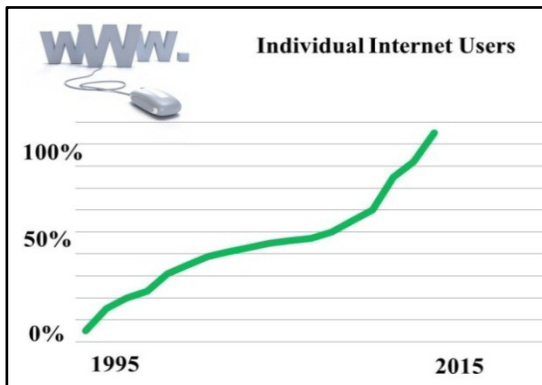


“To Be or Not To Be...on the Web?”

Community Associations are going online.
But does it make sense for your community?



These days, it's all about saving Time, Money & Headaches!



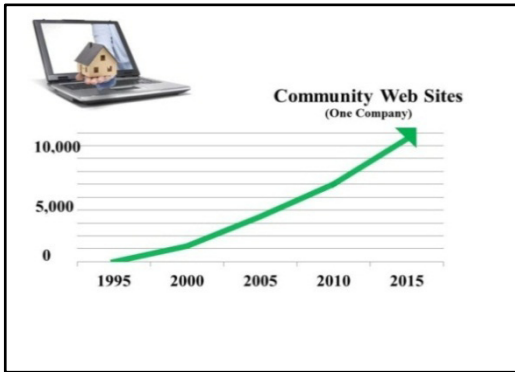
Gone are the days when only the largest or most highly sophisticated Homeowner Associations embraced the tools of modern technology in an effort to get their internal operations running more effectively and efficiently. Considering that home-based internet use is now at a remarkable 85%, it's no wonder today communities of every size, every socioeconomic group and every age demographic have shifted their thinking.

The question is no longer, is your association big enough or tech-savvy enough to embrace a Web site? Today, associations around the country and around the globe have begun asking themselves in record numbers, how long must we wait before we begin taking advantage of these new freedoms...and what is the price of continued inaction? The phone calls. The headaches. The repetitive tasks. The reduction or elimination of these resource-depleting factors constitutes a primary concern not only for Management Companies and Large Scale Homeowners Associations but for the tiniest of communities, as well.

Today, it's not enough for Homeowners Associations to just "think" like a company. These days, they've got to think like the "smartest" companies. And utilize all available tools to make them effective.

Now that the industry leaders in association Web sites have begun offering easily affordable tiered services, ROI can be realized just as easily at the 50-unit conversion as it can at the 500-unit complex or the 5000-unit high-rise. Now that a professional association Web site is within reach for every community, managers, Boards and residents alike are singing along in perfect harmony. For what was once the chore of consistent communications they've transformed into an exhilarating breeze.

While at one time web sites may have been perceived as simple marketing tools, one need not be either a genius or a Board President who was formerly CEO at a Fortune 500 company in order to recognize that a well-built web site is much more like an investment into your HVAC system, copper plumbing or your foundation than it is, say, landscaping. Now, associations everywhere are waking up to the larger truth: an association web site is not an amenity, an add-on or a spare part. It's the engine from which you can power the whole ship! In business parlance, it is an investment into infrastructure, one that sits at the very center of your entire community and just about



the only decision you can make that has the ability to both positively impact management performance and easily increase resident satisfaction today and for years down the road. A well thought-out, robustly designed web site is just that critical to the health of your bottom-line. And, fortunately for today's cash-strapped communities, getting started on the road to increased efficiency, vastly improved communications, and an

altogether more streamlined approach to management is now more accessible than ever, for just about everyone.

But thinking like a business means delving beneath the surface of all of the bells and whistles and asking: what are the real benefits to taking our association online, what are the costs, what kind of return can we expect, is it possible to make the transition in a easy, stress-free way? Aggressive, attractive pricing models, coupled with industry innovations such as ease of implementation and use, software interoperability and the opportunity for revenue generation, mean, now, it's easier than ever to take your community into the 21st Century. For leaders looking to leave a lasting legacy, let's take a close look at those associations who have already made the web a management priority and examine the sources of their satisfaction.

After building Board consensus and identifying the right web services provider, the most common reaction to a new association web site is, "We should have done this ages ago!"

Managers of communities with professional association Web sites receive fewer calls and requests from owners. When you, too, join the ranks of those who can lay honest claim to such facts as "our call volume has been cut in half" you'll want to sing out, too! But before you can begin celebrating the launch of your new association Web site and the newly captured efficiencies, as with anything worthwhile, there are some barriers to progress. If you want to be the one responsible for the victory, it proves best to follow the Boy Scout motto and "Be prepared." Three of the most typical obstacles associations must overcome on the path to greater efficiency and ease of communications are:

>>>GENERAL ANXIETY/LACK OF INTERNAL WILL

As any business owner or company president is well aware, change doesn't come easy. From the world of physics: "An object in motion tends to stay in motion; an object at rest tends to stay at rest." Overcoming the fear and complacency usually begins when one motivated leader has the vision and motivation to begin opening up the discussions.

Carefully weighing the pros and cons and making sure everyone has a voice in the discussion helps create buy-in for what needs to be done now and why.

>>>TECHNOPHOBIA

This is the very specific anxiety related to all things computer-ese. In conjunction with the discussions mentioned above, time should be taken to reflect upon the nature of technology itself. We use tools, all tools, to accomplish more than we could without them, saving us time, money and effort. And in the world of community associations, efficiency matters. Every business has the ability to use easy and intuitive technology to make them more efficient and effective. Understanding that tools exist that are non-threatening to the users is key to success.

>>>MYTHOLOGY

Myths ranging from “our people are too old to use the web” and “our neighbors will never embrace it” no doubt still linger in the minds of your peers. While the internet adoption rate is certainly slower amongst the young-at-heart, your association Web site provides only further motivation to stay active and mentally engaged, to begin emailing photos back-and-forth with the grandchildren, etc. Another misconception is that people won’t use your Web site because it will come to be viewed as a repository for useless information. But the best association Web site firms will help guide you in making sure your Web site actually provides an experience that is both engaging and valuable.

For communities who have done their homework, mustered the inner resolve to rally the troops and shake off the inertia and procrastination, the pay-off is huge. In addition to newfound communications and operational ease and efficiency, the Web site itself can be a unifying agent, the one successful project that galvanizes energies, instills pride and serves as a catalyst to a long list of Board projects and accomplishments.

KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR INTERNAL TEAM:

- *Big picture, what do we truly want for our community?*
- *What issues are we currently facing that a professional Web site can help us address?*
- *Why have we put off such a mission critical decision thus far?*
- *In our unique community, what would our Web site priorities be?*
- *Would easy and intuitive technology solutions allow us to achieve our objectives?*
- *Should we investigate all of the potential solutions that can save us time, money and headache?*
- *Is asking for help from experts a sign of weakness or a sign of Board strength?*
- *Do we have the internal resource to insure implementation and success?*
- *Have we allocated funds in our budget for a professional Web service?*
- *Can we afford NOT to implement a professional Web site to enhance our communications?*

Your association web site is a business investment that underpins a sound and solid management approach, all while smoothing out the wrinkles that have beleaguered Board and residents for years.

Of course, there is a “softer side,” a marketing element to your web site. You do, in fact, need to think about the perceptions your community enjoys both internally and externally, because that has a direct impact on buyer demand and home values. So, the importance of aesthetics and best practice web design cannot be overstated. But these days, a web site from a reputable association Web site services provider does far more than promote your community, although it certainly does do that, especially if you choose to work with a firm who also specializes in Search Engine Optimization, the process of getting your site to rank well and be found easily by others.

But because it’s not a vanity exercise but a business decision, one should approach both their Web site project and any prospective vendors with a judicious mindset. Are we thinking short-term or long-term? Will the least expensive bid lead to the most enduring satisfaction? Can a freelance kid working from his garage really deliver the kind of best practice association web site that addresses our unique needs?

From consideration of a new deck to the submittal of items to be included on the next Board agenda...from integration with accounting software to consolidating maintenance issues...from revenue generating opportunities such as selling advertising space to nearby retailers and service providers to offering your residents the chance to post for-sale notices...from reducing the overall cost of communication while actually improving communication and thus, fostering both better Board service and an enhanced quality of life...your new association Web site is a serious matter, but one that, if handled correctly, will have your neighbors grinning from ear to ear and singing its praises for years to come.

KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK A WEB SERVICES PROVIDER:

- *Do you specialize in community association Websites?*
- *Are you a long term member and/or sponsor of CAI (www.cai.org)?*
- *How long have you been providing Web sites to community associations?*
- *Do you offer a risk free Guarantee?*
- *What is your client retention rate? Can we speak with associations like ours?*
- *Are your Web sites easy to implement and intuitive to use?*
- *How long does it take to receive my Web site and “go live”?*
- *Do I have full control over building, editing and publishing my Web pages*
- *Do you offer assistance in launching my Web site to our community?*
- *Do you assign a personal Account Manager to me to insure our success?*
- *Do you utilize the latest technology and best practices in design, search and navigation?*
- *Do you offer unlimited, best-in-class training and support?*
- *Do you offer multiple editions and tiered services to meet assorted association needs?*
- *Can you customize my Web site to meet the desired needs of my community?*
- *Do you assist us with graphic design, document digitization and site design?*
- *Do you offer secure professional hosting for our Web site?*
- *Can you integrate with all of the accounting and management software companies?*
- *What makes your company different than the other Web services providers?*