

newsletter

22 Ways to Increase Usage of Samaj's Websites

Every Samaj's Moral Responsibility - Be The Beacon Of Information And Guidance!!

The Hindu Culture is very rich and well documented, however we often find that there is a **huge lack of 'good' information** that promotes the Hindu way of life in a correct manner and particularly in a way that is woven by a Samaj's norms. The available information, often found on websites lacks proper credence and authentication and can be totally misleading and worst misguiding.

The other concern is that a direct translation may not do justice to the script as it may have been translated by people who may have skills in one language and not the other (*Hinglish rather than English*). This often results in the reader getting more confused, often rubbishing the information and distancing away from an important and relevant cultural fact, which is quite simply dangerous.

A Samaj (including a Mandir/temple) are therefore best placed to provide credible, reliable and authenticated information which is closely woven in the fabric of the Samaj, it's values, culture and objectives. A good, informative, well designed and easily accessible website will aid this process immensely. There are other benefits which accrue as a result, cohesiveness, transparency and accountability to name a few.

Listed below are ways that increase website usage, which all will contribute towards the **key objective - promoting the Samaj - in a meaningful and profound manner.**

1 Get found - A good website will always be found. Search Engines like Google, Bing etc. use a series of attributes such as meta tags, keywords, back-links etc. to evaluate a website's ranking. Good **SEO** techniques therefore must be an integral part of any website strategy. These attributes are relevant for 'local' and small websites as it is for larger ones.

2 User friendly design - Google has recently announced that it is able to judge a website content by 'user experience'. This is measured by the time users spend on the website. A good visual design and use of simple effective images, good graphics and video are just the starting points.

3 Content - The crucial pages are Home Page, About Us Page, the Services page, Contact and location pages etc., are often the most viewed pages and hence they must be so the can get the visitor to connect. Other pages like history of the Samaj, information about the committee, key projects, key stakeholders, key donors, volunteers and other cultural and religious information form part of what is the Samaj and its roots and are therefore important.

4 Easy to navigate around - Once on the site, information must be easy to get to or find. Links between pages and other pages on the web will help visitors, as they spend more time on the website.

5 Keep the visitor engaged - Offering something in return (referred to as a hook), this can be a free newsletter, future programmes etc., which they can download in exchange for email details. The email list then can be used to pro-actively send information back to the visitors. This improves relationships and the reach of Samaj.

6 Live telecasting of events - It is reassuring for those who cannot visit events and can now be part of any festivities sat miles away.

7 Information about regular activities - such as a weekly Hanuman Chalisa or Jalaram Prasadi or even a Pensioner's Club meet. Activities help create a positive foundation of a Samaj's purpose Pensioners' Club meet etc.,

8 Member's area - this gives the visitor a 'sense of belonging'. Samaj's aim is to convert visitors into loyal members and to make them an integral part of the Mandir's activities. Membership also means providing more access than a regular visitor - so

information is available to the membership irrespective of where they live. Membership doesn't have to be paid. A good programme will actually reduce the administrative burden of committee members.

9 Involve People by creating a testimonial/ comments area. Testimonials are very powerful social proof, hence videos, audio and written testimonials are becoming essential ingredients in a website strategy as they tend to be 'independent' and hence weighs a lot higher by Search Engines.

10 Volunteer's area and register - Volunteer opportunities should be clearly listed so anyone who is interested is able to get involved. A separate register can also prove to be an immense resource (like a form of additional membership) and if maintained it would be like contact at a touch of a button to ensure Samaj activities are adequately covered during peak and even off peak periods.

11 Opportunity to keep keyholders informed, particularly for larger projects. It always is gratifying for donors to know their contribution is being utilized and serves as an encouragement to contribute more. Regular images and updates would encourage readers come back looking for progress.

12 Contact details with photographs, short biographies including personal interests (hobbies) makes committee members sound like real people. Visibility and accountability are key to building trust and rapport.

13 Collect donations online - It is now easy to get the extra help and financial assistance online. Yes, there is a small administration fee, however, all the detailed recording and receipting is done automatically.

14 Authenticated source of Culture and Religion information - Providing good information about culture and religion ought to be a primary objective and in our busy lives, individuals do not have time to investigate, understand and provide correct and useful information to promote our true heritage for the visitors to understand the values so enshrined in Hinduism.

A good website can aid this process immensely - it becomes a central depository of authentic information. This library provides reassured facts at easy access and constant use will reassure a deeper understanding and a true feeling of belongingness for the reader.

15 Blogging – This extends the engagement with the community by giving opportunity for people to participate by writing short and relevant articles. On most matters, there are always a lot of views, the more that are aired and discussed, help gain an appreciation and often a deeper understanding. This process also nurtures hidden talent of writers, giving them a platform to express their views beyond the small community around them.

16 Mobile friendly – Google's new mobile-friendly ranking algorithm that's designed to give a boost to mobile-friendly pages in mobile search results. i.e. the content is set up so it can be read properly using mobile phones or a devices like iPad or PC tablets. It may seem irrelevant, however, there is significant growth in people accessing information whilst on the move, so a Samaj website that can be seen properly on these devices is a great advantage.

17 Social Media – The latest statistics suggest that on average each person spends about ½ hour on their Facebook pages every day with other Social Media platforms like Twitter and Google+ amongst others getting equally popular. A supportive Social Media is an integral strategy for any Samaj.

18 Historical reports and media gallery – A central record of events is proof of work that the Samaj has done and it makes it easier to accept the transparency and competence of its committees. Visitors can share this with their friends and family.

19 Opportunities for businesses – banner advertising is a popular method, these sponsored links can be 'monetized'. The commercial reality is that, businesses benefit from contacts sent directly and if set correctly ought to share some revenues with the Samaj. It must be made clear that the Samaj doesn't sell or promote products, but acts as the channel which does. There must be strict guidelines from the onset and the project must be commercially prudent benefitting all parties - the advertiser, visitors and the Samaj.

20 Websites need to be interactive – Members could also be allowed to upload images, videos, articles and even comments. So, a personal event celebrated at the Samaj – say a Hanuman Chalisa or a katha gets on the Samaj's website – providing links to members who will forward these to family and friends and provide positive feedback of the Samaj's activities

and make people aware of their other activities. These has to be stringent guidelines to the content and uploading with verification and acceptance only by those who have adequate permission to the back end of the website.

21 Links to other websites – encouraging the Samaj's website to be used as a gateway. News channels, radio channels are perhaps the most obvious ones. These don't have to be restricted to local radio or news channels, you could be linked to any part of the world quite easily.

22 Information links - Accessing Gujarati or Hindi portals and other sites on health, education, pension provisions etc., through your website - a central portal geared to catering specifically of the reader. all links that would provide information with easy to access information.

Today, the environment has become highly competitive and 'battles' are fought each day for extra visitors, and extra monies - even for Samaj's (Temples too). The investment tends to be quite heavily in good buildings and exceptional facilities.

The focus on spreading the message is more important than ever before and a good website is one powerful, easy and cost effective way to promote a Samaj and its activities.

How Evolution can help?

The team at Evolution Print have been serving Hindu Associations over 35 years and are here to help. We are convinced that every Samaj (as well as Mandir) should have an up-to-date communications strategy and be able to relay clear **MARKETING** messages to their readership, which includes:

1. Good Website.
2. Good newsletter(s).
3. Regular publications.
3. Regular promotion of activities.
4. Reports of activities and programmes.
5. Acknowledging donors and well-wishers.
6. Acknowledging volunteers.
7. Acknowledging office bearers.
8. Acknowledging other key stakeholders.

See something of interest?

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