New Advertisement Ideas

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BIOGRAPHY
Levent Gurdemir is the planetarium director at UTA Planetarium of the University of Texas at Arlington. He has 10+ years of experience in running and operating planetariums as well coordinating outreach programs. He has been the president of Southwestern Association of Planetariums (SWAP) since 2016. He also served as president in the same organization between 2010 and 2012. He is currently serving in the IPS’s Vision 2020 committee as the head of Goal#5 to provide support and leadership in transitioning to next-generation planetaria design, technologies and content development. Levent Gurdemir has Astronomy and Space Sciences Bachelor’s degree and Physics Master degree.

ABSTRACT
The internet has become an unavoidable technology in our lives. Perhaps you have no interest in using search engine tools and social media for your planetarium. However, popular search engines as well as your visitors (people) are already advertising your facility regardless of your interest. The information they have posted may be inaccurate and you should take the control over before someone else does.

INTRODUCTION
You may not be aware but lot of people find your facility through search engines, get directions, find your showtimes, and contact phone numbers. They even read your reviews before they visit your facility. Search engines have lots of inaccurate listings that makes businesses suffer. Social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Yelp, Snapchat, and many more are also other avenue that people talk and post pictures about your facility. It is important to claim your business name on major social media channels before someone else does and starts posting information for you. Here are some steps to get your internet image started.

I. YOUR WEB SITE
Everything starts with a clear, easy-to-read, responsive website. Here, responsive means your website is being friendly with tablets and smart phones. You need to list your operating hours, showtimes, blackout dates, etc. very clearly as it will likely be picked by search engines and displayed to your visitors.

Every website contains hidden information called tags. Tags are the keywords about the website used by search engines. Search engines use tags to decide whether your website is relevant to the user searching something on the web. Keywords can be something like planetarium, night sky, stargazing, solar system, astronomy, telescope, etc. Properly tagged website is called Search Engine Optimized (SEO). You can test the optimization of your website by running a web search in your local area. Keyword “planetarium” search should bring your planetarium as the first order in the search results.

Your website should also have modern looking and contain pictures from your facility. Pictures that show visitors are most impactful as it will relate the experience. Pictures should be taken with professional camera. Pictures taken with cell phone should not be used on websites.

Moreover, you don’t have to have great website development skills to develop a good-looking website. There are lots of tools available out there. If you are hosting your own webserver, you may want to investigate Content Management Systems (CMS) such as WordPress. CMS is a software that offers you templates. You simply select your template and place your pictures and text to the website. If you are not hosting your own webserver, there are other tools available out there. Wix, Weebly is to name a few.
The summary of this section is:

You need a website that is

1. Responsive
2. Search Engine Optimized
3. Modern Looking and easy to edit/update

II. SEARCH ENGINE LISTINGS

Search engines (Google for example) automatically pick up businesses’ information from websites and publish it publicly. As more users today use smart phones to get information, search engine listing accuracy becomes critical. Search engines may contain wrong information about your location, showtimes, admission price, etc. that may result lot of angry people.

Below is the google listing of UTA Planetarium. It shows pictures of our facility, location and contact information, hours, and reviews. Google even picked a show delay information we posted on our website.

*Figure 1 – Google Listing of UTA Planetarium*

You probably have Google listing for your facility even though you didn’t provide any information. Google picked all the information from your website and created the listing for you and now your visitors can find directions to your facility, your hours and phone number. There may also be reviews from your visitors. That listed is not editable until you claim your business account with Google. There is no cost create Google Business Account to edit your listing. Google will verify your information and give you control of the listing.

Below is the statistics sent by Google the following month after we created our business account with Google. The numbers were shocking.
III. SOCIAL MEDIA

If you don’t have your social media accounts by your planetarium name, you may want to claim them before someone else does, even if you don’t intend to use them. It’s all about the name. Your visitors are likely social media users and search for you on the social media to get connected. Internet pirates claim unclaimed business names on the social media due to potential “accidental” draw. When they reach significant subscribers from your visitors, it brings potential value and price tag to the account.

Major social media outlets you may want to claim your business name are:

1. Facebook
2. Twitter
3. Instagram
4. Yelp
5. Snapchat

Once you created your facility’s account with the social media, accept visitor subscribers and let the number grow. There is significant potential to reach more people using those social media outlets.

IV. INTERNET REVIEWS

Time is valuable and no one wants to waste time by visiting a place that they won’t like. A lot of people read at least a few reviews if they are unsure that a planetarium visit is something they want. While there may be hundreds of websites who posts reviews about your facility, I found Google and Trip Advisor used most for planetariums. You cannot delete or edit your reviews, but you can increase the positive review by encouraging your visitors to leave a review. It would certainly not look good if your facility has low stars on Google and Trip Advisor.

Below is the snapshot of the Trip Advisor page about UTA Planetarium. This page wasn’t designed or edited by us and we have found it while searching our planetarium on Google.
You may also find significant number of personal blogs talking about your facility. They are likely written by people who visited your facility. It is always good idea to do a quick “Google Search” about your facility to find out what people on the internet is talking about you.

V. GOOGLE ANALYTICS

Google Analytics is a free service of Google that allows to monitor traffic to your website. It shows number of people visited your website, geographical location of the visitors, which pages they visited most, and when they visited. Google Analytics also contain information such as how long time your visitors spend on each page of your website.

Google Analytics information may be instrumental to develop a new marketing strategy and track impact of advertisement.

Google Analytics require a piece of code to be added to your website.