

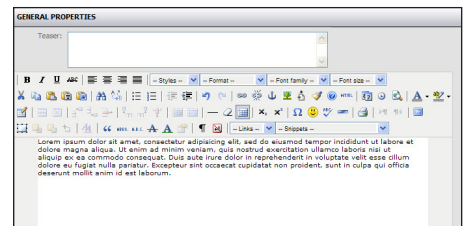
Maintain a Great Website with a Content Management Tool: Top 5 Features for the Non-technical Person

How many times have you stomped away from the computer to comfort yourself with a latte after being unable to find information you need on a website? Even if you already have a website, it could probably use a redesign. A poorly designed website can not only prevent you from communicating valuable information, but also taint your organization with the frustration of a dissatisfied user. On the other hand, a great website is a breeze to navigate and visitors can easily find what they need, leaving them in their happy place. So how do you get that great website for your Community Association on a limited budget? The old adage holds true that if you want something done, do it yourself. There are web content management tools available that allow you to build, edit, and maintain your website completely on your own. No need for fancy graphic design skills or a big budget—communicate bylaws, covenants, upcoming events and general information to residents through a user-friendly website that you can update and edit with ease.

Even a beginner can build a brilliant website if your content management tool has these five features:

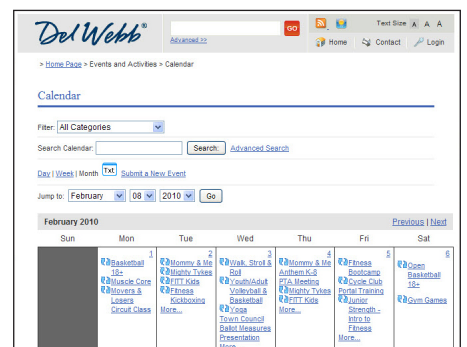
1. Point-and-Click

A web content management tool should be *easy to use*. We don't mean easy for a web developer—we mean easy for a non-technical person with no HTML knowledge. The best way to push the easy button is to find a tool that resembles Microsoft Word or any basic word processor. Even though you will be operating a new program, you can use the same mouse clicks to achieve the same results. Highlight text, insert pictures, change fonts; your website management tool should have familiar icons and command keys that are intuitive to you. Once you make additions and edits, changes should update in real-time. Click "save" and you're off to the races! The program responds by instantly updating your website. Without incurring any costs to outsource design, without having to bring in an HTML expert and without wasting time trying to navigate around a foreign system, you will see your website spring up through the magic of your own two hands.



2. Out-of-the-Box Templates

Rule Number One with websites is to *keep content fresh*. Visitors will consistently return if your content is new, useful and (dare we say it) fun. You can accomplish this by investing in a content management tool that is not only easy and fast, but flexible as well. The tool should be versatile enough to create a website tailored for your association—avoid any programs that force you into a pre-set format with no room for personalization. The program should include a variety of templates: surveys, web forms, calendars, events pages, FAQ's, "what's new" sections and advanced search options. Your website is an opportunity for you to take a page out of your mother's book and sneak vegetables into the mashed potatoes. In other words, interesting, attractive web pages will get your residents to read something they might normally dismiss in a printed newsletter. When you go "out-of-the-box" you can get creative, communicating and collecting the information you want in limitless ways, keeping it fresh.





3. Resident Interaction Tools

How often have you heard the term “*interactive*” to describe a product feature recently? It’s the new black! From the Wii to restaurant reviews, people expect and need to interact online and that holds true for your website. A content management tool should allow residents to submit feedback, ask questions, and post in a forum or message board. This open online communication can be provided through interactive online forms, resident request tracker systems, RSS feeds, blogs, e-commerce and e-mail notifications. Residents will enjoy having a voice in the community—meanwhile your life just got a whole lot easier because you have information at your fingertips in a centralized location. No need to rely on letters scattered about your office or the spotty memory of a phone conversation. It’s all right there online, your website acting as a two-way street of communication.

4. Security Controls

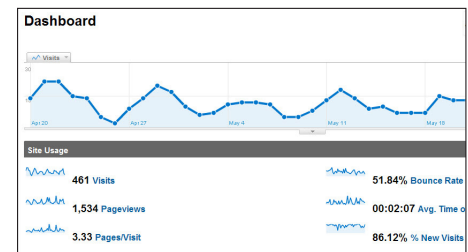
We’re guessing that as part of a busy community association, you probably don’t have time to spitball ideas and develop all of the bells and whistles you want on your website. With the right content management tool, you can *assign responsibilities*—author, editor, publisher—to your team and still keep an eye on the big picture. Whether you are delegating to a fresh-faced volunteer or to your right-hand man, you will be able to grant specific levels of access to individuals or groups and still retain version control. Keep in mind that your web management tool should also include automatic tracking, history and audit trails.

VERSION	TITLE	SUMMARY	LAST MODIFIED	BY
Version 17	Contact Us		Fri, 18Dec2009 11:36	vincentm vincent.marta@activenetwork.com
Version 16	Contact Us		Tue, 15Dec2009 10:21	vincentm vincent.marta@activenetwork.com
Version 15	Contact Us		Mon, 13Oct2008 11:13	jake.cooney jake.cooney@active.com

5. Built-In Analytics

How do you know if your website is as good as you think it is? To get a grasp on what is and is not working, you need a content management tool that includes website metric reporting. Make sure you will be able to *track important stats*:

- ▶ New visitors
- ▶ Returning visitors
- ▶ Unique visitors
- ▶ Number of page views
- ▶ Most downloaded items
- ▶ Average visitor time on the site
- ▶ Ranked popularity of pages



Metric reports allow you to make informed decisions about the design of your website based upon actual visitor behavior. Move pictures around, rewrite text and add features all according to what your metrics tell you interests (or bores) your visitors.

Having a great website for your Community Association is incredibly important and it’s time to focus your energies towards creating a portal that will strengthen your community and keep your residents connected and informed. A web content management tool is an easy and affordable way to achieve that goal and the best part is you can do it all yourself.