

Survey provides a roadmap for Web communications

The Issue:

As use of the Web by our county-based clientele increases, ANR needs to make our Web sites accessible and engaging. County-based content developers have not received the necessary information they need to determine how clients use our Web sites or how to use the limited space on a home page for maximum impact.

Many of our clientele use UCCE county Web sites as the entry point to information provided by the Division. By surveying these clients through the Customer Carewords Survey, we gained insight into their needs and preferences as well as valuable feedback about navigation and content issues.

What has ANR done?

With the assistance of Bob Johnson Consulting, a team of key Division personnel surveyed our county-based clientele to determine their web needs and preferences. UCCE county offices provided contact information for 8200 clients and sent them invitations to participate in the Customer Carewords survey. Our clients responded enthusiastically, and at the end of the survey period we had achieved a 12% response rate.

Through survey results, we learned that our clients come to us for information on pest management more than any other topic. Home gardening topics also ranked high; and home gardening topics had high crossover interest with nutrition topics. Interest in the 4-H program ranks high but is a distinct interest area, with little overlap into other areas.

Another notable finding is the confidence our clients place in the accuracy of our information. They express high satisfaction with search returns, but ease of navigation is mixed.

Words that resonate – but much more

The Payoff:

We now have a better understanding of how our clientele use our county Web sites, and the information they want. Armed with this information, county-based Web content developers can make informed decisions about how to better engage clientele through the placement of key information on their Web pages.

While the Customer Carewords results are noteworthy, issues and findings *around* the survey results are perhaps more significant.

- ☑ **The Power of Collaboration.** The survey results clearly point to areas of customer interest across our organizational boundaries. Creation of “content pods” or “public workgroups” for areas where content is similar would allow for collaboration across counties and serve crossover interest areas. We can pool our resources to create areas of common content – expanding the reach of our advisors and specialists.
- ☑ **One size does not fit all.** Our clients would be better served if we separated internal division information from content for the public.
- ☑ **Build online communities.** The needs of those participating in the Master Gardener and 4-H programs have more in common with social networking sites than

information sites. The Master Gardeners and 4-H members use the sites to communicate with other members, to check in on activities and deadlines, log in their hours, as well as get information. Their interaction is more participatory than information seeking – a new model based on this information should be considered.

- ☑ **Address the value of scholarly outreach and publishing on the Web.** Many specialists and advisors feel that Web communication is not valued in academic evaluations. Promotional criteria needs to acknowledge the role and value of this technology in the dissemination of scholarly research.
- ☑ **All of our clients use the Web.** The response rate from agricultural production clientele was not statistically different from that of the other groups surveyed. These results and changing demographics indicate that producers are increasingly web savvy. We should adjust our communication methods to include web and e-mail based communication with all of our clients.

Visibility for Viability Customer Carewords Research Background

Caveats:

The survey results **do not** imply programmatic priority.

This was a survey of clients who use county-based UCCE websites as an entry point. This survey did not measure content-specific sites such as the Sudden Oak Death Mortality Task Force site, workgroup sites, or statewide program sites such as IPM.

The findings are a guide to how UCCE offices can better use the limited space on their Web site home pages.

Background:

Purpose

Customer Carewords are words our clients care about; words that our clients are looking for when they come to our Web sites, or use in searches. If we want to create customer-focused content that resonates with our key audiences and stakeholders, we should be armed not only with pencils and keyboards - but with these words and phrases as well. Some Web communications experts believe that we have as little as 10 seconds to connect with a Web site visitor.

We also wanted to start changing the concept of the home page as a place with limitless content, to one where the role of the home page is to deliver a small set of core tasks most important to the primary clients who will use it.

The Team

Three advisors from each region, as well as key personnel from the Office of Government and External Relations, Communication Services, and the Communications Advisory Board served on the team.

The team decided to survey tasks and information themes rather than branding messages. An initial list of 450 information themes and tasks was narrowed to 123 for the final survey.

The Survey

Participation in the survey by counties was voluntary. Results reflect the geographic location of participating counties and the availability of e-mail lists. Therefore, UCCE offices with well developed e-mail lists and programs where e-mail data is collected (such as Master Gardener and 4-H) were more represented in the target survey group. Customers who made a purchase from the ANR online catalog in the past 24 months supplemented the pool of survey recipients from UCCE county client lists.

The team identified two basic client groups served: Those involved in agricultural production (Producers) and the general public looking for information on food, gardening, or family needs (Consumer). The team also identified 6 broad geographic regions as a selector.

Survey takers first self-identified as either a Producer or a Consumer and chose a geographic area. For the Producer survey, respondents further identified in three subsets as primarily involved in: agricultural production, natural resources management, or professional pest management. On the Consumer survey, the three

identifiers were gardening or the Master Gardener Program, 4-H and Youth Development, or “food and family”.

These selectors categorize the results, although the surveys were identical. The survey list randomly sorted for each survey taker, so that terms would not falsely register higher if they were at the top of a static list.

- Period of survey: March 10-18, 2008
- Surveys sent: c. 8,200
- Producers: 401 responses
- Consumers: 634 responses
- Response rate: 12.1%

Key Findings:

- Across the board, interest in Pest Management was the highest-ranking topic.
 - Pest Management crossed all interest areas except 4-H.
 - While interest in “pests” is uniform among consumers and producers, interest is stronger among producers.
- “Accuracy” of content rates high, but people are split on the ease of finding the information they desire.
 - This could contribute to respondents indicating a high use of the “search” feature. Satisfaction with search results was also high.
- Gardening is the dominant topic of consumer interest.
 - Gardening is strong with both the “gardening and “Food and Family” groups.
- 4-H is a distinct group with fewer overlapping interest areas.
- Content interest varies by geography more for producers than consumers.

Recommendations from the consultant:

- Give pest management topics prominent position on UCCE county home pages.
- One size does not fit all.
 - Sort front-page topics easily between consumer and producer information.
 - Sort internal from external information for 4-H and Master Gardener program on county Web site. For employees, sort internal and external information on the ANR home page. The separation of content should also be evaluated in the area of nutrition and consumer science – information for consumers vs. information for educators and service providers.
- Reduce overall front page content to better highlight Top 25% interest areas as determined by the Customer Carewords survey results..
- Use Top 25% content to plan Quick Links and to revise left column navigation links.
- Use Top 25% to plan blog/video content

- Interest in gardening may be a content area to grow the “Food & Family” group.
- Variation of interest topics by regions can guide individual county content and navigation decision-making.

Looking forward:

Carewords research can be expanded to survey large content specific areas such as workgroup and statewide program Web sites.

Top 20 Consumer survey topic results:

Topics	4-H Youth	Food & Family	Gardening & Master Gardeners	Total
Home Gardening (vegetables, fruits, flowers, pest control)	14	52	826	892
Master Gardener Program		13	643	656
Plant management (pruning, training, irrigation, fertilization)	7	6	335	348
4-H (After school, community clubs and programs, youth development)	286	1	1	288
Organic and sustainable agriculture (farming, innovations, landscaping)	24	9	246	279
Pest management (least toxic options, biological control)	2	13	250	265
Best plants for my area	4	11	247	262
Plant diseases	4	2	208	214
Tree fruit and nut crops	3	29	180	212
Pest identification		3	183	186
Vegetables	5	28	146	179
Calendar of events (deadlines, conferences, fairs, workshops)	78	8	70	156
Free publications (download from website)	31	11	112	154
Livestock and poultry (feeds and nutrition, disease and health, management)	114	12	20	146
Water (management, conservation, quality, irrigation efficiency, etc.)	2	3	134	139
Landscape Horticulture/Urban Forestry	8	4	117	129
Landscape pests	2		108	110
Educational tools and online learning	39	6	59	104
Specialty crops (herbs, tomatoes, heirloom tomatoes, Asian vegetables)		16	86	102
Composting (How to do it.)	8	7	86	101

Color key: Yellow = top 25%
 Pink = 25% - 50%
 Turquoise = 51% - 75%

Top 20 Producer survey topic results:

Topics	Agriculture production	Natural Resources management	Pest Control	Total
Tree fruit and nut crops	193	6	120	319
Pest management (least toxic options, biological control)	130	18	100	248
Plant management (pruning, training, irrigation, fertilization)	152	28	41	221
Pest identification	91	10	110	211
Pest control and pesticides (manuals, safety training)	112	7	88	207
Pesticide information	89	17	94	200
Plant diseases	78	24	96	198
Insect pests	75	15	96	186
Water (management, conservation, quality, irrigation efficiency, etc.)	93	45	19	157
Organic and sustainable agriculture (farming, innovations, landscaping)	89	22	20	131
Vines	98		25	123
Weeds (including aquatic weeds)	28	26	66	120
Home Gardening (vegetables, fruits, flowers, pest control)	38	50	26	114
New pests	44	9	56	109
Water issues (quantity, quality, policy, rights, resources)	57	35	14	106
Hot topics (Sudden Oak Death, Glassy Winged Sharp Shooter, Fire Ants, West Nile Virus, Avian Flu)	51	14	34	99
Master Gardener Program	21	33	35	89
Landscape pests	11	24	50	85
Vegetables	51	5	25	81
Invasive exotic plants	10	38	25	73

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Navigation and Content
Consumer Survey Results:

Customer_Centric_Index	Total	% of 2742	Cumul Vote	Cumul Words
Accurate information	343	13%	13%	4%
Helpful search results	305	11%	24%	8%
Confusing menus and links	226	8%	32%	12%
Simple layout / easy to read	215	8%	40%	16%
Complete information	207	8%	47%	20%
Up-to-date information	207	8%	55%	24%
Looks attractive / appealing	202	7%	62%	28%
Plain language	161	6%	68%	32%
Clear menus and links	154	6%	74%	36%

Producer Survey Results:

Customer_Centric_Index	Total	% of 1632	Cumul Vote	Cumul Words
Accurate information	238	15%	15%	4%
Up-to-date information	174	11%	25%	8%
Helpful search results	169	10%	36%	12%
Simple layout / easy to read	148	9%	45%	16%
Complete information	120	7%	52%	20%
Clear menus and links	104	6%	58%	24%
Friendly	84	5%	64%	28%
Confusing menus and links	69	4%	68%	32%
Looks attractive / appealing	64	4%	72%	36%

The full survey results are available at
http://anrcs.ucdavis.edu/marketing/Customer_Carewords_Research_Results.htm