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**Date:** April 26, 2014

**To:** Minnesota Swimming Board of Directors

**From:** Sandra Hibbard

**RE:** Web Coordinator's Report to 2014 MN House of Delegates

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The Web Coordinator's primary function is to manage content on the website. This is my second year in this position—and the second year of MSI using the TeamUnify platform for its website.

*Is the need for better communications driving development of the website or is the website driving better communications? With the growth and development of Minnesota Swimming and new legislation and programs being promoted by USA Swimming, the answer is that both are happening.*

Goals for this year were established with the idea that the web would drive better communications by:

1. **Increasing understanding of stakeholders needs** and modifying/developing information and access to meet those needs
2. **Continuing to support meets using available media tools** (i.e. video or webinar tutorials; increasing communications to meet directions and/or about meets)
3. **Refining communications**, including updating processes, promoting underused services, capitalizing on TeamUnify platform, and incorporating social media (Twitter or Facebook)

Information gathered at meetings, from emails, analytics, and in conversations has been considered in further developing the website. Strategically using learnings to refine intent in how the website is used resulted in a new page layout that is consistent and better communicates information to users. This, in turn, creates better support to the MSI community for meets, increased awareness, and celebration of successes.

Below are highlights of actions taken that impact clarity and usefulness of information:

- **Page layout with purpose.** Basic page setup now is structured into a two-column format, with information the left side and contacts and linked resources on the right side. While this is still being refined (and doesn't apply to some pages, such as documents), it serves as a foundation for the presentation of an increasing volume of detailed information.
- **Document management.** Due to the volume of available downloads of information, "Documents" has been divided into four different subtabs, with sections colored for easier reading. This structure—particularly around meets—will continue to be refined.
- **Emphasis of organizational initiatives.** New main web sections/pages—such as Safe Sport—and new subsections/pages including Concussion Awareness and Core Values have been added to help promote USA Swimming and Minnesota Swimming initiatives.
- **Increased promotion of initiatives and events.** The website not only is a management tool for information, but also a great promotional tool. Of note:

- ***New content and information*** are advertised up front and center via the slide show, with links to pages if applicable (i.e. virtual lost & found, safe sport, core values). Office closures also are announced in this manner.
  - ***Upcoming calls to action*** are highlighted using Command Buttons on the front page (i.e. applications due, meetings, safety training).
  - ***“Concussion awareness”*** is promoted on every meet page as well as its own tabbed section and through the slide show.
  - Significantly increased ***“news” items*** include stories about new content and availability of updated information, standout success stories of athletes or clubs, promotion of new initiatives and/or calls to action, and summary recaps of board meetings and legislative changes. Two years ago we averaged 1-2 stories per month; we now average 8 per month.
  - Supported the Executive Director’s initiative to ***incorporate social media*** (Facebook and Twitter and increased use of Google docs) to push links to news stories as well as meet updates—particularly during championship meets. Web analytics provide evidence that during the State Meets traffic was referred from the social media links; this supports use of these access channels as way to broaden the reach to MSI participants.
- **Accessing archives.** TeamUnify archives meet information on each event page. The Board supported a decision not to re-create old meets that did not correctly transfer with transition to the TeamUnify platform (due to accessibility of old times in SWIMS), and to retire the old website platform. Still, TeamUnify’s event management system is cumbersome when it requires multiple clicks and searches to reach a past event—whether a day past or two years past. Linking content to a seasonal meet schedule was discussed but dismissed because of the duplicated work required to access information that already is available. The ***calendar*** now is placed prominently on menu bar next to meets, to enable users to find past meets by opening the month and then launching directly to the event file. This approach will be promoted in the coming months and its success will be monitored in the coming year.
  - **Celebrating success.** A few news stories were created to highlight Minnesota athletes and coaches who have had successes on the national/international level. *(I am hoping to expand news stories on successes in the coming year.)*
    - Top 20-MN by age groups/stroke is being updated twice per season; and Minnesota athletes on the national Top 10 has been added to the MN Records/Top 20 page (under Athletes).
    - Kate Lundsten provides new records as they are reported; these are being updated approximately 20 times/season.
    - A new page has been developed to promote appreciation of various award recipients (ConocoPhillips, Simpson, Officials, etc.); it is located under the About tab. This is both to provide a historical perspective of achievement and to show ongoing appreciation and recognition for those individuals who have made significant contributions to the sport of swimming. Other achievements I plan to begin tracking include:

- State Meet team winners (and possibly MRC). *Rationale: Recognizing the team nature of swimming and celebrating success as groups both supports the path on which swimming now is traversing (with multiple championship levels) as well as better positions “teams” to compete with other sports to gain committed and passionate athletes.*
- Minnesota Olympians/National team members. *Rationale: Heroes create personal focal points and desire for emulation; they “legitimize” the support in the eyes of a broader community that may know little about it. Additionally, as Minnesota Swimming develops a promotional policy, it needs to consider the needs and support of and by the individuals who stand out in the sport.*

In the upcoming year, my goals are to:

- **Continue to support meet management** (beyond posting event files).
  - Still searching for a web-capture program that enables clear on-line video tutorials (for example, How To’s for planning, executing, and recapping various aspects of a meet).
  - Encourage support and buy-in for clubs to register with the MSI website and self-manage some of their contact details.
- **Develop a promotions policy** and present to the Board. Initial thoughts are that the policy will include encompass:
  - Events and individuals/clubs that can be promoted as news stories to increase interest in swimming
  - Monetization of club and camp self-promotion
  - Create an avenue for advertising and sponsorships for non-swimming supporters
- **Look for ways to promote MSI** and how it supports members (i.e. a page that summarized grants given or support rallied for various efforts or causes—still being determined).
- Work with Committee Chairs to **keep information updated and timely in all areas**; continue working with MSI Staff and Board to **adapt to changing stakeholder needs** including **ongoing integration with Facebook and Twitter**.

Comments and suggestions on the above are welcome. Thank you for your support.