

Lenswood & Forest Range Community Association

Presentation about the Association web site

1. Introduction

As far as I can see there are 2 parts to any discussion about the website:

- One part is the technology, and as far as that is concerned there is no limit.
- The other and by far the most important is what the association wants from the site and how to create a look & feel to the site which reflects the aims and aspirations of the members and is of interest & use to the community.

2. About the technology

- The Domain name Registration and hosting are done by techs and we have a reliable Host site, a good price and plenty of storage available to expand the features and use of our site.
- WordPress our software is number one - competitors being Joomla & Drupal. It is free software and in the public domain as are many of the themes, plugins & widgets we use.
- WordPress is like a car production line. We start with a basic shell & we then use Tools within it to produce a quality website.
- Themes are like a paint job, they are about appearance, there are in excess of 2000 of these.
- Other tools are Plugins & widgets, small software packages that extend the capability of the site e.g. contact forms, & editing tools for text & graphics.
- There are forum specific and shop front specific tools.
- There are slide viewers, video and sound players.
- We can use links to news & weather, Facebook, the library etc. to extend the reach of the site.

The Administrators role

- Is about loading files in to word press and setting them up to display well, checking software for security or statistical data and installing or deleting files as needed. No editing of computer language files is required. If need to we can seek tech help from web Designers.
- There are other help references available to administrator:
 - WordPress Adelaide meet ups (which is the same as a computer user group).
 - WP help (available from the dashboard inside the site),
 - Also Google, You Tube, Wikipedia have helpful information, tutorials, video clips etc.
 - All sources of help for site administration.

Website Designers & Developers

- Use software tools such as Dream weaver, to construct a custom website from scratch.
- Within the website there are hundreds of files each of which can be edited and which change the websites functionality or its appearance.

Summing up Technology

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- There is an endless choice of tools.
- The difficulty is rather that administrator hasve to choose from thousands of available tools to have the best out of a site. As long as we have a stable platform that is online 24-7, that is affordable, and has the capacity for our needs, then the technical side is in good shape.

3. What should the Website do on behalf of the Association?

- It should convey our message and ideas. We need to show people what we're about and create an experience so that people want to come back.
- It should boost our credibility.
- It should inform, educate and stimulate people.
- The site should be of interest & use to the community.
- If we want more people to use the site, we need to establish what to put on the site to interest people who we don't reach now.
- Be aware it may be people's first point of contact with us.
- Lastly, we have only three seconds to interest people before they leave if they are not interested.

What do we want on the site – ideas?

- We could have comic strips ,art work, weather, news, links to the local Library even local gossip etc.
- Do we want to cross-link with other groups or sites. For example Facebook, the History Group, other community associations (e.g. Lobethal also has a community association)?
- Do we want to invite other groups as a presence on our site; for example Apple growers, wine growers, religious groups (we have two churches here), the school and its great website, CFS, other community groups, the Shed etc
- Do we want a forum on the website. A Forum is a place where people can raise topics and issues about the Community, (e.g. news etc), which many groups do. Special interest groups like aviation, sporting, computer groups, book clubs, swap or mutual self-help forums focussing on goods or services (e.g. I have this pump to give away in return for old water tank OR I will provide 2 days free labour in your orchard in exchange for help fixing my roof etc.); or goods for sale, garage sales etc.
- There are security issues attached to Forums, spam, inappropriate language & topics and moderators are needed to review forum contributions.

4. What do we do now?

3.1 Brainstorm / soul search?

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In working towards a re-energised site I suggest we need to ask ourselves lots of questions. For example:

1. How do we tell people what we are about?
2. What does the association and the people, want from the site? What should be on the site? Do we want to use it at
 - An archive for:- the constitution, the Harvest Festival, other completed community projects.
 - Self-promotion of the community interest as per a new mission statement where we outline our goals?
3. How do we create a look, feel & tone to the site which reflects the aims, aspirations and even feelings of its members?
4. What can we add or change to encourage the use of the site , and interest in the association?
5. Should we praise our achievements on site? Heck yeah!!!!
6. What is the direction and what are future projects for the association? Should we change the sites appearance? That's really a technology thing but if the tone, look, feel or colour of the site is not right, yes we should.
7. What needs to change? Anything that is out of date or not relevant?
8. Are there things that need to be made more visible (more importance)?
9. Are there things that should not be on the site, that are not in our interest etc.?
10. Add your own ideas.....!

5. Next steps:

1. Look at other web sites for ideas for elements we might like to include on our site?
2. Formulate a plan?
3. Action the plans?
4. Review successes & failures?
5. Repeat the process.

Finally: I suggest allocating a small annual budget to the future upkeep/redesign of the website that rolls over into the next year if it is not used so it is possible to employ a developer for tasks that can't be completed by an administrator.

Report by Mal Drew (L&FRC website administrator)

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