

## “Promoting Your New (or Redesigned) Website”

*By Leanne Bergey, September 2006*

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You've put significant time and resources into your new website. Whether it's for a brand new or a redesigned site with fresh content, the promotion of your website should be an important and integral part of your existing marketing plan.

Many traditional marketing techniques to promote your website can be combined with new ideas that make use of the Internet. Use all mediums to generate anticipation and excitement for your site prior to launch, and encourage and reinforce the use of your site post-launch.

Below is our list of 10 cost-effective and easy promotional techniques to incorporate into your plans as you prepare and launch your new website:

### **1) Reference your website everywhere possible**

This is the best way to give your web address maximum coverage. Have your URL printed on all stationery and business cards. (If your budget does not allow for an immediate reprint of all items, implement this plan the next time you need a reprint.) Your URL should be included in print ads, newsletters, brochures, direct mail pieces, signs, packaging, and invoices. You can make it the last line on your general voicemail message ("You can learn more about us at [www.oursite.org](http://www.oursite.org)").

### **2) Send an announcement to your email lists**

Do you keep one or more email lists for members, affiliates, or other affinity groups? If you don't, you should. Draft at least two messages for distribution to your lists. Send a "coming soon" teaser two to three weeks prior to launch with a quick summary of features and goals of the new site. In particular, list the features that are designed to appeal specifically to the group. (For example, if you are sending an email to your members and your new site will include the ability to renew membership online, highlight this in your message.)

Send a second, follow-up email within days of the launch announcing your new site. Reiterate new features or services for emphasis and encourage your list members to visit. Remember to include a direct link to your site within the email now that it is live.

### **3) Print teasers in your newsletters**

If you mail a monthly or quarterly newsletter, design a teaser for the issue prior to launch. Create a "coming soon" box with the new web address, a list of features, and the anticipated launch timeframe to generate excitement.

Follow up with another box (or even a full story!) in the first post-launch issue. If you write a story, interview those who have already used the new features for interesting quotes.

### **4) Send a postcard**

If direct mail is a regular part of your marketing strategy, make room in your budget for a postcard mailing to announce the launch of your website. Design the postcard to mimic the design of your new site. Make it simple and eye-catching, with your web address prominently displayed, and the features of your website in an "at-a-glance" bullet-point list. Mail the postcard within a week of your launch.



### **5) Post an announcement on your current website**

If your new website is a redesign, let your current visitors know what to expect and get them excited. Post a teaser on your current homepage with the launch date (or approximate launch timeframe) and bullet points highlighting the most important new features.

### **6) Add a teaser to your email signature**

Email is a vital part of your daily communication. If you already have an automatic "signature" inserted at the end of each email, add a teaser about your new website. If you don't use a signature, explore your email software options panel and create one. (In addition to including your website address, most email signatures include your name, title, phone/fax and street address.)

### **7) Make an announcement at your conference or other live events**

If you will be attending a conference or other event in the weeks preceding your website launch, announce your pending launch during your presentation, and mention the services and features you plan to offer. If possible, arrange for equipment to show a brief presentation of the site – a screen shot of the new design, sitemap, forms, search interfaces, or other special features.

### **8) Create promotional items specifically for advertising your web address**

Print your web address on pens, bookmarks, magnets or other "fun" giveaway items for liberal distribution at conferences, exhibitions and other events, and to give to donors and members.

### **9) Distribute a press release to your local media and industry publications**

As a nonprofit organization, your new website offers service to your stakeholders. Send a press release to your local media and industry-specific publications to generate publicity (make sure your contact names are up-to-date – they change frequently). Remember to emphasize the service aspect of your site and any "firsts." For example, if you are an educational organization offering online registration for adult classes, and you are the only local college to do so, make this the focus of your story.

Make sure you track the results your site generates (more memberships per month, increase in volunteers, etc.) so that you can send out a follow-up press release demonstrating how valuable the site is.

### **10) Hold a press conference**

Here is your chance to have the media's undivided attention. Start planning the press conference early – one to two months before the site is scheduled to go live. Establish clear and measurable objectives and write your agenda. Set the date for a week or so after the live date (to make sure all the loose ends are tied up). You'll need to give the media plenty of time to arrange to cover the conference, so invite them two to four weeks in advance. Briefly state what will be covered, when and where the conference will take place, and include a contact name. Strong visuals attract photographers – so think of interesting people to include (who will the site help most?) or hold the conference in an interesting location (does your building have a unique room?) – mention these details in the invitation. If holding the conference at an outside location, make sure you reserve any necessary space and that it will accommodate your needs. Have enough press kits available to hand out. Lastly, make sure your organization's spokesperson has some great quotes prepared that will "read" well in a story.

*Leanne Bergey is the President/Founder of [Verve Internet Solutions](http://www.verveinternet.com), a full-service Internet communications firm with a 10+ year track record creating sophisticated and effective online presences for organizations in education, health care, human services, philanthropy, aging services and retirement, environment, and more.*