

How a Web Site is *Supposed* to Work

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Introduction

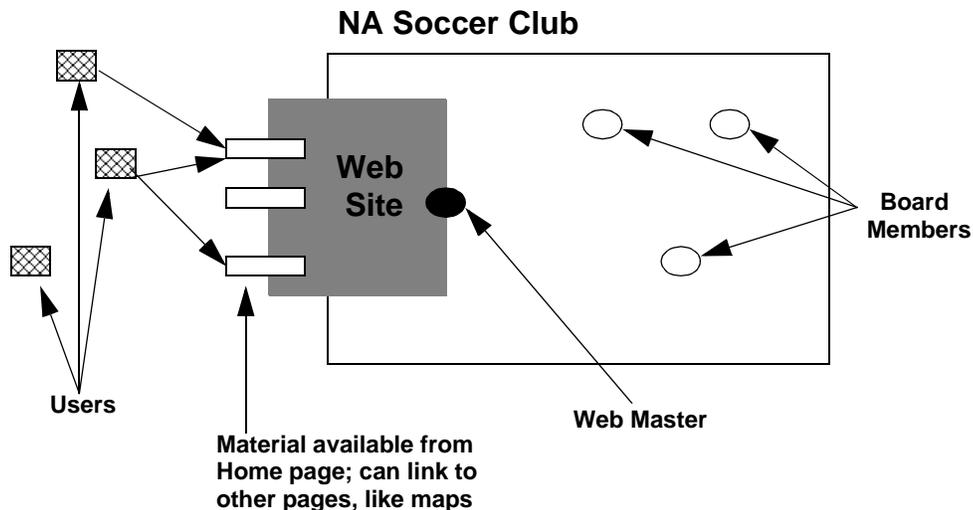
The purpose of this note is to explain how the NASC web site is supposed to work. I emphasize supposed because, it is important for Board members to understand the proper process of how this should be done. In a nutshell, the web site is not the property of one person; it's for all of us!

Overview

I want to start with a simple model that deals with three groups of people:

- users
- web master
- board members

Each of these plays a central role in what we do in creating and maintaining the Club web site. The simple model looks like this



Details

The User-Centric View: A web site, like many computer systems, is developed from the perspective of the users. We need to be able to answer questions such as:

- Who are the users of our web site?
- What information do the users want?
- How can we provide that information to them?

Here is an example of a user-centric process. When the site was first started, I realized that one of things that would be good to have was maps to our fields. How many times have you talked to a coach of another travel team and said: “Well, you go about 3 miles down this road, look for such and such, go about 500 yards, then turn left (I think it’s left; just look for the sign).” There is no reason to have to do this anymore! Instead you tell the other coach to go to our web site and get the map to the field that he needs. So there is one of the users: A coach of a travel team from another Club (or anyone who needs directions to one of our fields).

Here is another example; it’s important because it shows a case where we on the Board are the main user. A while ago we on the Board decided that all coaches were required to sign a volunteer disclosure form. Those forms were collected and returned to us. But we wondered how could we tell if someone had signed the form? Simple: There is a page on the web site that has a list of the names of the people who have signed the forms. So if a coordinator needs to find out if someone has signed the form, they just go to the web site and check.

The last example illustrates an important point. If we are going to require something to be signed it is our responsibility to make sure we adhere to this process. Second, we need to communicate that information to someone to make sure it gets up on the web. In the past few years that has not happened. But it’s easy to fix.

The Web Master: The web master is the person in the Club who deals with the web site on a frequent basis. There are several jobs that a web master has, including:

- architecting and designing the web site
- assist in planning necessary additions/changes to the web site.
- assist and facilitate other Board members to help them create material to put up on the web.
- providing reports to the Board about how the web site is being used.

It is *not* the web master’s job to create all the content that goes up on the site. Note the above words about *assist* and *facilitate*! We have not followed this model in the past except in a few cases (thanks to those who have helped!).

A note about reports: The main information the web master should provide, perhaps on an annual, or semi-annual basis, are site statistics. In

particular, how many times is each page visited? Which pages are visited a lot, and which pages are not visited much (that tells us a lot too!). As of this writing (1/18/2002), the top five pages visited are:

- home page (1390 hits)
- overview of camps (271 hits)
- general map of all fields (265 hits)
- entrance to Board member pages (194 hits)
- how to contact us (164 hits)

Role of Board Members: In a few cases Board members have developed material that has been put up on the web site. When this is done, it shares the load and helps us to better communicate with our members. In this sense the web site becomes a repository of information that is available to all the Club members. The emphasis is on available, through the web. That's why you will hear people say a web site is a shared resource.

We have been lax in the past about the development of policies, procedures, and guidelines for the Board. The lack of these policies has several effects. First, it means new members have a more difficult learning curve to overcome. Second, it means that a new Board member may go off and do something that is against existing policy. Wouldn't it be nice if we had the policies, procedures, and guidelines written down and available to everyone? The web site gives us an opportunity to do this. We owe it to ourselves to do this sort of thing!

I want to offer a simple caveat about what goes up on a web site: A web site is not a trash can! Here's what I mean by this. We all know that it would probably be good to put the registration form up on the web. However, to do this without any explanation does a disservice to our users. They need to know the proper way to fill out the form. For example, if they are registering for the spring, and their kid played on a travel team in the Fall, do they pay the full amount? Just putting up a registration form does not solve the problem. Let's create this site the right way.

We should establish a goal of developing the web site collectively as a Board. No doubt there is information that each Board member can contribute to their own area of expertise. Here are just a few things that I would suggest we need:

- Guidelines for Parents for MicroSoccer
- Guidelines for the Club Secretary
- Generic Club Calendar
- Information for Team Parents

- Information for New Board Members
- Guidelines for Selecting Travel Teams

I'm sure every member of the Board can figure out some relevant material to contribute to the web site. We should spend some time deciding what we want on the site, and how that information will be created (including by whom!). It's called planning!

Summary

Our web site is an important communication mechanism, for how we communicate with all of our members: parents, players, referees, coaches, and so on. It is also an important communication mechanism for Board members.

Just like a good soccer team, it takes everyone in the Club to make a web site a success. Think of the web site as shared between all of us: We each contribute to its collective success.