



Beyond Likes and Shares

Captivate your audience with diverse methods of creative content

BY STEPHANIE RILEY

When it comes to marketing and creating content beyond social media, businesses across all industries are ripe with opportunities, including the right of way industry. Just ask me — I had the honor of representing Chapter 10 at IRWA's 70th Annual International Education Conference in Long Beach this past June, where we humbly swept all three communication awards. While I'd love to say it was all part of my master plan, the truth is, it was a valiant team effort fueled by a lot of coffee, emails and a dash of luck. But enough about Chapter 10's trophy shelf; let's dive into how companies, firms and even IRWA Chapters and Regions can leverage websites, podcasts and more to communicate and market effectively with current clients and/or members as well as cultivate new ones. After all, there's a whole world beyond social media waiting to be explored!

Winning Websites

A company or organization's website should be its primary asset since it fully captures brand identity, includes details about events and services, attracts prospective clients or members and much more. In IRWA, Chapters and Regions should maintain a well-rounded website to provide up-to-date, easily accessible information to its members. Chapter 12 Illinois went without its website from early 2020 to fall of 2023 due to the website provider's objection to working with, and unresponsiveness to, the new Chapter leadership. Immediate past Chapter 12 President Dan Olson said, "When we didn't have [our website], there was no guidance for the members."

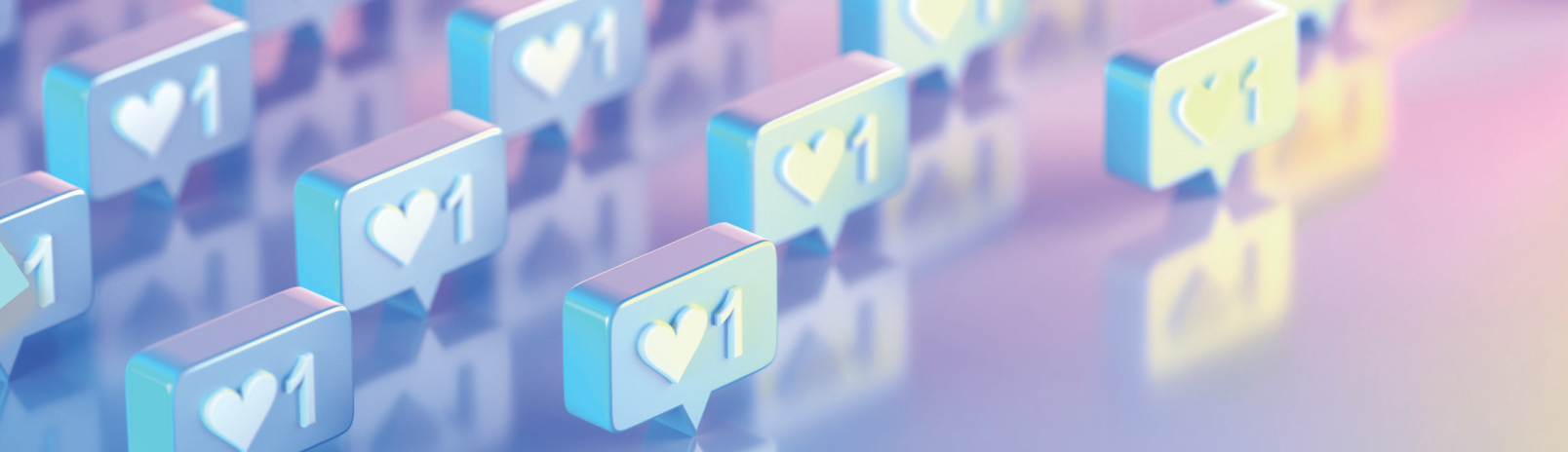
A well-designed and detailed website is a great alternative to social media to ensure that members stay informed, are able to contact leadership and have access to efficient tools to register and pay for events and classes online. Additionally, for Chapter and Region leaders, according to Olson, "You need the website because it does a lot of the work for you. Not only is it something that can give the Chapter online presence, but it can also guide our members to answers to their questions." Olson continued by explaining that while the website was unavailable, members may have perceived the Board at the time as being withdrawn or inactive, which was not the case.



To resolve this thought, Olson adds, "We added a link to email Chapter 12 to the new website that goes directly to the Board as a key feature that our members like." Zach Olson, who is in charge of maintaining Chapter 12's website, adds, "Our [website] engagement continues to grow, especially last month. Members like having somewhere they can go to stay up to date."

Having a compelling website is a functional element of any good marketing strategy. In a September 2023 blog, Colorado boutique marketing agency Third Angle recommends that a website include high-quality graphics, clean design, links and good meta descriptions, all of which can help improve visibility, readability and quality of your website. The blog concludes, "[T]hese elements will work in tandem to help increase organic web traffic and create more leads for your business."





Powerful Podcasts

Another popular marketing alternative to social media is podcasts. CEO and Founder of The Legal Podcast Network Dennis Meador rates podcasts as a top marketing tool because they are personal and humanizing, which are traits that younger generations desire when searching for credible companies or organizations to join. “Positioning yourself as an expert helps you connect with an audience and allows them to see you as a real person with valuable knowledge,” Meador says.

Kristen Short, SR/WA, R/W-RAC, owner of Blackbird Right of Way, LLC, Chapter 36 member and co-creator of the “Infrastructure Junkies” podcast says, “It’s a good way to mutually grow a professional network for both the listener and me and [my co-host] Dave. Dave and I now know experts on really niche topics in the industry across the country.” Kristen and Dave Arnold, SR/WA, have hosted five seasons and 83 episodes of “Infrastructure Junkies.” The podcast has over 35,000 downloads and its listenership has significantly grown since its inception four years ago.

“We pride ourselves on making right of way content not boring. We can infuse the podcast with personality and irreverence while still being filled with great information and insights into the industry,” Kristen explained. “Those episodes are there forever and available to everyone everywhere.”

Back to Basics

Websites and podcasts are just a couple main alternatives beyond social media to enhance your company or organization’s marketing strategy and increase its audience engagement. Taylor Doyle, senior vice president of Doyle Land Services and Chapter 12 member, sometimes prefers to take his marketing and business development strategies back to basics. “Face-to-face contact will never be replaced.” In his opinion, “Everything else is all just a lead up to having a face-to-face meeting. That’s where relationships are built.”

Some younger generations were thrust into or taken out of the workforce during the pandemic, so many young professionals crave face-to-face interaction. Similarly, older generations may feel nostalgic for the traditional mail system. There’s a certain joy in receiving a personalized card or package, and this tangible

connection can contribute to the company or organization’s growth by fostering stronger professional relationships.

“I said that our best marketing tactic was face-to-face,” Doyle began, “but that might not be accurate. Since the company is based in New Orleans, every year around Mardi Gras, we send our clients king cakes in the mail.” If it turns to early March and clients haven’t received their tasty confection yet, Doyle says he receives multiple calls, texts and emails. “They all love it!”

Doyle and his firm also see the value in supporting organizations like IRWA. As a recurring Exclusive Host Site Sponsor for IRWA’s annual education conference, Doyle believes, “As a firm, it’s a way to show we’re a national brand, important player and supporter of the right of way community.” Doyle explains that the sponsorship of the annual conference gives him and other Doyle Land Services employees who attend each year a chance to foster connections with existing clients and to create new ones with additional professionals to continuously build a robust network.

Exploring diverse methods of creative content has revealed countless small components that contribute to a larger whole. From powerful websites that guide clients and members to answers, to engaging podcasts that infuse industry insights with personality, and even back-to-basics strategies like face-to-face meetings and personalized mail, each piece contributes to a company or organization’s marketing growth and connection. With all the options, it’s best to decide which audience your company or organization wants to market to in order to determine the communication strategy or strategies that fit best. As Short wisely says, “[T]hey are a million tiny pieces-part of a bigger puzzle.” Let’s continue to fit those pieces together and captivate any particular audience beyond likes and shares. 🧩



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