

Company Background

The Detroit News is one of Detroit’s major newspapers, providing the city with up-to-date news since 1873. As one of the first newspapers to operate a radio station and the founder of Michigan’s first television station, it is ranked as one of the Top 100 Newspapers in the U.S. In August 2005, Gannett became the managing partner of the Detroit News in a joint operating agreement with MediaNews Group. Today Detroit News (detnews.com) holds a prominent spot as the 10th most read newspaper Web site in the U.S.

Business Objectives

As large news corporations continue to grow, it becomes necessary to manage numerous sites and incorporate functionality to stay competitive. As the online movement continued to evolve, detnews.com soon realized the need for a significant redesign of their Web site in order to gain a competitive advantage.

As one of the top news Web sites in the nation, detnews.com has enjoyed a loyal following and continued growth since its inception. However, the staff realized in early 2007 that a full site redesign was necessary to move it to the next level of online journalism. In an initial needs evaluation, the staff established several goals for a potential site redesign:

Evaluation Goals:

- **Increase** user engagement through features like forums, commenting and social bookmarking tools
- **Improve** the user experience on the site with an intuitive interface and navigation structure
- **Reflect** the attitude of Detroit with a bold and edgy design
- **Improve** consistency and content across site
- **Create** an engaging method to display their famous photography

Ultimately, detnews.com looked for a web redesign solution to elevate their online presence, functionality, engage users and increase loyalty.

Screen Shot Prior to Redesign



The Solution

Detnews.com chose Indigio, a Denver-based interactive agency, to provide a solution to solve their business challenges. With long-standing expertise in the publishing vertical, Indigio has worked closely with MediaNews Group Interactive in developing a set of best practices through several in-house usability tests. In assessing the initial Web site, the company looked to find ways in which changes could be made with simplicity and flexibility.

Detnews.com was taken through the following redesign process:

- Discovery Session - Determining requirements including ad size and placement rules, site taxonomy, site features and content strategy

- Development of mood board to establish mood on site - including colors, typography and design treatment
- Creation of Wireframes to establish core structure, content and feature prioritization
- Mockups of site bringing Mood and Wireframes together
- Final production for integration in detnews.com's content management system including development of scalable, fully semantic HTML Markup and CSS

Throughout the process, Indigio focused on creating an overall sticky site with a scalable and extremely flexible template structure. The site created a foundation on which detnews.com could build new functionality and special features.

"The feedback on the redesign of the site has been tremendous. About 80 percent of the responses from readers are purely positive. Of those that are not, many readers are making suggestions that we find are easily doable given the flexible design by Indigio." - Nancy Hanus, Director of New Media for Detroit News

Detnews.com made sure that the entire process involved their users – starting with a pre-launch survey asking site visitors to provide feedback on the site. With over 600 responses to help drive decisions, detnews.com was able to rely directly on their visitors' feedback in creating the new site. At launch, detnews.com continued to involve its users. The post launch marketing strategy included a blog, online feedback forum, and event marketing along with more traditional marketing in the core newspaper and on the site.

The Results

The redesign was met with an overwhelmingly positive response. Generally in newspaper redesigns, a lack of user acceptance typically decreases traffic for 30-60 days after the initial launch. However, detnews.com saw the exact opposite. In fact, the unique visits and time spent on site increased substantially, offering a different metric in which to measure success and navigation usability. Today those numbers have doubled - with a 100% increase in time spent on site in year-over-year measurements.

Detnews.com's more engaging design focused on on-page interactive elements and intuitive navigation, which forced the staff to re-examine their traditional success metrics. While page views per visit has decreased slightly since the redesign, the number of unique visitors and the level of engagement those visitors have has increased substantially. Visitors spend as long as 6 to 7 minutes on a page – engaging with multimedia elements such as video and slideshows. Shortly after the completion of the site redesign work, MidwestBusiness.com ranked the Detroit News site as the number one midwestern news site, ranking ahead of the highly reputed Chicago Tribune.

Conclusion

The redesign of detnews.com outlines many of the major obstacles newspapers often encounter. Web design, development and search functionality are key ingredients to a successful Web site and in taking online business to the next level. Indigio strives to offer these comprehensive services to clients like detnews.com and others to help them succeed online.

Screen Shot Post Redesign

