

View from the Helm

April 2008 Marine Technology

Web 2.0 – “Steppin’ out” with Social Media

What’s it all about?

One hears the term “Web 2.0” on a daily basis. So what’s it all about? Some have defined this phenomenon as the participatory web, or a transformation to “social media” where people can become easily connected for purposes of interchanging information and leveraging intellectual capital. It is how people are learning to interact – and just speaking with any highschooler today (my 17-year old daughter, for example) will convince you that this is how people will expect to interact in the very near future.

Wikipedia, the free Internet encyclopedia, defines the phrase Web 2.0 as “a trend in web design and development – a perceived second generation of web-based communities of practices and hosted services which aim to facilitate creativity, collaboration, and sharing between users.” I’m sure we’ve all heard about podcasts, blogs, wikis, social bookmarking, online video, RSS feeds and such, all elements of social media which provide enhancements over read-only websites. But, this is only the beginning!

Where does SNAME fit into this social revolution?

Keeping track of members is the core competency of most associations and societies, and now so too is providing members with the tools to interact, to communicate, to learn, to create and to grow together. As I have written before in this column, the Society embarked on a new course to replace our association management system, build a new website and provide our members with the ability to access the Society’s intellectual capital quickly and easily, but also the opportunity to utilize these new social media functions in a way that builds continued member value and member satisfaction.

We believe that if you have enough people responding, they will give you a pretty good indication of what the general population is thinking, so SNAME has opened it up, and you have responded. The new SNAME web-based system will allow for fast technical information retrieval to aid in research, exchange and collaboration, all needs expressed loud and clear from the Member Value Survey responded to in 2006 by 31% of our members.

In February we chose our web system vendor, so as we implement the new backbone system through the first half of 2008, TeamWeb, the group of dedicated staffers at Headquarters, continues to work closely with the SNAME member-users group, or SNAP, that has been helping us both to identify and to prioritize the functionality within

this new and exciting realm of social interconnectivity. This is the ‘architecture of participation’ that I have spoken about before. Now you can begin to see how members might utilize this technology to their advantage.

How do we get started and what form will it take?

As we move toward the new SNAME web-based system there are features that can be introduced as we progress toward our goal. Here are some of our thoughts:

1. While the association software system is being installed and tested, we may soon introduce a trial to help members better understand by actually using the concepts of socialization and interactivity to add content and value to “Abracadabra,” a glossary of maritime industry-centric terms and their abbreviations, started by one member a number of years ago. Watch for this to be introduced in the *SNAME NewsLetter* soon.
2. Another suggestion has been to utilize the SNAME electronic Directory of Members, now simply a “look- up” listing of members, in a new form, called Directory 2.0. Members can create an ad hoc group and invite other members to join. Within seconds they have a platform to discuss thoughts, share images, brainstorm ideas. Imagine being able to connect to members with like interests, or similar avenues of research, or those anxious to work in a collaborative mode to create a technical paper, or through inter-connective creativity, accelerate the path of scientific or engineering concepts from the realms of theory and experiment to practical and measurable applications.
3. And yet a third opportunity may occur in May when the Council meets at Saddlebrook for the purpose of strategic planning. This year it will be focusing on the new Strategic plan for the Technical and Research (T&R) Program, and its implementation to strengthen the T&R program and make it more accessible to a larger segment of our membership. My vision is to begin using the collaborative tools which will soon be available to us. Imagine a T&R Panel or Committee meeting via the web with the tools to bring together the expertise of members from all over the world to create a technical document, prepare a technical report or to conduct a “virtual” meeting. This can considerably improve the level of productivity, involve a larger segment of our member population and draw on the expertise, experience and skills of members heretofore unable or unwilling to participate in the T&R program because of travel restrictions, limitations of budget and/or the inadequacies of long distance communication.

Stay tuned for more news from the Society

I encourage you to read more about this Social Media phenomenon and to help us to provide you, our members, with the necessary tools you will need tomorrow to operate more effectively for the business of SNAME, for the business of the maritime industry and for the business of life.

Please stay abreast of our progress by reading the Society's semi-monthly **SNAME***NewsLetter*, and, as always, you are urged to share your ideas and suggestions by emailing me at pbk@sname.org.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Phil Kimball". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "P" and "K".