



Website EVOLUTION

A website is an online bank in itself and not just an extended operational tool. Aamir Ayubi presents the views of two online marketing agencies.

Gone are the days where we used to stand in a line at the bank's counter for all our transactions. But when there is no human interface, the website needs to be fully equipped to provide all relevant information to the customer and make him keep coming back. Banks' business is dynamic and ever growing, and the customers are evolving with a unique online behavior with a distinct online need. Most of the banks have specialized interactive marketing agencies to design and manage their content. In the case of PSU banks, tenders are floated and vendors are chosen according to procedures.

PRE REQUISITE FOR SUCCESS

Today, the websites are no more an online corporate brochure. Banks websites offer all the operational amenities at just a few clicks and are looking forward to sell their products and deliver services through their websites. KK Majumdar, Director of Chic Infotech with clients like Bank of Baroda, Bank of India and Union Bank of India opines: "During the designing stage of a website the bank should know the target audience and its needs, a web policy for website's governance, Content Management System (CMS) and most importantly, the best security features enabled.

Priti Jhavar, VP & Director – Client Servicing, Indigo Consulting with clients like HDFC Bank, HSBC Bank, Axis Bank, etc states: "Our requirements analysis stage involves probing in to the specific objectives of the website design project – it involves

understanding of the client's business and the brand, their current standing, their current online presence-what works for them and what doesn't, how market trends have shifted, their existing technology systems and how they can be integrated in to a seamless user experience, and accordingly approach the website design. Defining

the performance evaluators for the online initiative is also critical, as that it what will define the success of the project undertaken." The interactive agencies inculcate the brand identity of the bank in the color scheme of the website and the content depends on the digital objectives. Also, browser compatibility needs to be addressed due to the availability of multiple browsers.

CONTENT AND POLICY

The content and its presentation of any website form its core and will keep getting the customers back to the website. Majumdar points out: "In simple terms content can be divided into two, one which is created by the bank and the second is created by customer through the browser. In a bank, there should be a webmaster and a team of people at the top who establish the overall bank web design and policies, arrange the necessary technical resources (working with the people who provide the bank its network infrastructure), and supervise the design of the bank's website which is often done by an outside firm like ours. Banks are coming of age and realizing the importance of the website as an asset for daily operations and customer interaction and over all cost effectiveness."

A lot of banks don't have a dedicated web team. There should be web policy which needs to be integrated with the overall corporate policy simply because online banking generates revenues for the banks and it needs to be addressed. When the web policy is in place then the content and its management becomes very smooth for the vendor as well as the bank.

CONTENT MANAGEMENT

Managing the content is an up hill continuous task. There are some sections where information needs to be updated on almost daily basis. Also, the website has to be monitored and evaluated on a constant basis for which potent Content Management



KK Majumdar emphasizes that banks need to have a web policy which should be their 'Must Agenda'



Priti Jhavar reiterates that choosing the right CMS depends on the bank's needs

System (CMS) are used.

Priti says: "Choosing the right CMS is an important decision for all banks, and this is dependent on the bank's needs - such as workflow management, language capability, ability to integrate content of different types from different sources, product scalability, etc. Another consideration is how well the content management tool fits in to its existing IT infrastructure. The content may be decided on expiry of the existing promotion, promotion of the latest offers, and promotion of the content that is relevant for the bank at that point of time. In our experience, most banks use enterprise products like Interwoven Teamsite, or Microsoft Sharepoint, etc for content management as that gives them the benefit of licenses and product support. We also have a home-grown, custom built CMS that has been used by international companies, including a bank. The CMS supports all standard functions like WYSIWYG editor for content updates, workflow, archiving and roll back."

The customer feedback system should also be kept in mind while choosing and implementing the CMS. It's only through the customer feedback that the website can be evaluated objectively.

FLASH CONTENT

The broad view of the agencies is that Flash related promotions should be used in the homepage as it catches attention immediately. Priti remarks: "Flash promotions on the homepage are changed often; the frequency differs from bank to bank. It could even be as frequent as every day, basis the bank's priorities and digital marketing calendar. Some banks may employ tools and techniques that allow

automatic updates on a daily/hourly basis." Whereas Majumdar disagrees: "Flash content should be used sparingly. The websites need to be light and fast to load even for a user who has a slow internet connection. But it depends on the banks' promotions going on at that moment and its overall web strategy." We observed that most banks websites have Flash content on the homepage which is mostly used for promotions.

WEBSITE DESIGN AND REDESIGN

Designing any website and not just banks' should be purpose driven. With respect to the design aspect Priti states: "It is important to understand what the strategic objectives of the website, as well as the design are, rather than just aesthetic objectives. We often find clients stating 'our current website looks too old, we need to redesign'. We urge them to enumerate specific objectives like, target users and their needs, websites

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attunement to ever evolving technology, presentation of content, the bank's objectives of the website as a channel and evaluation criteria of success of design. Most important question is whether the website will enhance or undervalue the overall brand perception?"

Answers to these questions help understand the objectives for the design, and devise the most apt solution for the bank. For example, user behavior has evolved and users today express themselves through blogs, wikis and social communities. Banks would benefit from making social media and user generated content a part of their digital strategy to keep up with evolving user needs and behavior, and new technology.

Similarly, while defining target users, it would make sense to define, segment and target each group of users through the website content and features. The content

features and functions offered should fulfill the needs of the all defined target groups.

NAVIGATION

It often happens that the site navigation is cumbersome as the panels are not clubbed logically. Every bank follows a different pattern for grouping of panels. For example one bank may place the Debit cum ATM Card panel under the Savings Account tab and the other may choose to place it under the Cards tab. As long as it is located, it is fine with the customers, but site navigation should be designed by always keeping the user in focus. Priti explains: "We are the first and perhaps the only digital agency to have a separate User Experience Group, called UX Labs. This group comprises of experts who specialize in human-computer interaction, and engage scientific methods like card sorting and usability testing to group and validate the information architecture and navigation. These methods benefit not only the broad site structure and navigation, but also content presentation, page level interaction, and other detailed design. As a result, we are able to build a robust site, not only on basis our considerable experience and expertise in building banking websites, but also basis user inputs."

REVAMPING PSU BANKS WEBSITES

Chic Infotech's earliest clients were PSU banks. Majumdar feels a certain comfort dealing with PSU banks and ever since they only have PSU banks as their clients. Over the years they have excelled and the expertise is vouched for by their clients. Majumdar observes: "Earlier the banks' websites were static and were nothing else than an online brochure. As a result banks have revamped their websites and the new banks make sure that the website is interactive and user friendly. As we only cater to the PSU banks, we have implemented an option of a multilingual website. Bank of India is one of our clients whose website can be viewed in Hindi and Marathi apart from English. The reason being PSU banks have many customers who are net savvy but may not be comfortable with English content." This customer friendliness is the advocacy of the PSU sector of India.

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