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AV TechSource
Audio Visual Service and Technical Solutions

At AV TechSource, audio visual service is our specialty. We offer AV system design and installation, engineering, control system programming, on-site maintenance and on-site repairs.

For dealers and integrators, we work on an outsource basis, helping you provide a very high-quality product while keeping staff and overhead costs low.

For corporate and educational AV users, we work on a partnership basis with your audiovisual integrator or dealer. We welcome your direct inquiries, but we will bring in one of our strategic partners to provide needed hardware and software, while we take care of the AV system design and installation and the support.

Either way, you can be confident that you will receive the best audio visual service possible. Our engineers and technicians are among the most experienced in the industry, factory trained and certified. We are an Infocomm Diamond Level Solution Provider, an AMX Valued Independent Programmer, as well as factory trained by Crestron, Tandberg, Polycorn, ClearOne, Biamp and other leading suppliers.

We use AV TechSource for Tandberg installation and recommend them to clients when they need help with AMX programming or service. They do quality work and if there's any problem, they'll step up and take care of it.

—Chris Rens, President,
Viste Marketing Associates

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Building Blocks

Creating a new website for AV TechSource.

BY DON KRESKI

So you're ready to upgrade your website, or perhaps you're ready to build a site for the first time. You have a lot of ideas, but how do you go about making it happen?

This month, I thought it would help to look at a website-development project I've been working on recently to illustrate the process. The site is for AV TechSource, a company that outsources skilled labor to AV integrators and contractors. Principals Gary Harling, Ben Barry, and Tom Harm hired me this spring to upgrade a website they had built on their own with the goal of bringing in more business.

STEP ONE: DEFINE THE MESSAGE

AV TechSource is unique in our industry, but I believe if you look closely, any company has its unique aspects that its marketing program needs to define.

When we started this project, I knew the principals all had extensive backgrounds in AV industry service departments, which they had been offering their clients for about three and a half years. Their original website, however, did not make their target market—integrators and contractors—clear. My first task was to nail down exactly what they were trying to accomplish.

“Our feeling is that we can't prevent end users from finding our site, and in fact, it's a feather in our caps to hand a project off to one of our integrator partners,” Harling says. “But [the website upgrade] helped us to state that we will serve these end users in partnership with an integrator or dealer.”

In any web project, defining your focus is a high priority. You can't be everything to every possible customer. Even if you're working for a large company with a wide variety of markets and skills, you need to define what you

The new AV TechSource website (previous design shown inset) was designed to make the company's target market—integrators and contractors—clear and to show how the company is unique in its market.

If you're careful in the planning phases, website programming, like an AV install, should be a straightforward process.

are best at in a very simple way. If you don't, you risk confusing potential clients and failing to give them a good reason to call you. I boiled down our conversations to three simple ideas. First, AV TechSource is all about labor. Second, its primary customers are contractors. Third, it is interested in users—corporations, schools, and government—and the company is able to bring in one of its contractor partners to supply equipment and help complete the project.

STEP TWO: DEFINE SPECIFIC MARKETING GOALS

I asked Harling what kind of business he would most like to see develop if this project were successful. He told me he felt he and his people had done a good job calling on the AV integrators in their core Chicago/Milwaukee/northwest Indiana area, but that there was a lot of potential for work from out-of-state companies when they needed a subcontractor in their region. That work might take the form of installation labor, warranty service, service contracts, project commissioning, or user training.

In addition, Harling said AV TechSource had high-level skills as AMX and Crestron programmers, that selling more programming should be a priority for the site, and that programming was practical to offer to clients anywhere in the country. We thus determined that we would need to market the website on a national basis, but include geographic keywords in pages talking about installation and on-site service. We also decided that control-system programming would be a special priority for our search-engine efforts.

STEP THREE: BUILD CONTENT

As we began to outline content for the new site, we planned the pages and navigation we would need, planned custom photography to show the company's technicians at work, started writing copy for

the site, and started to define the graphic look for the new pages.

Navigation came from the list of services we were promoting, but it was determined in part by our budget and the number of pages we could afford. Copy came directly out of the goals we defined, our conversations, and my own experience in the AV industry. The photo shoot came from a need to show (as well as tell) how AV TechSource is unique. We agreed that I would shoot images of company personnel at a job site, both of technicians at work and of a finished AV system at that site. I was also able to gather project photos from one of the company's customers, Bluewater Technologies, and supplement the custom

photography with a couple of vendor and stock photos.

Once we had the photos and copy, one of my graphic artists, Sharon Ferdinand, worked up three home page designs, and the principals came back with what they liked and disliked about each. Based on their feedback, Sharon worked up a final home page design. Once that was accepted, she started on inside page designs based on the home page.

STEP FOUR: SEARCH-ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

Once we had copy but before we started on the graphic design, our search-engine consultant—Tim Grant, owner and president of lunavista communications in Chicago—worked up a keyword analysis, a recommendation report suggesting changes to our navigation and copy, and metatags and alt tags for each page.

For the keyword analysis, Grant and I worked up a preliminary list of words and phrases describing the work AV TechSource does. Then he ran each of these terms through an online keyword tool, which helped him determine what terms web users actually use in searching for these services, as opposed what we thought they might use. Once he had a list of priority terms he suggested which terms we might target for each page, as well as specific changes to the copy I had written. (See svconline.com/avcontrol/features/searchengine_optimization_1208 for more on search-engine optimization.)

Grant also suggested changes to our navigation and page plan. For example, since control-system programming was a priority in our marketing effort, he advised us to make it a first-level page in the navigation so that the search engines would perceive its importance to the company. He also proposed we add pages for AMX, Crestron, Tandberg, and Polycom services, since each of these brands is frequently searched for by name.

IT'S NOT SO NEAT AND TIDY

In outlining this process, I have to admit that these steps were not as simple or as separate as I'm making them appear. In fact, we went through the entire process at least twice: once as I outlined a general design and budget for the new site, and a second time as we filled in the outline, created content, did the search-engine optimization analysis, and finalized the copy and design. The process is not unlike building an AV system, where you might create a design spec and initial drawings, then go back and do much more detailed engineering once you have the job. If you're careful in the planning phases, website programming, like an AV install, should be a straightforward process.

"It's funny, because I've experienced all of this before," Harling says. "I look back at my days at Midwest Visual, when I was the sole video technician and the sole Apple computer technician, then grew into the manager and added more and more people. We're doing the same thing now at AV TechSource. The website is progressing nicely. I like what we have so far, and I expect it to help us take another step forward."

It's a little early to say how successful the new website will be in bringing in business. You can view the results of this project at www.avtechsource.com. **SVC**

Don Kreski is a marketing consultant who works exclusively in the AV industry. You can reach him at www.kreski.com/contact.html.