



Your website is the single most important marketing element for getting the word out about your affiliate.

Many of our affiliate websites were designed over the past 3 – 5 years with very different objectives in mind at the time. But, much has changed since then: social media, a better understanding of search engines, blogs, mobile devices, visitor online behavior and the number of different communication channels that individuals are sharing information on today.

While all of these things are important today, it may helpful to begin the redesign process by considering the primary use of your website.

## Uses for Affiliate Website

- Marketing tool
  - To retain members
  - To engage new members
- Create impression

Your affiliate website is a useful tool for **retaining your current members** and for **engaging new members**.

Yet, it's important to remember that you've only got a few seconds to make a good **first impression**.

Let's stop for a moment and think about what happens when you meet someone in person. You might make up your mind up quickly about the individual, particularly if it's a bad impression. Yet, common courtesy and etiquette may keep you engaged with the individual for longer than you intended.

However, if visitors to your affiliate website get a bad first impression or can't find the information they're looking for, they click off of your website in a matter of seconds.

## Define your website goals

- Inform members
- Educate public
- Increase visitors



Image credit: [http://www.dch.org.uk/001\\_network\\_members.htm](http://www.dch.org.uk/001_network_members.htm)

As you redesign your affiliate website, you begin by **defining the goals** and objectives for your website.

One goal might be to **inform your members** and tell them about conferences, workshops, awards and scholarships that are particular to your affiliate.

Another goal might be to **educate the public** about FCS in general and about what your affiliate can offer – perhaps speakers and content experts for workshops.

A third goal – common for all websites – is to **increase the number of visitors** to your site.

## Assess your website

- Content
- Web pages
- Links




Image Source: <http://imgur.com/9w4eq>

Protect the existing assets of your website, particularly the content and links that are driving current traffic and leads on your site. The process for assessing your website includes:

First, **review the content** on your site. Create a map of your website that includes the content of each page and how they link together.

Next, consider how many **webpages** you need and how much clicking is required to get to the information. Obviously, you don't want to bury the information. Rather, you want your visitors to use as few clicks as possible to reach the information.

Lastly, consider the **links** you provide to other websites. As a rule, the fewer links, the better. It's difficult to maintain those links and keep them current. It requires you to check the links periodically to ensure that they are still viable. You might want to reconsider providing a "resources" page. Consider how people search today; they use a search engine, not your list of resource links.

## Avoid Common Pitfalls

- Flash-based animations
- Jargon
- Too many images / clip art
- Long pages of text


As you evaluate and redesign your website, **avoid a few, common pitfalls:**

**Complicated Animations/Video** – Flash-based animations can be bad for search engine optimization, but they can also complicate the website experience for visitors. Remember that when users visit your website, they are looking for something specific. Animations can often be slow to load, which slows down users and can make them abandon your website. Perform a test. Remove your animation for a set period of time and see how it impacts metrics like lead conversion and time-on-site.

**Avoid jargon** – Assuming that visitors know and understand FCS terminology is a mistake. Look through your website and highlight terms that are not commonly used outside of our field. If you aren't sure if a word should be removed, ask someone unfamiliar with FCS if they are familiar with the term. Delete the highlighted words and replace them with more common explanations.

**Images** – Images are important and help to tell a story. However, many websites have too many images. The problem with having too many images is that they can drastically slow down the load time for your website in a web browser. Also, search engines take into consideration page load-times when ranking websites. Keep some images, but go through and remove all images from your website that don't help tell your affiliate's story or message. And, it's a good idea to avoid using clip art on a professional or association website unless, of course, it's the association logo.

**Long Pages of Text** – Research has shown that Internet users don't like to scroll. Having a page that is full of text and graphs that takes several scrolls to reach the bottom is asking for your information to be ignored. The truth is that if you have long text pages on your website, you are probably trying to communicate too many ideas on that page. Read through and ask yourself, "Is this all about one topic?" If the answer is "no," then divide that page into a couple short pages that each contain a single idea. This type of simplification will make it easier for your visitors and search engines to understand what your site and affiliate are about.



## Attend to your website

- Answer emails daily
- Change content frequently
- Check web stats



Image Source: <http://www.ongoinginnovations.com/website-statistics.html>

It's not good enough to build your website and expect that it will maintain itself. Like a plant, your website needs some care and attention so it grows and flourishes. Your initial investment will be wasted if you don't **maintain it**.

### **Answer email at least once a day.**

A good website will have some way of allowing people to contact you with questions. To keep members and visitors happy, plan to answer all email within 24 hours or less. If you don't answer your email in a timely fashion, your members and visitors will lose faith in your affiliate's ability.

### **Keep your website content up-to-date by changing content frequently.**

Come up with a reason for people to visit and revisit your pages and recommend them to their friends. This could be a series of articles giving tips, a blog about FCS, handy forms and "did you know" information, or anything that will make people bookmark your site to come back later.

If you've got information on your front page about a workshop that took place three months ago, then chances are that people are going to think that you don't care about your site and are less likely to trust you. Make sure you take down out-of-date information as well as adding new information.

### **Check the statistics** on your website – there's more to it than just how many hits you get.

So you've got yourself a website. But how do you know how well it is doing? Your web stats will give you information about how many people visit your site. This is a useful starting point but visitor numbers are only the tip of the iceberg. Details of the search keywords and phrases that people are using to find you and information on how long they stay on your site and how they navigate around your site will help you adjust your site to get better results.

Make sure that your website re-design enables you to measure and analyze your traffic, page views, leads, and conversions. If you want to see if you are meeting your goals and objectives you have to be able to analyze, adjust and improve in order to consistently meet your affiliate's needs.



Let's discuss what might be some of your **affiliate's website needs**.

As you consider your service provider, it should be a company that allows you to **develop a customized website**.

One of the best ways to attract visitors to your website and capture them as leads is to create targeted, interesting content such as webinars, videos, whitepapers and e-books. It takes more time and resources to create these advanced content types, but the payoff can be dramatic. Members will appreciate in-depth reports and analysis or the chance to participate in special events. Put content before design. An impressive design is simply not enough to maintain the interest of your audience. Content attracts visitors and converts them to members.

You have full-time jobs, so you'll want to **manage your website with few technical skills**. It's helpful if you can find a company that provides you with a template into which you simply plug in your specific content.

It's important to use a company with a **good customer service** record and support.

As always, **cost** is critical, so it's important to research and compare the monthly costs for maintaining a website.

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Redesigning Your Affiliate Website  
Dr. Mary Kay Rhude-Faust, CFCS, NBCT  
PAFCS Executive Director • paafcs@gmail.com



In Pennsylvania, it's been useful for us to **password protect sections** of our website, restricting sections for "members only". It provides people with another incentive to join the Association.

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## Affiliate Needs

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### Accept registrations & payments


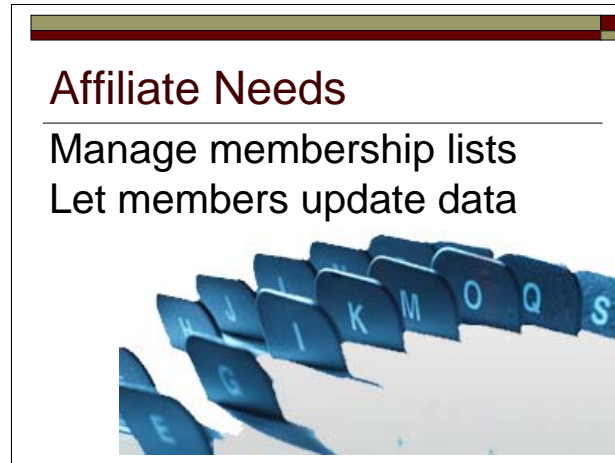


Image Source: <http://www.mattabraham.com/wordpress/>


You may want a web service that provides a way for you to **accept registrations and payments on line.**



**Affiliate Needs**

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- Manage membership lists
- Let members update data



Some web service providers offer ways for you to upload your **membership database** and then **allow members to maintain and update their information**, much like we do in the AAFCS website.



Another way to **make members feel engaged** is if you can offer them a way to **connect with other members**, whether it be through a blog or discussion forum.

## Association Software

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- **Memberclicks** (specialize in small-staff associations)  
<http://www.memberclicks.com/>
- **Other examples**
- AMO <http://www.associationsonline.com/>
- Computility  
<http://www.computility.com/index.php>
- Membee <http://www.membee.com/>

There are many companies that offer software for Associations. We use Memberclicks.

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Samples of the PAFCS website to highlight:  
Up-to-date home page that is contained on one screen

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Samples of the PAFCS website to highlight:  
Information is accessible with just one click from the home page

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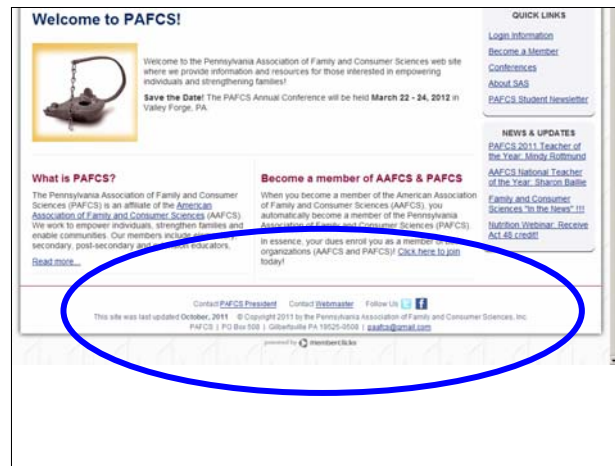
The screenshot shows the PAFCS website with a red navigation bar containing links for Home, Governance, About Us, Meetings and Conferences, and Login. The main content area features the title "PAFCS TEACHER OF THE YEAR (2011) MINDY ROTTMUND" and a detailed biography of Mindy Rottmund. The biography describes her role as a family and consumer sciences teacher at Penn Manor High School, her award-winning program "The Diet Literacy Project," and her innovative literacy approach using nutrition research and non-fiction books. It also mentions her graduate-level training in brain development and multiple intelligences, her collaboration with her partners to create podcasts, and her participation in the "Raise a Healthier Generation of Kids" campaign. The biography concludes with her active involvement in the school year as a class and club advisor and a member of the SAP (Student Assistance Program) team.

**QUICK LINKS**  
[Login Information](#)  
[Become a Member](#)  
[Conferences](#)  
[About SAS](#)  
[PAFCS Student Newsletter](#)

**NEWS & UPDATES**  
[PAFCS 2011 Teacher of the Year: Mindy Rottmund](#)  
[AAFCS National Teacher of the Year: Sharon Balle](#)  
[Family and Consumer Sciences To the Rescue!](#)  
[Nutrition Webinar: Receive Act All credit!](#)

Samples of the PAFCS website to highlight:  
Some pages do contain a lot of text, but those pages aren't on the home page

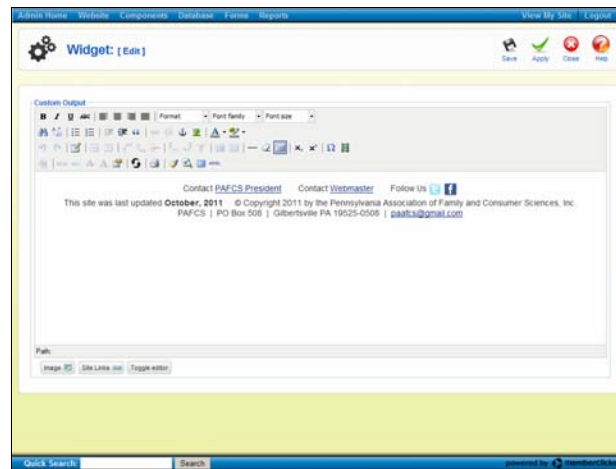
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Samples of the PAFCS website to highlight:


Every page has a way to contact the PAFCS president & webmaster, and includes our mailing address.

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Samples of the PAFCS website to highlight:

The date is listed on each page so visitors realize that the information is updated frequently.



Your Affiliate website  
is the single  
most important  
marketing tool  
for our Association

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