SITE DESIGN IDEAS

Do you have a website that needs to cater to multiple constituencies? Read how two organizations redesigned their sites to better serve the needs of the varied segments of their audiences.

SEA SITE WORTHY
REDESIGN BOOSTS SALES FOR CROWLEY

Playing Around

Revamp helps The Strong Museum increase stickiness and ROI

It may house the world's largest collection of toys and games, but when it comes to web metrics, The Strong isn't playing around. A site redesign helped the museum better gauge the ROI of visitors and increase stickiness.

The Strong.org serves as an umbrella for the Strong's "play partner" organizations— the National Museum of Play, the International Center for the History of Electronic Games, National Toy Hall of Fame, the Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play and American Journal of Play.

The various arms of the Strong target a variety of different constituencies, from families looking for a day out to toy collectors to scholars studying the sociological impact of play. "The website is a way to bring all those audiences together," says Suzanne Seldes, vice president of marketing.

For many years, the number of unique visitors and clickthroughs per month was the main metric considered. But more customization was needed to get a better picture of what was driving the best traffic to the play partners' sites.

For example, the National Toy Hall of Fame site gets a lot of traffic from around the world when new inductees are announced, or when PR opportunities (like "The Daily Show" doing a piece chastising the museum for taking so long to induct the ball) generate a lot of interest.

But the metrics for the physical museum are different. During school break weeks, the museum looks at visitors from nearby Rochester, Buffalo and Syracuse IP addresses. Their needs and behavior may be quite different.

"While the Toy Hall of Fame is more an information site, the museum is a different animal and they need to measure how well a visit to the website drives visits to the physical museum," says Andrew Lucyszyn, director of web analytics, Sigma Marketing Group, which helped The Strong redesign the sites.

This means if the site is doing online banner advertising, they can analyze the clicks from those ads to see the propensity of people viewing that ad to look for parking or direction information. Admission tickets aren't sold online, so other information has to be use to infer the site's influence, such as visits to cost of admissions page.

The Strong has a strong brand presence in the Rochester region, notes Lucyszyn, meaning that generic paid search in that area was wasted promotional dollars. Instead, the Strong is working to make its local search more relevant, says Seldes. "We're trying to buy smarter and not do as many generic terms, highlighting things like traveling exhibits that wouldn't come up in a natural search."—BETH NEGUS VIVEIROS

A revamped website better highlighting maritime transport firm Crowley Corp.'s range of services has boosted SEO and conversions.

The site, redesigned by digital agency Roundarch Inc., led to total organic search referrals increasing 244% per month, and total non-branded keywords leading to the site rising 68% per month, says Mark Miller, director of corporate communications for Crowley.

Crowley's existing site prior to the redesign was nine years old and very outdated. Although a similar layout was needed for each of the company's brands' sites, a distinct design was required for each as well. The main Crowley site had a professional, open design, while Titan Salvage had to focus on the specifics of marine salvage. Customized Brokers focused on import and custom brokerage services, while Jensen Maritime catered to those in need of naval architects or marine engineers.

Frank Baldassare, project manager for Roundarch, notes that there was a need to create a link between the sites, a "soft landing page" built into the navigation of the main site that, for example, would talk about salvage before linking off to the subsidiary site. "The ability to point a prospect to a job similar to what they're looking to do is very helpful," says Miller.

The new design is built in a fluid framework that will allow the site to be adapted to screen layouts for different devices, such as tablets or mobile phones. "You need to adapt the site for the device it is being rendered on," says Baldassare.

Search was another component. While some users knew of the Crowley name, the company also wanted to appeal to users who maybe knew them only for one service, but weren't aware of other subsidiaries. Thanks to the open source eZPublish platform, now metadata on all pages can be optimized, so as keywords in the industry evolve there will be flexibility to adapt.—**BNV**
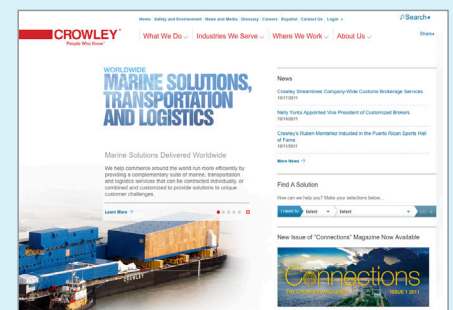
HOLIDAY FUN
CUT THE CLUTTER TO ENGAGE SEASONAL SHOPPERS.

Here are 10 tips for optimizing site navigation before the holiday rush begins.

1) **Let shoppers navigate throughout your site from any webpage.** Don't assume shoppers will start their navigation from your home page. Visitors can enter your site on almost any page, depending on how they get there: from an Internet search engine, a link sent to them by a friend or through their social network, going directly to your homepage, from special offers or ads on another website, or from a blog. Once they're on your site, provide a navigation bar and include it on all pages.

2) **Show products on all category pages.** Minimize the number of clicks required to get to your products, and try showing your most popular items on your top-level category pages without requiring any further refinements to be picked. For example, if there's an extremely popular boys' t-shirt, then show this item as soon as someone clicks onto the "Boys" category, rather than force your visitors to do another click on the t-shirt category before they see it.

3) **Provide different ways of ranking products on navigation pages.** Offer shoppers a way to easily reorder the products on a navigation page. While they might choose to rank products by least expensive, best rated, or newest arrivals, you should also build in default choices that work well for your business—for example, the most used default options are "most relevant" and "most popular." You should then allow visitors to reorder by options they prefer, such as best sellers, most/least expensive, highest rated or most liked by featuring these options at the top of the navigation page. Once visitors pick a new order, you should remember their preference, to avoid frustrating them.

4) **Use the language of your visitors in your navigation links.** Use site search data to research "trigger" words that your shoppers use when they're trying to find products. If the navigation links use the language of your customers, they provide a much stronger infor-mation scent so when visitors click on them they help people find what they are looking for.

5) **Show ratings and review information in navigation.** Add ratings and reviews to product information displayed on navigation pages. It's a good idea to show the number of reviews for each product to illustrate which products have reviews, and to help put the ratings into perspective.

6) **Allow visitors to refine and sort by product ratings.** Shoppers usually want to see products with the best ratings first – many of them don't even want to see low rated products, and they'll go straight for the 5 stars. Provide refinement options for ratings, and make this refinement visual by showing the different star rating options.

7) **Use banners to enhance your navigation page.** Banners give shoppers a visual confirmation of their navigation location, indicating where they are in the product category or the landing page. They also help you highlight sales, promotions, and popular products .

8) **Ensure your navigation pages can be crawled by Internet search engines.** Use short URLs that include useful keywords to your navigation pages (e.g., categories or subcategories) with very few parameters. Avoid using JavaScript links because search spiders can have trouble interpreting them.

9) **Rank the products in a way that makes sense for your business.** Ordering products by popularity will minimize the number of clicks shoppers must to get to the products they're looking for. Consider also showing your highest margin products first, or the ones for which you have excess stock.

10) **Test options and solicit feedback to keep improving your site's navigation.** Always test different layout options, refinements, categories, and result orders and measure the difference to your sales to make sure you're providing your shoppers with the best user experience. Conduct a survey or do some user testing to get some feedback.
—SHAUN RYAN, CEO, SLI Systems

TIP:
Profile for Better Targeting

Where marketers once placed online ads by looking at website audiences, they can now get closer to a conversion by segmenting and targeting specific customer groups using stable, anonymous data amassed over time and from a number of sources, including purchase behavior, demographics, and financial and lifestyle data — "anonymous consumer profile targeting" (ACP). Here's some guidelines:

▶ **FUNNEL:** Traditional behavioral targeting seeks to determine who's ready to buy today. Use ACP to monitor consumers who are consistently active in a product category, and thus to refine targeting from brand awareness and research through purchase and referral.

▶ **FOCUS ON THE AUDIENCE, NOT THE CHANNEL:** Consumer data can drive programs across multiple media, such as online, email, direct mail and broadcast. Retargeting cookies both in email and on a website can extend marketing dollars.

▶ **MEASURE RESULTS ACROSS CHANNELS:** Research concludes that web display campaigns gain impact from combining with other media such as TV or paid search. Cross-channel effects are tough to measure, but failing to do so could mean sales attributed to the wrong campaign channel.

▶ **PAY ATTENTION TO PRIVACY:** Comply with ad targeting opt-out best practices of the Digital Advertising Alliance. Consumers must be given control over the use of their data — even if it's anonymized.—KERRY MORRIS, vice president of product management, Epsilon Online Solutions