

CLUB WEBSITE VIRTUAL AWARDS 2008

Website Analysis and Results

By Dale Hartle DTM, District Webmaster

Nominations were received from 5 clubs, and these were the only ones analysed for the purposes of this Award.

Nominations – Analysis

Kaiapoi Toastmasters Club

www.ktm.org.nz

Webmaster: Richard Moffat

Kaiapoi's home page has a dramatic image – Busted, Toastmaster Myths, Enter if You Dare. It's a bit shocking when you first view the page as it's big, red and bold. (We discussed the impact of this at the Club Website Workshops held in Christchurch in April!)

The link to Enter sends you to a very readable Top 10 Myths page, and when you get to the bottom, you can return to the home page.

The webmaster might consider changing the home page image for a new one every few months to keep it fresh and inviting, and get rid of the “big-bold-red” approach.

The Home page shows a last updated date of 28 February 2008, along with a change history, which I believe is unnecessary. As a visitor I am not interested in the history of the website. But the pages had obviously been updated since 28 February, so this text should be updated to reflect the most recent date something was changed on the site.

The next thing you want to do when browsing the site is read the Vital Questions pages, the content of which assumes you are reading them in order, but they are quite readable even if you chose a page at random, except the Where and When page.

The Recent Events page had three news items, two with accompanying images which were correctly optimised for the web.

I did not login to the members section as I had seen it before. I still find this a bit unnerving on a club site having a password protected members only section, but it is acceptable practice.

The tone of the content of the whole site was friendly and inviting, and even humorous in places, especially about the Beatles reunion on the Events – Coming Up page relating to the District Convention.

A search in Google for “kaiapoi toastmasters” gave the following result as #1:

[Kaiapoi Toastmasters](#)

Kaiapoi Toastmasters - Overcome your fears of public speaking! Learn the secrets of effective communication and improve your listening skills.

www.ktm.org.nz/ - 2k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#)

In fact the club is listed in the following web directories. It is certainly the most findable toastmasters club in New Zealand!

www.finda.co.nz

Waimakariri Council Club Directory

www.tradefind.co.nz

yellow.co.nz

Toastmasters New Zealand Club Finder

Kaiapoi Living Community Website www.kaiapoi.living.net.nz

Local Eye – www.localeye.info

Toastmasters International Club Finder

UBD – www.ubd.co.nz

A Google result for Rangiora.com but when viewed, no listing could be found

Rangiora Blogspot - <http://rangioratoastmasters.blogspot.com/>

Wises Maps - <http://www.wises.co.nz/p/kaiapoi-toastmasters/60fv/>

However the website does not have compliant code when validated on the W3.org website. This should be rectified as soon as practicable.

In summary, the Kaiapoi Toastmasters site answers all of the questions research and analysis has shown that prospective members ask, so as a prospective member, I certainly would be tempted to contact the club to arrange a visit. Good on you Kaiapoi!

Hereford Street Toastmasters Club

www.herefordtoastmasters.org.nz

Webmaster: Robert Strong

Webmaster's email: hosting@ictsolutions.net

Because Hereford's website is sponsored, the home page is very long and busy, with sponsor images and content at the top and bottom relating to an animal welfare theme, and some images were quite distasteful (but I presume the club has no control over this). There is also an animated dancing cow in the middle of the home page to grab your attention which was really irrelevant. It took me a few minutes to assimilate all the information on the home page because of the range of content and links available, and this could be quite off-putting to a casual visitor interested in Toastmasters.

Inaccurate information was found on the How Toastmasters Can Help You page, with out of date joining and membership fees:

There is a \$16 new member fee, and \$18 dues every six months.

The fee information on the FAQ page may also be out of date but it is impossible to check this.

Other inaccurate information on this page and the FAQ page concerned the Communication and Leadership Manuals.

The Vision and Tips pages had general information about Toastmasters, mostly copied from the Toastmasters International website.

A Google search for "Hereford toastmasters" or "toastmasters Christchurch" revealed the following results:

#1 result:

[Hereford Street Toastmasters, Christchurch, New Zealand](http://www.herefordtoastmasters.org.nz)

Toastmasters is a great way to improve your communication and leadership skills and lose your fear of public speaking. And have fun doing it!

www.herefordtoastmasters.org.nz/ - 118k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#)

The remaining search results were not relevant to this club.

However as stated in the 2007 Awards, the site does have most of the basics in place according to the Toastmasters International website criteria. Membership promotion information could be found in the form of Testimonials and the Features and Benefits of Toastmasters are covered in the How Toastmasters Can Help You section. The Home Page had images of recent successes correctly captioned and a Speechcraft story, which really is news which belongs on a sub-page.

As stated last year, the club webmaster may consider whether having a site sponsor is desirable considering the nature of the sponsor's business and the images displayed. This would allow a simplifying of the site, which currently has 3 menu navigation methods.

Varsity Toastmasters

<http://www.varsitytm.org/>

Webmaster: Sajeewa Dayaratne

Email Webmaster.webmaster@varsitytm.org

A first time entrant in the Awards, Varsity Toastmasters Club website opened quickly and is well presented with nice blue colours.

On a technical aspect, the website is coded for XHTML strict, but when validating the home page, 6 errors were detected by the W3.org validator.

The home page is a bit confusing as it opens on with the first heading reading About Us, but then there is an About Us navigation link as well, which goes to a totally different page. I had to click back and forwards a couple of times to see the difference between the home and the about us pages.

The home page also had an event notification for the Division contests on 5 April, however the site was checked on Thursday 24 April for this Award analysis. The site webmaster needs to keep the site up to date by removing out of date event information immediately after the event has been held.

Other news on the home page was acceptable, but needs to be weeded out of very old information.

The copyright and TM Trademark Statement text was in very small pale blue text, which was virtually unreadable.

Again on a technical aspect when I scrolled down the page, the style sheets are forcing some elements in the left hand navigation pane on the home page right down the page out of view, and this wasn't noticed until I scrolled right down to the bottom of the home page. The elements were Search, Upcoming Events, and the Calendar.

Moving from the home page to the About Us page, the goals were listed for 2006-07. This is now nearly the end of the 2007-08 Toastmasters year, so this information had not been updated. Further down the page were the clubs Executive committee profiles and accompanying photographs.

The Where We Meet page had location information with a Google map. The Meeting Format page gave a general sample agenda for reference. The FAQ and New Member pages had some typographical, grammatical and inaccurate information on it, especially the information about the Toastmaster manuals.

The timing buttons on the Table Topics Tutorials is a good idea, but it is unclear how it operates as it is not described in the text.

The Members Login section asks for a password. This is acceptable practice, but there is no indication of what may be found there.

The Upcoming Events page had listings for the next four club meetings. Calendar entries had RSS feeds available

The News pages had club news items going back a couple of years, but the Club Newsletters page had newsletters from 2006 as downloadable pdfs. I thought this could be either removed or updated with the latest newsletters if still being published.

The Varsity Hall of Fame page includes a link to a blogspot website with news from 2006. This is really out of date now and should be removed.

The Contest Champions page is a duplicate of the Hall of Fame page.

The Club Leaders page lists previous committee members and the club's DCP status.

The Contact Us page goes to a web form which I filled in and sent to find out the speed of response. A reply came through almost immediately which was pleasing to see.

A Google search result for Varsity Toastmasters gave the following #1 result which was good to see:

[Varsity Toastmasters | Club 0680, Area A1, Division A, District 72](#)

Varsity Toastmasters is a vibrant young **toastmasters** club with a mix of university students, graduates and working professionals. ...

www.varsitytm.org/ - 16k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#)

Other search results went to an Auckland University website page with an article about the club.

In Summary, the Varsity Toastmasters Club website is full of useful information, but has some technical issues which prevent it from displaying correctly, and some content inaccuracies. If these issues were resolved, the site could be much improved and could have been a contender for the Best Website Award.

Northside Toastmasters Club

<http://northsidenz.freetoasthost.com/>

Webmaster: Angela Blackwood

Email blackwoods@orcon.net.nz

When typing Northside Toastmasters into Google, the first search result is the Northside Toastmasters Club's Freetoast Host site in Chicago.

By narrowing the search to pages from New Zealand, no results were found. Not being found in Google is now a major barrier to the club for visitors from New Zealand.

However by using the link from the TMNZ Club Finder I was able to link through to the club's website, which is a FreeToastHost site.

The site opens with a photograph of club members. However the home page is very long with a huge amount of information, in capitals, bold, and centred in the content panel. The page was last updated on 22 April.

The Club News page went to a forum which had 3 entries.

The Membership Information page had plenty of useful information for prospective members and how to join the club and what it costs.

The FAQ page was empty

The Club Calendar page was empty

The Directions page gave driving and parking instructions with a map.

On the Meet our Members page were two poorly optimised images of club officers. The text on the page did not match the quality of the images. This page had not been correctly coded as the page title was using default code.

The Contact Us page had contact and meeting information. An email was sent to the email address listed (the generic TMNZ email) for a response.

The Public Downloads page was empty except for the default FTH User guide.

In Summary, FreeToastHost websites are very limited in their functionality and usability. While Northside have attempted to use the FTH template, and do have useful club information on the site, it is my opinion that they should develop a full website and separate the information into a more usable navigation system with better quality images.

Turbine Talkers

<http://www.turbine.wellington.net.nz/index.htm>

Webmaster: Joji Jacob

Webmaster email: joji@ennovative.co.nz

This club website won the Best Website Award for 2006 and 2007, and was on target to win again until I found some out of date information on the Events page, but I had to look hard to find it. I see some Articles have been added, and a meeting debrief. Apart from that not much has changed since last year. The site is still well maintained, professionally designed and interesting to look around.

You just need to do some work on your metadata by adding a better description, and amending the title. This is your Google search results for toastmasters clubs Wellington – ranking #14:

[Turbine Talkers Toastmasters Club - Home](#)

Turbine Talkers **Toastmasters Club, Wellington, NZ.**

www.turbine.wellington.net.nz/ - 25k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#)

Results

The number of submissions for this year's award was very disappointing, even though the competition was promoted throughout the District on several occasions, and considering there are now over 60 club websites. The aim of the contest is to help improve the standard of design and content of club websites, which are now a primary contact point for prospective members, and a useful resources channel for current members.

This award was judged by the District PRO and District Webmaster solely on the nominations received for the following sites:

Kaiapoi

www.ktm.org.nz

Hereford Street

www.herefordtoastmasters.org.nz

Varsity

<http://www.varsitytm.org/>

Northside

<http://northsidenz.freetoasthost.com/>

Turbine Talkers

<http://www.turbine.wellington.net.nz/index.htm>

I am pleased to announce that the winner of the

2008 Dale Hartle Best Club Website Award goes to:

Turbine Talkers Toastmasters Club

Highly Commended: Kaiapoi Toastmasters Club

Comments

Club websites must meet the Toastmasters International website guidelines, and preferably follow the District 72 guidelines as well. These guidelines list the criteria to be adhered to regarding the information and links required, as well as promoting the quality and design of the websites.

Many club websites have out of date content, are poorly formatted, visually unattractive, and difficult to navigate. Most sites do not have a printable version of their web pages, and basic club identification information is missing. What impression is this giving to prospective members and visitors?

With Toastmasters struggling to gain and retain members, clubs must give serious attention to the design, content and maintenance of their club websites as a promotional and marketing tool to our web-savvy audience who do research online before making contact. This is a project in the new Competent Leadership Manual, and is ideal for someone interested or currently maintaining the site to consider developing and promoting.

I have been running Club Website Workshops in various Divisions over recent months, but am yet to see the results of these efforts. I look forward to these clubs having an entry in next year's awards.

Dale Hartle DTM
District Webmaster

8 May 2008