



PITTSBURGH GLASS CENTER
www.pittsburghglasscenter.org

Like any organization at the time, the Pittsburgh Glass Center had a Web site when it started in 2001. As the fledgling nonprofit grew, so did its Web site. "It was almost like adding on to a house. It got to the point where it was really cumbersome to update and hard to navigate," said Paige Ilkhanipour, marketing director. "It really didn't showcase the best of the facility. There weren't a lot of pictures, there was a lot of copy."

Glass blowing is "a visual and performing art so it was important for us to have a dynamic Web site that showed all of the beautiful work that's done here and the dynamic nature of the glass-blowing process," she said. In addition to the glass-blowing school, the center has a gallery and rents its studio to artists in the region who make glass art.

The easier navigation and access to information has led to people calling and ready to register after browsing the Web site, instead of being guided over the phone which has saved staff time. An online registration component will be added this year and video will be incorporated as well.

"Mainly when they come to our site they're looking at our classes, which is exactly what we hoped - that was one of the key things we wanted to present on our site, information about our classes," Ilkhanipour said. The center has far exceeded its goals for workshops offered this year. "I think the Web site has played an important role in helping fill those classes."

The new Web site gets about 125 visits a day, according to Ilkhanipour, but the previous site was so primitive, there's nothing with which to compare those figures.

The center has about a dozen employees and the majority of its \$1 million annual budget comes from local foundation funding. Once online registration is available on the Web site, the goal is to move toward online donations as well, but in the meantime the center uses Google Checkout.

The glass center has a designer on staff but also worked with a local firm, Elliance, to help build a strategy for the new Web site, identify key audiences and how they would navigate through the site, and what they would want. "We worked from the ground up, thinking of our customers, before moving to design in the last phase," Ilkhanipour said.

Success could be as simple as changing how classes are categorized. The old site categorized classes by type - i.e., hot shop, flame shop - but now they are listed by skill level, like beginner and intermediate, since newbies likely aren't familiar with the terms.

"The whole experience is different than what it was previously," Ilkhanipour said. "We use a lot of imagery to show what's going on at the glass center. There are a lot of options for people to envision themselves working at the studio, the kind of work that can be made here. It's very colorful, once you hit it it's really eye-catching, it really brings it to life."



SPEED MATTERS
COMMUNICATION WORKERS OF AMERICA
www.speedmatters.org

The Communication Workers of America (CWA) has the need for speed, but it's got nothing to do with hot rods. The Washington, D.C.-based association launched its Speed Matters campaign to raise awareness and support for better access to high-speed Internet in the United States.

The key to the campaign is a widget that visitors can use to test high-speed Internet access in their geographic region, with an option to sign up for email updates.

After inputting a ZIP code, a user could compare that area's high-speed Internet access with the national average of the United States, as well as other countries. In most cases, the speed lagged other nations. More than 172,000 visitors to the site last year took the speed test.

The speedmatters.org email list grew from 10,000 members when it launched in October 2006 to almost 90,000 through January 2008. The key was finding creative ways to promote the speed test. While an email address was not required to take the test, about half the users who took the test entered their email and ZIP code. Other labor groups, including the AFL-CIO and WorkingAmerica, among others, helped promote the site via e-mail, according to Beth Allen, electronic communications coordinator for CWA.

Integral to making something viral on the Web is allowing visitors to quite literally take your site - or whatever is unique about it - with them. In the case of Speed Matters, visitors can embed a widget version of the speed test on their own Web sites, blogs or social networking pages. Visitors to those other sites can take the speed test without leaving those sites, with all data from the widget feeding into Speed Matters' database.

Continuing to spread the Speed Matters message, each week an email is sent to new speed test takers asking them to tell a friend about the site and test, Allen said. The campaign also used Google AdWords and Yahoo Search Marketing to capture a monthly average of 3,100 speed tests and 2,000 email addresses.

In addition to the widget, the site launched an interactive map and report in June, displaying speed test data from around the nation. Visitors to the site can see media speeds by state, county or ZIP code. The report was picked up by various media around the U.S., leading to more traffic to the site with links back to the interactive map.

Design and development costs for the site were about \$10,000, Allen said, done with the help of Blue State Digital, as well as partners Ookla, which powers the speed test, and FlashMaps, which powers the interactive speed test results map.

Speed Matters is a finalist for the Institute for Politics, Democracy and the Internet Golden Dot awards this year.



THE DIAN FOSSEY GORILLA FUND INT.
www.gorillafund.org

Since re-launching its Web site in the fall of 2006, the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund International (DFGFI) has made sure to drive visitors to the Web page. But just because people visit a site doesn't mean they contribute.

Headquartered in donated space at the Atlanta Zoo with less than a dozen employees, the DFGFI had total revenue of \$5 million before shaking up its Web site.

The site was updated in fall 2006 with sticky content and viral content, subheaders. "I basically revamped what we had," said Athena Buchanan, director of marketing and online fundraising.

"Sticky content" includes a "gorilla fun section" such as gorilla e-cards, photographs, a Flash-based gorilla sound book and gorilla quizzes. "The longer people stay on the site, the more it helps with conversion, so you want engaging, fresh content," said Buchanan, who ran an interactive marketing agency for nonprofits before joining the organization.

Since launching the new site, Web traffic has jumped 66

percent and page views are up 64 percent, said Buchanan. "A lot of it has to do with driving the traffic; once you drive it, you want people to stay on the site so that the page views remain strong. So what we're doing is working."

The site's gorilla e-news, where visitors can sign up to receive email newsletters, enjoys an average 55 percent open rates and an average 27 percent click-through. "That's great because we have very low opt-outs and we're providing people with the right type of content," Buchanan said. "We don't oversell our programs for fundraising."

Online fundraising nearly doubled in each of the past two years and now makes up nearly 60 percent of new business. "This is huge because it is a low-cost solution to support our field programs versus the cost of direct mail," said Buchanan.

"All of this is driven by programs, so for example, I launched consistent retention and demand generation programs to our list and that links to the fresh content on the site, coupled with our search engine optimization, search engine marketing, social networking sites, to create a multi-channel campaign that also drives traffic to the site."

The cost of a Web site facelift depends on what's done, whether it involves a little tweaking or a need to be rebuilt, Buchanan said, though she declined to say how much the organization spent.

Buchanan views the Web site as a product to drive traffic to by different means, which makes it vital to have fresh content to keep people on the site.

Direct mail (DM) complements online because people will sometimes go to the site and donate after receiving a mailing versus spending the time to write and mail a check. "Some people say DM is not performing as well as online fundraising but I think it's important to keep the DM channel open because it reaches an older demographic," Buchanan said.