

Put Some Teeth into Building Online Communities

by Andrew Webb, Director of Internet Solutions

How many points of interaction can you give your site visitors? Plenty.

That's why 'Web 2.0' and 'social media' get so much attention. Potential online tactics for engaging your audience include blogging, polling, forums, rating a product, Facebook, Twitter, desktop widgets... it's a long list, and getting longer. And implementation is getting easier, which is fortunate, because your visitors, as they catch on to the social media trend, tend to expect more.



Just the other day, YouTube became the second-largest search engine behind Google – bigger than Yahoo, MSN, or Ask. Yet even in Internet terms, YouTube is a young company. Its success results from providing an interaction point that, in hindsight, everybody wanted and therefore enthusiastically adopted. And let's be clear: it's also blurring the traditional distinction between content 'publisher' and content 'consumer.' Basically, it's increasingly easy to be both.

To take one more example of **social media**, and how it connects consumers and business: Technorati, originally a blog search engine, now connects blogs and social media sites with advertisers and indexes more than 1.5 million new blog posts in real time every day. Technorati likes to describe itself as 'placing brands at the center of a global conversation.'

Thanks to Web 2.0 innovations, online communities now arise with surprising speed. And while we can't all be as successful as YouTube and Technorati, we can learn some lessons from this measurable phenomenon.

And at Quicksilver, we jumped on the bandwagon and applied social media to teeth.

Social Media and the Academy of General Dentistry

Familiar with the term 'general dentist'? Probably not. But the Academy of General Dentistry isn't exactly small potatoes. 37-thousand members make it the world's second-largest dental association. Dentists certainly appreciate its educational role, but despite having a vast amount of information (or online 'currency') to share with the public, until recently it had absolutely no public profile.

So in 2008, the Academy asked Quicksilver to design a consumer site from scratch – a site with the ambition to become the leading destination for those seeking in-depth, reliable and accessible information about dental and oral health. All in one place.



Put Some Teeth into Building Online Communities (continued)

So that's how
www.knowyourteeth.com
came into being.

It's a great demonstration of how to publish lots of content, make it easy to find, and provide lots of interaction points around content that is, let's face it, of interest to most of us. We all have teeth, teeth have problems, and visits to the dentist's office are a common experience. So we can all benefit from the Factoid of the Week, take a stab at the Quiz of the Week, and download a [desktop widget](#) that will remind us (and family members) of those approaching appointments. The core of the site is the alphabetical topics library, and based on what people read the site publishes a list of the five most viewed topics. There's a traditional newsletter, but there's also a very entertaining blog by the [Dental Maven](#), who in the true spirit of blogging is quite upfront and personal and remarkably entertaining. We built an [interactive Flash](#) to teach visitors how their teeth change over time. And in the Dental Advisor forum, you can ask dentists those nagging questions – like the Mom who wrote that her 3-year-old needed a mouthful of crowns. Was this a good idea, she asked? And she uploaded the x-rays to the forum, where several dentists viewed them and responded.

Truth is still stranger than fiction, and KnowYourTeeth.com is just the latest meeting place online to find it.



KnowYourTeeth.com



The Dental Diary [desktop widget](#)
from KnowYourTeeth.com

Andrew Webb (ironic, isn't it) has been involved with Internet projects since 1995, including experience with strategy and site structure, user experience and creative direction. As director of Quicksilver's Internet solutions group, he manages delivery of integrated services ranging from site concept to construction, hosting and application development.

Quicksilver has been designing interactive websites since 2000 for clients ranging from prestige cruise lines to medical diagnostic companies to associations with business and medical foci.

Click on this link to learn how our end-to-end Internet solutions integrate your strategy with our design and technology capabilities to make your Web presence a highly productive and valuable tool for communications and marketing or [contact our sales team](#) for more information.