WEB Strategy Marketing and Communications Working Group: Recommendations

Background

The Web is the only communications medium that reaches all of Carnegie Mellon’s target audiences. Because of its ability to disseminate information efficiently and effectively to millions of Web visitors, it is critical that it provides a consistent, cohesive university brand experience.

Carnegie Mellon University’s Web sites encompass more than 700,000 administrative, academic, personal and other pages.

Previous efforts to encourage voluntary compliance with the Carnegie Mellon identity system on university-related Web sites have had varying success. Although a webmaster network has been created, there is no formal means to regulate their work or the Web work of other university community member, or enforce compliance.

About the Recommendations

The WEB Strategy Marketing and Communications Working Group has developed three major recommendations for the university’s website: creating a marketing message, implementing that message on the Web, and using the website as a marketing tool. The group has identified key parts of the Carnegie Mellon website where the marketing and communications message should be the strongest:

- Administrative pages, including:
  - The Hub, business services, student affairs, admissions, alumni relations, development, computing services, etc.
- Academic, including:
  - Colleges, executive education for corporations and government, departments, centers, and course pages
- People, including:
  - Faculty official pages, university president, on-line directory, staff official pages

To a lesser degree: student and faculty personal pages and student organizations

Also, the priority audience for the message should be aimed, in the working group’s opinion, at both an internal and external audience composed of: (External) Alumni, Donors, Prospective Students, Corporate Partners, Government, Media, Researchers/other academics, Friends/Community; (Internal) Current Students, faculty/staff.
Our recommendations:
1. The university must first create a marketing plan:
   a. Overall marketing plan would define the message the university’s message; the website must be considered a part of the marketing plan
      I. Take into consideration all the key parts of website identified above

How To Implement: Utilize university courses to develop a marketing plan and an outline on how to implement the plan. Examples of courses – Prof. Theresa Pudik Card, Heinz School, Strategic Marketing/Communications (91-818); Prof. Chris Neuwirth, H&SS, On-Line Information Design (76-487/887)
   b. Communicate the marketing message to the campus community
      I. Ongoing educational classes conducted by top-level university administration to a select group on campus and implemented in a manner similar to Total Quality Management (TQM) classes
         1. The select group could be all marketing people, public relations, webmasters, and university advancement staff
            a. This group takes the message back to their home department and communicates the message to appropriate people in house
         2. Ongoing educational classes run by University Advancement team
         3. Ongoing educational classes meet twice a year
      II. Educate department heads and others about power of the Web
         1. Website as powerful marketing and communication tool
            a. Number of users per year
            b. Use by potential students and faculty, alumni, corporations, and government agencies
         2. Offer model on how to maintain department website
         c. Afterwards, evaluate ways to strengthen the message on the website
         d. Allocate the appropriate resources to implement marketing message on website
            I. People
            II. Money
            III. Strategy
         e. Integrate campus marketing initiatives into overall university plan
         f. Brand identity should be a part of marketing plan
            I. Word mark
            II. What makes Carnegie Mellon special

2. Implementing the marketing message on the website
   a. Communicate marketing and brand strategies to campus community
      I. To people in charge of websites
      II. To marketing folks throughout campus
   b. Make incentives for adhering or implementing marketing plan
      I. Make it easy for people to use word mark by making available many different sizes and colors
II. Create a print “Web Style Guide” like the “Writer’s Style Guide” and distribute to campus
   1. Include technical guidelines, such as databases, for future compatibility

III. Identify a contact person or create a support line to handle questions

IV. Identify a person (perhaps Walter Deforest & Jacqueline Koscelnik, University Counsel) to handle copyright issues

V. Show how complying is beneficial to both parties

VI. Share the results of the marketing success with campus community
   1. How behavior was affected
      a. Money donated by alumni and corporations
      b. Admissions – number of applications, acceptance ratio
   2. Share university-conducted surveys and studies
   3. Information gathered in 3.IV. below

   c. Measure the website as a marketing and communication tool
      I. Provide a service, such as products (video, photos, stories) available for media
      II. Make sure information journalists would want is easily accessible, such as about journalists trying to use corporate website's PR section (http://www.useit.com/alertbox/20010401.html), some of which could apply to us.

III. Information Consistency Throughout Website
   1. Departments point to sponsoring dept., instead of listing details

IV. Accurate and Up-to-Date Calendar of Events
   1. Submission form needs to be edited to be more user-friendly
   2. Option to view both academic and events calendar on one page

V. Business transactions, such as CARNEGIE MELLON items, faculty books

VI. Removing old pages

VII. Central Web development toolkit with statistic software to analysis log files, html editor like Dreamweaver, Web Style Guide
   1. Offer training
   2. Team up with PITT to use their Web education resources

3. Website as a marketing tool:
   a. Conduct the following surveys and studies on an on-going basis:
      I. Benchmark against competitor’s sites
         1. Tier 1 schools
         2. Other Web sites that draw multiple audiences
            a. CNN.com
            b. Disney.com
            c. Microsoft.com
      3. Use log files to see what people are looking at on the website

Procedure recommendation: Ask a class to take this on as a project
II. Establish relationship with other universities and their webmasters; Share information like hits

III. Gather existing reports on university web sites
   1. Media Metric rankings by number of hits
   2. CASE report (http://www.case.org/resources/surveys.cfm)
      a. Best practices
      a. Online marketing newsletter that is Web-related

IV. Identify Carnegie Mellon group to gather marketing information, of which the Web would be a subset
   1. Collect log files from various groups on campus
   2. Review Web statistics
   3. Measure consistency in registration forms and interactivity
      a. What percentage of alumni used website to donate money and update information
      b. What percentage of alumni used website to sign up for email forwarding
   b. Survey external audience’s perception of university website

Procedure: HCII class could conduct studies
   I. Conduct user studies
   c. Measure site to see if it is meeting users’ needs
      I. Assess what user needs are; utilize HCI course, marketing class, Tripp-Umbach studies to do the assessment
      II. Measure every couple of years