

# Reviewing Annual Arts Events in Eugene, Oregon and the Future of Web Marketing in the Event Industry

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# Reviewing Annual Arts Events in Eugene, Oregon and the Future of Web Marketing in the Event Industry

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## **Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this capstone study is to review the utilization of websites promoting arts events in Eugene, Oregon. By reviewing websites during winter term 2003, specific criteria will be used to evaluate sites of arts organizations. The study will examine the quality of information provided to the end user (web surfer), suggest website improvements, and discuss roadblocks to website success.

## **Background**

The birth of the internet occurred with a simple problem: technology directors at the Pentagon had before them 12 different computers that communicated in 12 different languages on 12 different terminal screens (Haffner & Lyon, 1996, p. 13). The data contained on these 12 computers in 1966 was primarily for research and science purposes and was a way that the Pentagon could keep in close contact with scientists working throughout the United States. However, having all of these computers that did not communicate with each other in one room was similar to having a roomful of televisions all tuned to different channels. So the idea was struck to make all the computers talk to each other in order to create a way to use only one terminal with one common language.

Flash-forward about 25 years, to a world where there are 435 million active email addresses, and 619 million people enjoy web access, and you can begin to grasp the significance of the internet (Global Internet Statistics and CyberAtlas, 2002). What was once a way to communicate research between a few universities and the federal government has become an indispensable part of life in the United States. The team of

creators working on the project all through the 1960s and 70s could have ever dreamed the internet would become such a success (they hardly regarded email as a useful tool at the time). Now there are currently over 27 million web domains (homepages), and an average of \$32.6 billion is spent each year via the web (US Dept. of Commerce, 2003). People are using the web to purchase products, research papers, and communicate in real-time with others.

With all the technology available today, one may wonder what the advertising world looked like before the arrival of the internet. Many of the same methods of getting the word out about events and organizations that were used 25 years ago are still in use today. These methods include the use of flyers to advertise the event/organization, holding meetings about the event/organization, and using the telephone to either advertise or inform. One of the best examples of using these methods to promote the arts is the Hult Center, which regularly mails schedules to those on their mailing list and advertises locally in the Eugene Weekly to inform the public about their ongoing events.

All of the old methods work reasonably well, but they also have limitations. Using the flyer to advertise would limit the visibility of the event because it would be nearly impossible to ensure all members of the public that were interested viewed the flyer. It would also cost a substantial amount of money to produce and pay postage for a large number of flyers, something that a small organization may not be able to afford. Visibility is also a major problem with newspaper and radio ads, as they would only inform a select audience that happens to read a particular newspaper or listen to a

particular radio station. Another major disadvantage to using radio and newspaper advertisements is cost because professionals typically design them and they usually cost the most to have run compared to other mediums. The final form of advertising in the pre-internet era discussed was the telephone. The major problem with the telephone is that its use is costly and time-consuming (Chase & Shulock, 2001, p. 8). An arts organization would have to have a staff member call each interested party to inform them of upcoming events or meetings. These calls may be long distance and/or restricted to certain hours of business (obviously an organization would not be staffed and calling its patrons at 11pm).

Many of these limitations were overcome by the growth of the internet in the early 1990s. Businesses and organizations began putting up webpages to get information out about their products and services. There were some very simple reasons for this, most notably because the internet did not suffer from the accessibility problems of the old way of advertising. For one, almost anyone in the world can access information via the web, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Although this capability was new, it immediately appealed to businesses and organizations because it provided a constant presence that allowed all interested parties to view a substantial amount of information. Using the internet to promote events and organizations was relatively inexpensive too, beyond the basic startup costs, such as server space, paying a web designer, and having a web master (Chase et al. 2001).

## **Significance**

The internet has become the fastest and least expensive way to communicate information between two parties and unsurprisingly, the number of websites has continued to grow each year. Ironically, where we once lacked information, we now have a globally connected world by the world wide web. The information age is no longer a battle for information, but a wading through process to see who can gain the most useful and relevant information on a variety of topics in a reasonable amount of time. The thousands of arts events and organizations that offer information via the web can create a confusing maze for web surfers to navigate through. Imagine the simple task of looking up your favorite event through a search engine such as Yahoo ; you would likely be bombarded with hundreds of pages of information. However, if the site was rated using a preset criteria, the web surfer may be able to discern whether a webpage has the information they need or not a lot faster. The end goal in this project is to save the web browser interested in Eugene arts some time when using the web.

This study will also make suggestions as to how to improve the websites reviewed, which could aid new organizations in building art websites and serve as a guide to improve existing ones. By establishing a criteria on reviewing the websites, organizations may focus more attention on that aspect of their promotion, resulting in a better product for the end user.

## **Definitions**

Domain Name- The unique address of a webpage, similar to a phone number, which is licensed and rented by individuals or organizations.

Internet- A form of communication that connects computers to one another, allowing information to be exchanged.

Internet Browser- A computer software program that permits the user to connect to the internet and view webpages.

Navigation Bar- Acts as a table of contents for the webpage, by directing traffic to various points of information.

Master webpage- The initial page that a user reaches when typing in the domain name (often referred to as the Home Page).

Stand-alone websites- Websites that were created for one event and one purpose only, not linked to other websites or part of another website's navigation bar.

Web Creators/Designers- People that create webpages using code and software. Many are professional, but there are a few amateurs that create webpages that are published on the internet.

Webpage- A page on the internet viewed through an internet browser that displays text and graphics.

Website- A collection of webpages with the same root domain name.

Web surfers- The general public that browses on the web in search of information or for entertainment.

## **Websites Chosen for Review**

The websites chosen for review met the following criteria:

1. The website reviewed was a stand-alone website that marketed an art event in the city of Eugene.
2. The event occurred annually.
3. The event was a non-theatre event.

The significance of the stand-alone website was that it reflected the level of importance of an event to the event sponsor. In many instances, the art event occurring in the city of Eugene was no more than a footnote on an organization's webpage. However, in a few select cases, the event sponsor felt the event was significant enough to create a website for a specific event.

Preliminary research also indicated that many of the major art events in Eugene occurred annually. This would include the Oregon Bach Festival, Asian Celebration, and Eugene Celebration, which are considered by the general public to be major arts attractions in the city. Reviewing annual event websites also allowed for evaluation of an event within a fixed time period. For instance, because the event was only occurring once per year, the amount of change made to the website while the study took place would be specific to the event and therefore, likely to be very limited.

Finally, this study made a distinction between theatre and non-theatre events due to the fact that theatre events typically hold several annual events. In many cases, the annual theatre events included on the theatre company webpage do not have a stand-alone

website or are intertwined with other events on the same page. This made review for a single event difficult and was the reason for exclusion.

### **Criteria for Review**

The basic purpose of creating a webpage in the arts field is to communicate information to patrons or customers. With that in mind, I created 10 basic elements to a successful event website. These 10 elements will serve as the criteria for judging Eugene arts websites and allow us to assess the use of the web in the local arts community.

1. **Content.** Did the event answer the five W s, Who, What, When, Where, and Why? It is important to know who is putting the event on, what the event is about, when the event takes place, where the event takes place, and why the event is held. Many websites fail to answer these five basic questions, and it is the most important element to providing the public with information they need.
2. **Appearance/Aesthetically Pleasing.** The focus of this element is finding out whether the web creators used good color combinations, easily readable text, and the format of the page was easily accessible (Chamberlain, 2002, p. 21). Obvious color clashes like lime green text on an orange background reflect poorly upon an event. Making text unreadable negates the entire point of having a website, because the information becomes useless. Information and website links should be laid out in a format that makes sense to the user, typically organized in one corner of the master webpage.
3. **Short Webpages.** It is important for users to not have to scroll in order to access the information they seek. By keeping webpages brief, it not only is more ascetically

pleasing but also makes it easier for web surfers to quickly get the message of a webpage (Hoyle, 2002, p. 62).

4. Use of table of contents. When first accessing a webpage, it is important to be able to find information quickly and easily. The best way to orchestrate this is by having a table of contents or navigation bar that allows web surfers of all levels to point and click on the information that is of most interest to them.
5. Small Images. Images can take a great deal of time to load, and oftentimes have very little relevance to the user. For instance, if I were to access ticketing information for an event, I would probably not be interested in having a huge picture of the artist load on the same page. The point being, I m already interested in purchasing a ticket to the event, so the picture is of little use or interest to me. If pictures are of interest to the web surfers or if they need to be included in a page, the best way to facilitate this is to make them as small as possible. A savvy web designer will be able to allow users to click on the image to view it in a larger size.
6. History of the Event. Many events have an exciting history or interesting story as to how they came into existence. This information provides the web surfer with local history, an idea of the major people involved in the event, and may entice people to go to the event.
7. Marketing/Promotion of the Event. Websites can contain a great deal of information, but do they encourage the user to go to the event? In some cases, events have provided web surfers with promotions only available online, such as discounted tickets for web purchases or event coupons.

8. Use of Technology. It is not uncommon for websites to offer virtual tours of events or event locations or allow web surfers to print tickets to the event on their home computer.
9. Keep links current and annotated. Many organizations choose to have links to relevant websites for their users. These may be links to a variety of different webpages and are subject to the comings and goings of the web. Each day, many webpages are destroyed due to organizations going out of business or information becoming outdated. There are a number of resources that can be utilized to check the validity of links for organizations automatically or a periodic manual check can be used. Annotated links provide web surfers with reasons why the site was linked and its relevance. For instance, if I was visiting a website that sold hockey pucks and found a link to Bauer Sports in their links section, I would not know why that link was there. If it were somehow annotated with The best hockey sticks to go with these pucks, I would have a much better idea and it may save me time.
10. Put contact information on your pages. Many web browsers are interested in contacting organizations by phone, mail or email. It is always a good idea to provide basic contact information on a webpage so that an organization can gather feedback on their webpage.

### **Website Reviews**

First, the following websites met the criteria set forth on page five of this paper:

Art and the Vineyard, [www.artandthevineyard.org](http://www.artandthevineyard.org)

Asian Celebration, [www.asiancelebration.org](http://www.asiancelebration.org)

Eugene Celebration, [www.eugenecelebration.com](http://www.eugenecelebration.com)

Eugene Oktoberfest, [www.eugeneoktoberfest.org](http://www.eugeneoktoberfest.org)

Fiesta Latina, [www.fiestalatinaeugene.org/](http://www.fiestalatinaeugene.org/)

Holiday Market, [www.holidaymarket.org](http://www.holidaymarket.org)

Oregon Bach Festival, [www.bachfest.uoregon.edu](http://www.bachfest.uoregon.edu)

Next, each of the above websites was reviewed using the review criteria. The websites were graded on a 1-5 scale (5 being the highest) in each category and points per category were totaled to produce an overall best website. Each category was also totaled to determine where the strengths and weaknesses of Eugene's art websites.

	1.Content	2.Appearance	3.Short	4.Table	5.Images	6.History	7.Marketing	8.Technology	9.Links	10.Contact	Total
Art & the Vineyard	5	3	1	4	2	5	3	3	5	5	<b>36</b>
Asian Celebration	3	5	3	5	4	1	5	2	4	4	<b>36</b>
Eugene Celebration	5	5	3	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	<b>47</b>
Eugene Oktoberfest	4	5	5	4	5	1	5	3	1	3	<b>33</b>
Fiesta Latina	2	3	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	<b>15</b>
Holiday Market	3	2	1	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	<b>18</b>
Oregon Bach Festival	5	4	3	3	3	4	4	3	4	4	<b>37</b>
<b>Total for each 10 elements</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>24</b>	

### **Art and the Vineyard Website**

Art and the Vineyard, an event that takes place each year in Alton Baker Park, brings together food, wine, art and music. The website itself was very full of the basic information concerning the who, what, when, where, why and how. The history section was particularly helpful at explaining both the event and a local organization (Maude Kerns) are tied together. The website has a very good navigation bar that highlights different topics while the users mouse scrolls over them. The navigation bar also stayed on each page while the websurfer browses, so switching topics was very easy. Links on the website were labeled well and only one of the links failed to work.

Art and the Vineyard s site did have some problems and areas to improve. In general, the pages were very long and required a lot of scrolling. In some cases, the website was not aesthetically pleasing because the font was too small and there were some poor color choices (lime green is very hard to read). The sponsor page and many other pages on the site had blurry images of poor quality. Finally, the site also referenced offering a three-day free pass to Maude Kerns members without providing any information on becoming a member. Overall the page was above average, but could use some improvements.

### **Asian Celebration Website**

The Asian Celebration is an annual celebration of the Asian culture. Artisans, cooks, vendors, and performers gather at Lane County Fairgrounds to put their talents on display. This website created excitement almost immediately with its consistent colors,

varying shapes, and easy-to-read text. It also contained a great navigation bar that allowed users to move between different pages with ease. The website also matched well with published marketing material put out by the event, and keeps interested parties updated with regular press releases.

The Asian Celebration site also put all pictures in the same location on the webpages, so browsing through pictures was easy. The links at the end of the pages were all annotated, and the contact pages did contain phone numbers so interested parties could contact the event planners.

This website did not contain a history of the event other than to mention it was the 18<sup>th</sup> annual celebration. It would have been helpful to have more of an idea of why the event takes place and what has been done in the past, such as themes and significant guests. The website did not provide a map or written directions to the event site, which could have deterred people from attending. Overall this website was above average.

### **Eugene Celebration Website**

The Eugene Celebration bills itself as a gathering for Eugene residents to come together and celebrate the uniqueness of the city. With musical performances, art shows, and athletic events, the Celebration has grown into one of the more successful events in the state. The Celebration website was far and away the best site reviewed. It is very pleasing to the eye because it kept the same format throughout the entire page, it utilized easy to read color tones like green and purple, and changed font sizes to emphasize

important messages. The navigation bar contained all the major headings with sub-headings for each category.

The history section of this site was concise but discussed when the organization that operates the Celebration took over the event. In my opinion, the best feature of the site was all the maps and directions included in easy to print formats, and lodging suggestions for out of town visitors. Other positive attributes featured on the site were great sponsor link pages and a page that provided phone, email and physical address contact information. The website even offered an online area to make website suggestions!

The only real downside to this site was the length of some of the pages, and the failure of the designer to provide a link back to the top of a page. This site received the highest review, and for good reason!

### **Eugene Oktoberfest Website**

Oktoberfest is the area's family fun festival put on by St. Mark's Catholic Church of Eugene. Oktoberfest offers games, food, crafts, and a beer garden for adults.

Oktoberfest's page was likely the most fun page reviewed, with a very personalized feel to it. One gets the impression that the event is a neighborhood gathering, but reading about the event informed the browser that it is much more. The major feature of this website was its ability to keep pages to a minimum with the maximum amount of content. Oktoberfest makes good color and font choices as well, which provided for a page that is easy to read. It also made use of high quality images, though there is one per page.

Some of the quality information provided concerned the price of the event (free, except for the beer garden) and a map to the event location.

Oktoberfest s website did not provide a history of the event or any links, which definitely impacted its score. It is clearly not as developed as other event sites, and rated as average.

### **Fiesta Latina Website**

Fiesta Latina is sponsored by a Lane County grant that helps promote tourism in the area. While the Fiesta Latina event appears to be a very entertaining one, it is hard to tell exactly what to expect from the event based upon their website. Their website neglected to tell the interested web surfer who the event is organized by, or why it is put on in the first place. In fact, there is not even any contact information for the event on the webpage. The website itself only offered one page of information and a very hard to read program to the event.

On the upside, the webpage appeared to be a nice start to perhaps something bigger in the future. The color scheme was average, and there was some basic information about the event available. The event also promoted rides on LTD. Because of the size of the page, and the quality, it would most likely be considered a site in need of much greater development.

### **Holiday Market Website**

Holiday Market attracts Eugene residents to the Lane County Fairgrounds to purchase gifts and crafts, see fashion shows, and enjoy a diverse range of foods. The Holiday Market page was a website with more weaknesses than strengths. The webpages were too long and there is little history about the market provided to the customer. The page did not flow well and needed serious development help, particularly in relation to the marketing aspect of the event.

The site did provide some basic information, but lacked the consistency to communicate that information well. This website had huge potential to attract shoppers to the event, and it would be possible if more pictures were used and more information was provided. Even finding a way to make the font uniform from page to page would have improved it drastically. Considered among the worst websites reviewed during this study.

### **Oregon Bach Festival Website**

German Helmuth Rilling began the J.S. Bach Festival in 1970 with a series of short workshops and a concert. Since then, the Oregon Bach Festival has become a premier event of national recognition. With the backing of a major university and an outstanding community reputation, one would expect the Oregon Bach Festival to be one of the more thoughtful and informative webpages. The Festival website did not disappoint, turning in consistent performance in every category reviewed, and was particularly strong in providing quality content. What really set this website apart was the technology aspect, which offered the ability to purchase tickets to the event online. The site also offered an

extensive history of the event, and provided annotated links and adequate contact information.

Disappointingly the site did not offer directions to the event or any type of map that a customer could access to gain that information. In some places, the font sizing was poor and it was not clear how to access a different page. Overall, this website was above average and only needed minor improvements.

### **Improving Websites**

While the 10 categories that were rated previously in this paper provide a measurement for website success in arts organizations and events, it is not always apparent that a website has a problem or what to do about it. Fortunately, for those interested in improving websites, there are resources available. Many local community colleges and universities offer classes in website design and bookstores are filled with how-to guides on the topic of web design, which cater to beginners. Grants are also available to help finance website improvements or create new websites. With almost unlimited resources available to the public, creating a website becomes easy. If people do not wish to create websites themselves, there are even professional agencies willing to do it for a fee.

The best computer courses for beginners are usually Computer Science 101 or a similar community course. For those individuals with little knowledge of computers, a beginner course that discusses the hardware may be more appropriate than a computer science course or a web design course to ensure sound understanding of computer fundamentals.

In the Eugene community, Lane Community College and the University of Oregon offer beginning computer courses for a reasonable fee. Many of the courses are considered community courses that only require a person to pay a flat fee, but the person does not receive college credit or have to apply to the university. In the case of regular academic courses, oftentimes it is necessary to apply to the university before being allowed to enroll. It is always a good idea to investigate all potential courses in a community to find out what best fits the needs and budget of the individuals interested.

A less-expensive way to learn website design skills is by purchasing a book or two on the subject. The following titles should provide a starting point for resources available in bookstores:

- The Complete Idiot's Guide to Creating a Web Page by Paul McFedries (\$24.95)
- Web Design in a Nutshell by Jennifer Niederst (\$29.95)
- Sams Teach Yourself HTML and XHTML in 24 Hours by Morrison and Oliver (\$24.99)

Other resources available through bookstores or software dealers include:

- Intro to Web Design e-Service Starter Kit (\$39.99), which allows consumers to learn web creation at their own pace through software tutorials on cd-rom.

Books are typically less expensive than classes, and offer the opportunity to access the information learned repeatedly at any hour. Classes offer a more hands-on learning style with the opportunity to ask the instructor specific questions and receive personalized

help, but are more costly in terms of money and time. It is up to the individual to decide what learning style best fits their needs.

There are also ways in which organizations can get others to do the website improvements at a low cost. On a small scale, an organization may offer an internship to provide a college student with an opportunity to improve an existing webpage or build a new one. Obviously the intern selected would have to have a strong understanding of HTML and other software programs used to build webpages. This internship may or may not be paid, based upon the resources of the organization, and sometimes college credit can be given for internships. The duration of the internship would vary, depending on the needs of the organization. If the website needed to be built and updated regularly, a year-round internship program would be a good, low-cost way to fulfill those needs. If the website needed to be reconstructed, but the resources are on staff to maintain it, then a one-time 3-month internship may be the most appropriate. College students are typically looking for opportunities to use the skills they have acquired and add to their resume, and an internship program is one method to facilitate that while achieving the technological goals of the organization.

On a much larger scale, grant writing is a method that can be utilized to tap into major funding sources. The federal government, with organizations like the National Endowment for the Arts, distributes grant money to local arts communities annually. The recipe for success on writing grants is rather simple:

- v A community problem worth addressing

- ∇ An organization designed to address the community problem
- ∇ A well thought out plan on how to address the issue
- ∇ A proven need for funding to solve the problem
- ∇ An articulate grant writer to put the problem in an easy-to-read and understandable format

Executing all aspects of the recipe is much more difficult. The first two ingredients are rather easy to acquire, because there are many problems in our society that are worth addressing, and many organizations dedicated to solving them. Many organizations attempting to obtain grants typically have problems in the planning segment. The plan to solve the problem must be clear and appear feasible, which can lead to controversy among the organization staff or in the community. This is because there are multiple ways to solve some issues and everyone has a different point of view on how it should be done. Thus, an idea for a grant must also have a significant level of support to see it through the grant-writing process and then to execute the plan once it has been approved for funding. The need for funding is another part of the recipe that is usually apparent, especially in the most economically poor parts of the country. The final ingredient, a good grant writer, is more difficult to acquire, but can be done by hiring an individual with a proven track record in grant writing.

Finding grant organizations sponsored by the federal government is not very difficult, as they fund a number of major projects in the arts community. The National Endowment for the Arts occasionally offers grants that can help arts organizations build a strong technological base (NEA, 2003). The most well-known of these grants is the Technology

Opportunities Grant (TOP), which provides matching funds to organizations that promote the widespread availability and use of technology in the public and non-profit sectors. TOP focuses on ensuring that its grants are diversified geographically, having given grants in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, totaling \$204.9 million and leveraging \$282 million in local matching funds (NEA, 2003). TOP also actively works to ensure that as many grants as possible are given to rural and under served communities. The goal of TOP is to find out the best way to spread digital technology in communities throughout the United States with the grants, and then replicate the successful grants in other communities. The TOP website provides interested parties with all the details of previous grants and grant applications, the amount of money donated, and the results of many projects (ibid.).

For a grant to be accepted by TOP, it is important to recognize that the simple act of filling out the forms is unlikely to garner any awards. Many of the grants that were accepted had a specific project and vision in mind that would not only better the community, but also better the organization. When reviewing the approved grants it was also observed that the organizations approved were in a rural community or directly involved economically underprivileged people. Some examples of grants that were approved that may be replicated or improved upon in the Eugene/Lane County area:

□ Northern Journeys (<http://www.uaf.edu/museum/journeys/index.html>), a program administered by the University of Alaska Museum to access museum information and events in rural areas. What Northern Journeys has been able to do is allow

elementary and middle school teachers to bring important aspects of Alaskan history into the classroom and integrate the museum into the learning process.

- α Plugged-in ([www.pluggedin.org](http://www.pluggedin.org)), a program in Palo Alto, CA that allows low-income students and their families learn technology-based skills. Plugged-in offers a wide range of technology learning opportunities for students, from filming their own movies to building webpages.

These types of programs could be copied in Eugene to better webpages and web technologies for events. In the case of the Northern Journeys webpage, an event in Eugene could partner with a local school or an outlying Lane County school to gain the grant. The money from the grant could be used to improve the event website, and also allow students to become well informed about an event, perhaps with the creation of a website just for students. It would be a unique learning experience for students and at the same time allow an event to present a better product to the online public.

The Plugged-in program could be replicated in Eugene to provide similar services to the community. A group such as Lane Arts Council could be the grant sponsor and moderator. The Council could provide the opportunity for at-risk students to learn new skills in the local arts community by directing them to organizations in need of their help. For instance, if a student had webpage skills, or wanted to learn, the Lane Arts Council could refer that student to Maude Kerns to assist them in building their webpage. Maude Kerns may even be able to provide a mentor to teach the student about creating pages on

the web and allow the student to partially complete the page. The student would have a one-of-a-kind experience of creating something that will last and help the community, while the organization would benefit from not having to pay for outside expertise.

The National Endowment for the Arts also funded Open Studio, which existed from 1996-2000. Partnering with Microsoft, the Ford Foundation, and AT&T, the Open Studio project provided internet access to arts organizations and artists with the goal of putting the arts community online. To do this, the project established 10 organizations across the country to give funding with the hopes of making artists and organizations more tech savvy. In the first year of the project, over 300 artists received online skills training, largely through workshops. Judging by the Lessons Learned section of the study results, the project encountered some difficulty in getting off the ground and running effectively. Being a new project, the idea lacked credibility in the arts world, which may have hindered its success from the start. The project was ultimately ended, and is unlikely to be revived on a national scale due to the poor economy and a reduction in NEA funding.

Open Studio is a project that could be implemented on a smaller scale and be successful. An organization in the Eugene area would need to take a leadership role in securing funding and resources for the artists and the teachers. Once enough sponsors signed on to the project, and a suitable facility to hold the workshops was found, the organization would need to reach out to the Eugene arts community to recruit interested artists. Working with teachers familiar with the internet and related software programs, the

artists would be trained to create webpages and web art. As part of this training, they could perhaps be required to complete a website for a small arts organization in the area. Websites in the Eugene area would improve, new websites would be created, and many community artists would be trained through a program such as this.

Available through the National Endowment for the Arts website is a listing of federal funding sources that arts organizations can tap into. The site lists the project names and the project objectives. From this page, you can click on the project name to reveal a summary of the project and its funding sources. The page is a great resource for those interested in receiving federal funding and monitoring the different projects that are being done in communities throughout the United States. To access this information, visit:

<http://63.169.191.195:591/federal-opportunities02/a3-access-f2.html>

Finally, if an organization is fortunate enough to be able to pay professionals to create and/or maintain their website, there are many companies out there willing to do so.

These companies have often times created many successful websites and have access to the newest website creation technology. These internet companies are typically listed in the local yellow pages under Internet Marketing. As with all other business decisions, it is important to research the costs involved and check the references of the company doing the work to ensure their credibility.

## **Adding Value to Your Webpage**

As demonstrated by the reviewed websites, the internet is a remarkable tool for providing the public with information about an event. However, it is important to keep in mind that the internet is only one piece of a complete marketing strategy. In many cases, the traditional means of publicizing an event are becoming diluted, as new technology brings different forms of advertising to the forefront. This essentially means that website advertising and promotion of events will likely continue to grow and even perhaps crowd out the traditional forms of advertising, based upon event budgets. With this information in mind, Microsoft Corporation has begun to assist event planners with utilizing new technology. Kevin Dolan, an e-business development manager at Microsoft, has developed what he calls the P s of a great web marketing campaign (Hoyle, 2002):

- § Presence. Having a website that an event can begin to drive web surfers to.
- § Pleasing. Making the website pleasing to the eye.
- § Personalized. Develop a relationship through personalization.
- § Purchase. Through e-commerce, buy or sell products or services.
- § Process. Integrate your website with core business systems.
- § Partnership. Being connected with partners, suppliers, customers, and competitors expands your reach.
- § Programmable. The site can be easily changed to tailor your marketing message.

Once your website has been created and critiqued, only one piece of the marketing puzzle is complete. Many businesses use some form of the above criteria to meet their

marketing objectives. By implementing the P s, an event manager is not only following a business model, but also assisting their customers in accessing what they need.

The first step is developing a presence on the internet. To make this happen, a domain name must be selected and paid for (Chase & Shulock, 2001, p. 139). A domain name is like a phone number for the internet, in that it provides customers with a way to reach an organization on the internet. By typing the domain name into internet browsing software, the software is given directions on where to go to load the information on a webpage. After a few seconds, the webpage is fully loaded on the computer screen in a viewable format. Many organizations are able to register domain names that end in .org, which signifies they are an organization. However, many private, for-profit companies must register their address in a .com format. Some of the more common domain names recognized by the American public are amazon.com, yahoo.com and google.com.

Domain names are not actually owned by anyone, but controlled and distributed by Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN, 2003). They are rented out and the renter of the domain name must pay an annual rental fee to keep the domain name. While the internet is a low-cost means of advertising, there are a few start-up fees that must be paid in order to begin marketing a product on the internet.

Once a domain name is selected, that domain name can then be placed in advertising flyers, published on event programs and business cards, and broadcast over the radio to attract customers. It also must be easily found for the casual web surfer who attempts to

access the page through one of the internet s search engines (Goldblatt, 2002, p. 276). The search engine is like a phone book, in that it allows users to type into a box on the search engine webpage what they are looking for. An example would be a web surfer looking for all the restaurants in Eugene. By entering Eugene restaurants into the search engine box, the search engine should respond by giving a list of all the webpages about Eugene restaurants. All of the restaurants that appear had to first submit their names to the web search engine for approval. On the internet landscape today, there are about 10 major internet search engines that are significant enough to apply to. Once an internet domain name is listed through these search engines, web surfers should be able to find that domain name much easier and traffic to the site will increase.

Customers want their experience personalized, oftentimes by giving them choices over what content they view. By making the web experience personalized, an organization is also more likely to retain their customers and grow their event. One simple way to create personalization for customers on the internet is by creating a customer web profile. A web profile sometimes contains biographical data, income data, and content interest data on a customer. At the very least, it will contain content interest data so that a website can personalize the content of the website for the customer. Once a profile is created, a username and password is often created as well, and a customer would literally log-in to the webpage like they would their private email account.

An obvious problem with this is that event managers seldom have the time or the funding to create such an in-depth and complex website. Additionally, the amount of

personalization that can be done to a website of an annual event is very limited, as is the quantity of the content. It is likely that the best way to personalize an event for a customer is not through the web, but through other advertising platforms or at the event itself.

One of the more interesting options that has become available recently is the ability to purchase tickets online (McDonnell, Allen, and O Toole, 1994, p. 214). The airline industry has become an active player in offering tickets online (some now charge extra for paper tickets), and many sporting events and concert tickets are offered through websites such as Ticketmaster. The art event industry has lagged behind. The reason for this is somewhat puzzling, because it is a great way to save customers time and is relatively inexpensive to setup. Typically, all that is involved is getting a method of credit card authorization setup online through the website and the designation of an organization computer to track each purchase and store the information.

Online ticketing usually takes one of two forms; either the organization can offer customers the opportunity to pay online and pick up the tickets at the event or it can offer the option for customers to pay and print the tickets on their home computer. Each organization should consider the benefits of each method before deciding which ticketing option is right for them. If an event is one that has limited, designated seating, then the optimal choice would not only include the ability to purchase tickets online, but also to get virtual views of the customer's seat so that the customer has an idea of what they are

paying for. A good utilization of this technique can be seen through the Hult Center website, among others.

Customers sometimes have fears about making online purchases, which should also be a consideration when offering a ticketing service. The top two concerns of customers are typically theft of credit card information and downloading/acquiring a virus from another computer. However, these are only misconceptions that are likely to be overcome as the general public gets more familiar with the internet. Online purchases are actually proven to be safer than establishment purchases, and internet viruses are not as common as many would believe (O Toole & Mikolaitis, 2002, p. 180). Event organizers using online ticketing should be prepared to handle customers who have questions or concerns about purchasing online in order to make the technological aspects of the event run as smoothly as possible.

In dealing with organization computers, either for office use, webpage building, or ticket purchases, it is important to have all the computers mainstreamed and working together. Not only can computers then be used for multiple purposes, but all the information input into the computers can be shared between all computers. This allows for easy access to information for both employees and customers, and builds a better infrastructure for an organization.

Business partnerships and sharing of information and resources can also be very efficient when marketing on the internet. If an event is held annually, it may pool its technology

resources with those of other annual events that are held in different seasons. For instance, the Holiday Market held in winter may be able to share resources with the Eugene Celebration held in early fall. The resources of one of the two events may not be in use while the other event is going through prime season. This would allow the organizations in the partnership to buy better computers and technology assets together, rather than separately, and save all organizations involved a lot of money. This tactic may even carry over into the non-technical aspects of the businesses, such as shared rental office space. In the end, it may also allow for superorganizations that would put on an event in each of the four seasons, with a permanent, year-round event staff.

Finally, the website of an organization should be easily programmable and changeable. This can be done by having a person on staff familiar with programming HTML program code, the basic code of internet webpages. If this is not possible, some computer software is now so simple that creating a webpage with the software is seldom any more difficult than typing into a word processor. As a last resort, the organization may decide to seek professional help by paying an outside web design company to create, update, and maintain the webpage. This type of service can be very expensive, depending upon the complexity of the website created and the amount of updating that needs to be done to it. Review the *Improving Your Website* section of this paper for low-cost ideas on creating and maintaining a website.

In closing, the Microsoft e-business philosophy provides solid steps to creating a marketable website. By following the recommendations of this program, organizations

will be able to avoid mistakes made in the past and assure some degree of success. As the internet continues to grow as a source of information and commerce in the United States, arts organizations and events will be able to reap the rewards of having a strong, well-marketed webpage.

### **The Future of the Internet**

As the internet continues to grow, it will theoretically make society more dependent upon using it (Veen, 2002, p. XI). Where will the growth in the internet occur? Right now, more and more webpages are being created, but the growth of the webpages alone does not outgrow the population of those accessing the internet in the long term. Growth is likely to come from new sources, such as new technologies and new ideas brought to the marketplace.

In the world of arts, the internet is likely to start offering more museum-like tours if they become popular enough. Already users can visit the Louvre online, enjoying the pieces that they offer in a virtual tour format (Louvre, 2003). The virtual tour is very interesting for those who would never get the chance to visit the Louvre, but is also limiting at this point in time in the online format. The major problem is that while one can view many different art pieces at the Louvre, it is not possible to zoom in or zoom out with the software provided, making a close-up view of the pieces on display difficult. As technology improves, this may become a workable medium for visiting a museum.

It is impossible to discuss the virtual tour segment of online tours without discussing the economics of the issue. While a festival or event may be able to absorb the loss of offering a virtual tour of past year s event, a museum that relies upon admission revenue may not. The solution to this problem may be an online admission fee to use the virtual tour feature at museums to replace the lost revenue. Without significant improvements to the quality of these tours, it is unlikely that the general public would be supportive of a fee to view the material, so only time will tell whether museums will be using this medium to gain revenue.

Another idea catching on is that of displaying art created online in museums and in galleries (CNN, 2003). Recently, the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York began displaying art created on the internet, including webpages, viewable on five laptop computers in the museum. While the internet art is unlikely to replace hanging art, it is a remarkable step up in the art world for online artists. Having websites recognized by the Whitney Museum as an art form gives internet artists more credibility as true artists. If the display of online art catches on at the Whitney Museum, it is likely that more museums will begin offering similar exhibits in the near future. Eventually, this medium may evolve into online events and or internet displays at events. For example, Art and the Vineyard may decide to hold part of its event online, with the artwork displayed on laptops throughout Alton Baker Park! The progression of arts and the internet has clearly impacted the events world, and will likely continue to do so in the future.

The way the internet is presented to the public will also change over time. The growth of mobile phone users has created a demand for additional phone services. Almost all major mobile phone retailers now offer some type of mobile internet connection as part of a mobile phone package. By offering the internet to mobile phone users an entirely new format for advertising will be created that will be more personalized than ever (Amor, 2002, p. 83). According to internet consultant Daniel Amor, it is not difficult to imagine a mobile phone being able to provide users with detailed information about events in their area and even provide directions and coupons via mobile phone. The mobile phone may even replace the computer as the standard device used to access the internet, if the current projects being worked on by Microsoft and other technology companies are successful.

The future of the internet is limitless, as companies continue to create products that change our methods of viewing the internet and accessing information. The number of features that are available to the individual will grow, including improved virtual tours and online-only events. Artists will be able to display art online that will be deemed credible in the art world and therefore create more internet-based events. Organizations will be able to use mobile phone advertising to open up an entire new stream of communication with potential customers. The future internet will improve the lives of event managers, attendees, and volunteers by providing information on an even larger scale than is currently possible. In the end, the events industry should be greatly improved by the advances of the internet and the result will be better events for the general public.

## **Conclusion**

The internet has proven to be a valuable asset over the past decade in promoting arts events. In the Eugene, Oregon arts community, many organizations have delegated time and resources to creating websites with an eye towards building an online marketing strategy and improving event awareness. Overall, the efforts of these arts organizations have succeeded in providing the end user with quality information in an easy-access format.

Of the seven websites reviewed in Eugene, five were considered average or above average. Many of the websites reviewed excelled in providing content, making the website aesthetically pleasing, and marketing the event. However, many of the websites failed to keep their websites short enough and/or integrate technology in a creative way. The seven websites had at least one area in which they could have improved and in doing so, created a better end-product.

Fortunately, there are many resources that these organizations can access to improve their website for a very low cost, if they choose. There are a number of classes offered through the University of Oregon or Lane Community College that members of these organizations could attend to improve their website creation skills. There are also a number of books and software titles available that accomplish essentially the same thing. Another method suggested is an internship program that would allow a student to build a website for an art organization.

Money is also available for those organizations wanting to have a broader impact in the community. Grants through the NEA offer organizations the opportunity to create a project that serves the dual purpose of improving the community and the organization. The project could entail creating an organization website or improving an existing website, provided the conditions of the grant were met.

There are methods that can be used to add value to an organization's website as well. By creating a strategic marketing campaign that follows the guidelines set forth by Microsoft's Kevin Dolan, any arts organization should be able to create a website that is a marketing powerhouse. Dolan's guidelines force organizations to reflect on their goals and also require a certain level of creativity to market their product in a unique way. One of the more dynamic ideas I was able to come up with after reflecting on the Dolan piece was that of creating partnerships with other event organizations to share resources. Dolan's guidelines will save organizations time and money by putting the focus on the areas that lead to marketing success.

While the Eugene community does have many successful arts websites, more can be done to improve the websites by utilizing the resources suggested in this paper. The importance of developing a creative and informative website combined with a solid online marketing plan should not be overlooked as the events industry prepares for the next decade. Those organizations that choose to follow the internet's yellow brick road are likely to be rewarded with increased revenue, attendance and event awareness. By

improving upon these three key areas, utilization of the internet may become a pillar of event success.

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