

2015 Region 9 Website Report

July 2015

As of the writing of this report, I am in the process of creating an updated website for the Region. It is being reviewed for any glaring issues, and we should be able to go live with it soon. The new site will keep the majority of the features from the old site, as well as a few new integrations with social media, a more dynamic format which will work on mobile devices, and an enhanced calendar.

We will need to look at our advertising scheme for the site. It was not a popular option on the old site, so we need to evaluate if we want to continue to offer that option and/or see if we need to make any adjustments to our pricing.

The web site statistics for July 2014-June 2014:

- Total unique site visits: 45,969
- Number of pages served: 680,290
- Greatest site traffic: March with an average of 185 unique visits per day
- Lowest site traffic: February with an average of 103 unique visits per day
- Most visited pages: Judges/TD/L list, Show Calendar, Instructor/Trainer list, Education events, Region 9 Championships, Certified Instructors, and Youth
- The search terms typically used to bring people to the site include: region 9 dressage, region 9 used, austin area dressage stables, austin area trainers, best dressage trainers in austin, dressage texas, emerald classic dressage 2015, houston dressage trainers, how to become a certified instructor, region 9 dressage calendar, region 9 events, region 9 dressage shows

What does this all mean? In short, for the membership base we have, the site does not get a lot of traffic. It's not horrible, but it's not great, either. Considering that our site is a resource for Region 9 information, it's not going to be a huge hotspot of web activity. People come to find a certain piece of information and then from there will contact more local organizations. The good news is that people are staying on the site awhile, so we must have information that they find valuable.

What can we do to make our site more useful? A couple of things. First, I think that listing all the regional recognized shows will be a help. Kind of a one-stop shop for people looking for shows. It would be nice to list schooling shows, but there are SO MANY throughout the region, I don't know how feasible it is to try and tackle getting that information. I'm willing to put them up on the site, but GMOs are going to have to get the information to me, I'm not going to go digging on all those individual websites.

Second, looking at the search terms which bring people to our site - it seems that our visitors are looking for training and stabling resources. This is an ad opportunity for the Omnibus. It is also a benefit to those purchasing ads - get your information listed on the website for the year. My GMO, SEDA, offers a trainer and equine facility directory on our site (\$50/yr gets it listed on the site, in our member directory and our newsletters). It's not hugely populated, but it is a great resource for people coming to the area and looking for stables and/or trainers. I know it gets used. On the Region 9 site, we can expand our offering of that ad space (a listing) outside of the Omnibus as well. It might be another revenue generation tool.

Third, we need to encourage all the GMOs to cross-link their websites to Region 9. Cross traffic is a great way to generate traffic to our site.

Fourth, with the new format of the website, it lends itself to offering a blog. I would like to see if we can encourage a different GMO each month to submit either an article from their newsletter or a message from the club president (or someone!) that we can post on the site. This will give us fresh content every month. Fresh content keeps people coming back. Plus, it's a great way to share experiences and ideas from around our region. Our region covers a great deal of territory, so sharing articles like this is a good way to help shorten the distances and make us feel more like we are in this together.

Fifth, and I admit that this is on my 'wish list', I would love to see a photo gallery with images from events happening around the Region! I would need people to send in photos. This is like pulling teeth, so it's on my 'wish list'. But, it's also something that site visitors enjoy and would increase interest in our site.

Along with the website, I send out the monthly e-news. This comes out around the 15th of each month. Current statistics for our e-newsletter:

- We have 460 subscribers on our e-mail list, an increase of 6 people since last August.
- On average, 36% of the recipients open the email.
- On average, 7.9% of the recipients click on something in the email.

These are above average rates for a non-profit group like ourselves, so it's not as dismal as it sounds.

What can we do to increase our click/open rate? This is hard to say. A lot of people are simply overwhelmed with content in their inboxes, so they don't look. Some are not interested. Some never get the email because it's filtered out by a spam blocker or settings on workplace servers. Some things to consider: If we are able to offer a 'blog' on the website, that content can be included in the e-news; a monthly message from the Regional Director or some other Board person could encourage a look because that information is not available elsewhere; featuring a particular Omnibus advertiser each month could be a good key.

I'm happy to include more content, but I have to receive it! I am fairly out of the loop as far as what is going on elsewhere in the Region, so I have to rely on other people to keep me informed.

And then there's the Region 9 Facebook page!

We currently have 728 followers on Facebook. I link our monthly e-news to the Facebook feed so that information gets disseminated in that format as well. Nearly every day I share articles from other sources on Facebook (USDF, Dressage Today, TDF, and many others) if I think the content would be of interest to our followers.

What would make our Facebook page more useful to our followers? Utilizing content from the website when we get it and member-submitted photos are always fun for people to view. If there is important news from around the Region or time-sensitive information (cancellations, exciting

news, deaths, etc) I can share that on Facebook for a more immediate response than what will be gained from the website or e-news. Social media is a great tool we can make more use of.

When all is said and done, we are doing ok from an electronic perspective, but we could do better with some collaboration from throughout the Region!