of CPRS Calgary

Jan/Feb 2008

Message from the President



Hello CPRS Calgary Members and Happy New Year.

Normally by now, we are over the perennial process of looking back at the year past, and moving on to what lies in store for the year ahead.

Yet, looking ahead to what will surely be an exciting 2008 as we celebrate CPRS Calgary's 50th anniversary, I can't help but reflect on that history and what it means to our member society today.

As our long-time members, some of whom joined CPRS Calgary in its early, formative years, will tell you, the landscape of our profession has changed dramatically in half a century.

Evolving from a practice area known for spin and press agency to a profession regarded as a valued, if not critical, component of business success, public relations has certainly come into its own over the past 50 years.

We still grapple with many issues – around perception, the struggle for recognition in organizations and a solid seat at the boardroom table. And even within the profession we continue our debate over the best education or qualifications, the value of mandatory accreditation, and to some extent still suffer from an identity crisis and the definition of what public relations is and does.


Yet amid these debates, this profession has grown and matured, in no small

part because of the contributions of professionals committed to its ongoing development.

CPRS Calgary remains committed to playing a key role in fostering this development and recognizes the significance of its member contributions in achieving this.

CPRS Calgary members of the past 50 years have built a legacy. Today, we as members have the opportunity, and the responsibility, to build on this success. Through our actions, we ensure the viability of CPRS Calgary and its ongoing capacity to continue making valuable contributions to the discourse and development of the public relations profession.

If you haven't already made your New Year's resolution, resolve to get the most out of your membership this year by getting actively engaged.

Join us to celebrate 50 years of history and success at one of the many commemorative events planned throughout the year – and while you're at it bring a colleague. We're looking forward now to another successful 50 years – and you can be part of building that success. 

Nancy H. Arab, APR, ABC
President, CPRS Calgary

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Save a tree (and money)

Interactive Annual Reports

By Todd Andre, 4th Year Communications Student U of C

Cheaper, sleeker and more accessible, interactive annual reports (IARs) are quietly becoming the preferred medium to deliver a company's financial narrative.

Suzanne Spencer, Director of Product Operations for IR Communication's Interactive Annual Reports wing, believes that publicly traded corporations who adopt IARs can benefit immensely by moving from paper to gigabytes.

"There are a number of reasons why a company would use an IAR," said Massachusetts-based Spencer. "Ease of delivery, accessibility via the web, search capabilities, ability to export financial data to Excel and cost savings for printing and mailing are all reasons why the interactive annual report is advantageous."

Depending on whether a company mails out glossy coffee table books or bare bones black and white pamphlets, hard copy annual reports tend to sacrifice either marketing or information. Black and white printouts can

reflect badly on the company's image both in appearance and information deficiency.

On the other hand, many beautifully crafted – and expensive – annual reports are predestined to go immediately from the mailbox to the recycle bin. Going digital with the annual report allows companies to dodge both bullets while at the same time adding a potential online brand builder.

High resolution images, high definition video, digital audio and impressive design can not only soothe the eyes of the shareholders, but they can sell a company's brand identity to web surfing investors.

Tech-savvy companies have invested heavily in IARs, to increase shareholder reading and position the company as forward thinking.

A good example is Limited Brands image heavy 2003 annual report, which immerses the reader in vivid videos, stunning photographs and tasteful flash animation, while maintaining an elegant simplicity.

The result is closer to art than report, which garnered them a 2003 Communication Arts design award for their trouble, and a top Google spot for the phrase "Awards Interactive Annual Reports."

In order to ensure an effective IAR, Spencer suggests fulfilling a few key features.

"It first must maintain the integrity of the original document. In addition, the content needs to be easy to access, have search capabilities, contain links to other related information as well as offer the ability to export financial material to Excel," said Spencer.

She suggests packaging and distributing the report into a format suitable to your company's needs. If it's a small report it can be distributed to shareholders via a mass email. If its size is bloated with video, photos and flash animation, upload it onto the company website or at a location with loads of investor traffic. If your IAR is pretty enough, it pays to put it on display for potential investors.



Celebrating Alberta's Best in Public Relations

Brought to you by CPRS Calgary and CPRS Edmonton



Genome Alberta

STUDENT AWARD CALL FOR ENTRIES

Areté (Greek): Knowledge, Wisdom and Excellence.

March 28, 2008 is the deadline for public relations students to enter the **Alberta Arété Awards** – the first provincial awards program celebrating Alberta's best in Public Relations!

The **Alberta Arété Awards** recognize excellence in public relations by practitioners and students in Alberta. The **Alberta Arété Student Award** recognizes student excellence in the field of public relations and is open to any student enrolled in a public relations or communications degree, diploma or certificate program at an accredited educational institution in Alberta.

Here's your chance to shine in front of your peers, professors and Alberta's communications community, as well as receive valuable feedback from APR judges.

For details and an entry form, visit www.cprscalgary.com/awards

Jointly sponsored by CPRS Calgary, CPRS Edmonton and Genome Alberta, the Alberta Arété Student Award offers a great opportunity to showcase outstanding work and gain professional and public recognition. Entering your work in Alberta's provincial awards program can also be a timely stepping-stone for the CPRS national awards.

There are also many practical navigational reasons to adopt IARs. Linked indexes permit the reader to effortlessly flip to the sections important to them – a marked improvement from trying to negotiate endless pages of fine print.

The best part about IARs though, is they provide automated and personalized feedback from readers. Which link, where and when it was clicked are all compiled into a database to be analyzed. Feedback from shareholders is also collected and all of this

information can be compiled to perform a cost-per-impression analysis, or to assist in making informed decisions to boost the efficacy of the report for the following year.



Where's the Red Briefcase?

By Tanya Ristoff

The question may be perplexing to newer members, but for many longtime CPRS Calgary members the mystery of the disappearing red briefcase stirs a sense of head-scratching nostalgia over the whereabouts of the somewhat infamous handbag.

CPRS Calgary is once again hot on the trail of the briefcase as the Society's 50th anniversary celebrations get underway.

The 50th Anniversary planning committee, led by CPRS Calgary member Henry Stevens, APR, is busy organizing a host of events to commemorate the milestone year.

"Our objective is to commemorate CPRS Calgary's rich history and celebrate the many achievements of the Society and its members over the past 50 years," said Stevens, who served as CPRS Calgary president in 2004-05.

The committee is working closely with the CPRS Calgary Board to bring a series of special edition professional development events, and has established a subcommittee to plan a gala celebration in October.

"This is an historical period for CPRS Calgary and we've come far since we incorporated in 1958, both as a Society and a profession," said committee volunteer and longtime member Beverly Reynolds, APR. "We expect to see many reunions of old friends and colleagues throughout the year."

Stevens agreed and said the committee is seeking to "create a memorable experience that will honour the history of the Society and engage members – past, present and future."

As for the briefcase, "It was a fire engine red, moulded plastic briefcase, sporting a Calgary Winter Olympics sticker," said Judi Gunter, APR. "It contained 40th anniversary planning committee materials, contacts of past presidents, pictures and minutes of planning meetings – memorabilia that would be so neat to have now!"

It went missing shortly after the anniversary party, she said.

The committee has established a blog at cprs50.blogspot.com for anyone who may know the location of the red briefcase, or any former CPRS Calgary members who may want to be part of the 50th anniversary festivities. Be sure to visit and share your stories.

Stay tuned to CPRSCalgary.com and HOTWire for regular news and updates on 50th anniversary celebrations.