

Avenue A/Razorfish Speaks to 'Cutting Edge' of Corporate Intranet Trends

As an intranet manager, what should you be on the lookout for? How can you derive greater business value from your corporate site? What pitfalls should you avoid?

that most consumers have only a single or limited interaction with any company's site," Todd said. Compare that to an intranet, which is embedded into your employees' daily workflow.

"An intranet is embedded into your employees' daily workflow... The workforce has a vested interest in how it is set up and functions."



Todd Thiessen, a Client Manager and Strategist in the New York Office of Avenue A/Razorfish, addressed these topics—and more—at a dinner gathering of NJ/IABC members and guests on

October 27 in Morristown. Avenue A/Razorfish is the largest independent interactive agency, with offices located in major markets across the country.

Todd described the "holistic" approach that his firm uses in developing a client's intranet site: "The key question is, 'what is your business strategy and what are you trying to arrive at with your intranet?'" he asked. He urged corporate communicators to explore these issues up front, before jumping into the development and design phase.

Intranet vs. Internet

Todd noted the irony of many corporations devoting time and money to Internet development, while putting much less resources into their intranets. Yet intranets typically contain 10 to 100 times more information than public sites—and companies with the best and fastest data clearly have a competitive edge. "Research proves

"The workforce has a vested interest in how the intranet is set up and functions," Todd claimed. Because of this, Todd advised his audience to promote a similar development process for their internal and external sites. "There is a need to create prototypes and use employee focus groups for feedback on your companies' intranets," he said.

Todd noted that the three most common barriers to employees using their intranet sites are **poor search functionality, stale content** and the **lack of consistent navigation**. "Google has raised the bar on search engines," he claimed. "Employees expect to be able to find what they are looking for. Real-time information delivery has also become a priority. If the little things aren't there—if, for

example, an employee directory isn't up to date—it signals that employees can't trust any of the information on their corporate site."

Common Pitfalls

Todd also cautioned communicators about these common intranet pitfalls:

Blaming technology. "Technology is rarely the problem when employees don't gravitate toward using an intranet," Todd says. "It's much more likely that appropriate governance is not in place or there has been little change management built into the phase-in of your site. A lot of behavioral changes are needed in order for people to alter how they work."

Performing vendor and/or product evaluations before assessing business requirements. This can easily lead to over-hyped expectations and under-scoped costs.

Receiving little executive support. "The intranet explosion is a middle-class revolution, with younger, more technologically-savvy employees leading the way to new functionalities," Todd. "The collaboration chain is only as good as its weakest link."

Marketing a site poorly. "You have to communicate and manage expectations of what your intranet can and cannot do," Todd concluded. "Training, support and marketing the rollout of each new phase is vital."

How is Your Intranet Weighted?

There are three major functions of intranets:

Process facilitation, or "nuts and bolts" tasks that can be performed electronically, such as enrolling in a benefits plan or performing other self-service functions.

Asset Management, which refers to the digital asset management of tons of information that can go into databases to be archived, searched and used.

Collaboration, or using technology to connect people in ways that transcend time and location—web conferencing, blogs, joint editing, and the like.

Every intranet is weighted differently. Communicators should think about all three functions and how they interact, realizing that the easier and friendlier you make your site, the more employees will keep turning to it.

Writing and Measurement The Business of Communications

On September 21, 2004 NJ/IABC hosted an all day seminar at Headquarters Plaza Hotel in Morristown, NJ. Nearly 40 people participated—and left re-energized for the task of writing and measuring communications within their respective organizations.



The 'Beat' of the Decades

Keynote speaker **George Taber**, President and Publisher, *NJ Biz - Business News New Jersey*, captivated the

audience over lunch with a lively overview of his 40 years in journalism. Taber spoke to the changes he's witnessed in the industry: new technologies; a proliferation of media outlets; use of the Internet; a more mixed quality within the journalism field; and a polarized America.

Taber added that there is a fine line between analysis and opinion. "How much the journalist wants something to be true affects the way a message is crafted and phrased," he noted. "As journalists, I hope we have a system where we challenge each other."

Point to Results

Anthony Storzieri, Avaya Communications, moderated an afternoon discussion featuring experts in communication measurement. The following panelists shared insights:

Mike Bennett, Director, Internal Communications, Honeywell, discussed how Honeywell uses measurement to drive employee engagement in two fundamental ways: By upgrading the quality of internal communications, and by changing the environment to make Honeywell a better place to work.

Wayne Bullock, Senior Vice President of Research at Delahaye, shared that misconceptions in role and value are the single biggest detriment to PR efforts. PR practitioners must measure outputs and outcomes against a pre-determined set of objectives: targeting audience, ends and timeframe.

Dirk Herrmann, President, Murray, shared a success story with an ongoing external communications initiative developed for a client, ADT. He noted the biggest problem faced in corporate communications: Measurement is often viewed as 'nice to have' instead of as a necessary part of ongoing business strategy.

Alison Davis spelled out a list of "what people do wrong" in measuring communications efforts: not measuring at all; measuring too little too late; engaging in 'one size fits all' measuring; 'kitchen sink' measuring (where you measure everything so nothing is actionable), and 'big tent,' or census, measuring.

Gary Radford Ph.D., Professor of Communication Studies at Fairleigh Dickinson, claimed that research is a form of communication in and of itself—a way of getting a desired response from an audience, then convincing them that they should have confidence in the results.

Gary: "Research adds credibility to concepts."

Alison: "Communicators court failure when they don't communicate the results of their research or the changes made based on employee input."

Dirk: "Measuring communications seems more obscure than measuring marketing."

Wayne: "PR can no longer hide behind its 'art and craft,' but must demonstrate accountability."

Mike: "We measure everything we produce...as a barometer of corporate culture and brand strength."



IRIS Awards Recognition

A hundred and nine entries are in and judging is underway for the 2004 NJ/IABC IRIS Awards Program, recognizing excellence in communications. Will YOUR program, publication or design stand out? Will you be called to the podium in recognition of your efforts?

Come to celebrate and view the 2004 IRIS Award winners—and to honor one person as our NJ/IABC 2004 “Communicator of the Year.” This communications professional was nominated by his or her peers for personifying excellence in business communications in New Jersey and for consistently displaying expertise and professionalism in the delivery of information.

There will be great food, even better company and surprises galore at the annual IRIS Awards Ceremony, held January 27, 2005 at Headquarters Plaza Hotel, Morristown. Watch for more information and registration details.

www.njiabc.com for more info!

PR Newswire (PRN) is proud to sponsor the NJ/IABC IRIS Awards. PR Newswire’s affinity program will provide IABC members who are NOT already members of PR Newswire with the following:

- Free membership for a year.
- 5% discount on all domestic newswire press releases for the first year.
- One Company logo stored on NewsCom at no charge for a year.
- \$500 discount on ProfNet for the first year.
- Three months free on Online MediAtlas when member signs up for a one-year subscription.

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Writing Memos: 3 Tips on Keeping It Short*

Eliminate useless words. One study showed that the average business letter contains an average of 15 useless words. Examples: “please be advised,” “we wish to draw attention,” and “I have before me your letter.” *Ugh.*

Pretend your next memo must be sent as a telegram you have to pay for. Make every word count.

Know how long a memo should be: long enough to make the point be clear to the reader. Charles Colson wrote one of the shortest memos on record to John Dean in the White House during the Watergate scandal. It read: “*Now what the hell do I do?*”

*From “communication tips,” 1101 King Street, Suite 110, Alexandria, VA 22314

Special Thanks to Chris Faust and Sandy Charet for their work towards NJ/IABC receiving an IABC US District 1 grant of \$1,000, to be used for increasing membership.

connect

ENTER THE HOLIDAYS

Delivering Tools ... Measuring Success



Recently, communicators and marketers have seen their corporations reducing costs to keep bottom lines healthy. While there is some economic recovery, we continue to find ourselves competing for limited resources.

To get a piece of those resources, today’s successful communicator needs to demonstrate skills in several areas, and demonstrate measurable results. Your insights help your company develop a growth approach to gain competitive advantage. Your communications help target appropriate investments to achieve growth. You measure the success of your initiatives. And, at the end of the day, you should have helped your company improve its structure and processes to make productivity gains.

The NJ/IABC provides a valuable forum to learn how other communicators and marketers handle the various aspects of today’s changing environment. Our events this year have focused not only on the basics but on measurable results.

We will continue to deliver meaningful seminars that provide implementable solutions for our members’ workplaces. We are currently planning our 2005 calendar and welcome your input on suggested topics. Please e-mail me at njiabc@comcast.net with your suggestions.

Best regards,

Andrew Miller

Bear-ing with the holidays

Pease join fellow communications at the annual Inter-Association Holiday Networking Party co-sponsored by NJ/IABC, PRSA-NJ, the Business Marketing Association of NJ, Marketing Executives Networking Group, the NJ AdClub and Media Communications Association International on Wednesday, December 8 at the Hanover Marriott, Hanover Ballroom (1401 Route 10 East, Whippany). This gathering puts the best communicators at their best by helping others—donating new, unwrapped Teddy Bears for distribution to various hospitals and social agencies. (Or, if you’d prefer, you can make out a check for \$10.) Bears will also be available for purchase at the party. Pricing is \$40; students \$25. Watch for e-mails with registration information.

Linking Corporate Communicators, Faculty and Students

Gary P. Radford, Ph.D., Professor of Communication Studies at Fairleigh Dickinson University (FDU) in Madison, NJ and Director of FDU’s Master of Arts program in Corporate and Organizational Communication, was invited to the NJ/IABC Board of Directors in October. In this role, Gary will work to foster links between academia and corporate communicators in businesses throughout the state.

“One of our strategic goals is to establish closer connections with colleges and universities and help students make entries into the business world, be it through mentoring programs, internships or other job opportunities,” says **Andrew Miller**, President, NJ/IABC. “We are extremely pleased to have a person of Gary’s professional caliber join our Board to lead this effort.”

For a list of the NJ/IABC Board please see our website at www.njiabc.com. Anyone interested in a Board position for the 2005 calendar year should contact Andrew Miller, njiabc@comcast.net

Bah! HumBLOG!!!

OK—so you’ve never used a blog or don’t even know what one is. Now you have the chance to get in the spirit (and look technologically “cool!”) by unwrapping a new gift from NJ/IABC: our very own blog for members and professional communicators. You can use the blog to:

- Learn about current/upcoming chapter activities.
- Communicate about current issues affecting your organization.
- Network virtually with your peers.

Participation is fun, fast and free. So, if you’ve been too rooted to the past or too preoccupied with the present to see what the blog craze is all about, log on at <http://www.njiabc.blogspot.com>. It will help you see the future of new communication channels!

