

SEARCH CRITERIA

Model	Model D: Information Access
Industry	Rural, Community
Focus/Level	Community, Industry
Approach to information needs	Website
Special Interest Groups	Other

1. PROJECT TITLE:

DPI Website

2. FUNDERS:

Department of Primary Industries

3. PROVIDERS:

Department of Primary Industries

Ice Media (commercial website developer)

4. Key Contacts:

Manager:

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5.INDUSTRY/ISSUE/GEOGRAPHY:

The project's primary target group is Queensland rural communities and all the links in the supply chain from farm to plate including farmers, wholesalers, marketers, retailers and consumers both domestic and international. Other target audiences include community groups and tertiary education institutions that are major users of DPI research output.

The website is focussed on the issue of rural community and industry development and providing the necessary information services.

6. Project Context:

Developed from a pilot project running from 1994-1996, the DPI website was upgraded in 2001 to better handle an increasing amount of often-overlapping information provided by different business groups. Information is accessed either within sections of the website managed by different business groups and built around their web projects or collated via a search of the whole site.

The DPI website is part of a wide range of information and communication services provided to its clients with other services including a call centre, electronic discussion groups, book sales centres, library system and extension officer network.

It is concerned with addressing the issue of providing services for rural community development and to the entire value chain from paddock to plate. It represents a shift within the focus of the DPI information services from dealing with primarily Queensland farmers to dealing with the whole rural value chain.

7.PROJECT NICHE (SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES):

The DPI website will have a major role to play as the current knowledge management initiative within the DPI. It aims to provide a framework and strategy for it to become a knowledge management organisation.

Within The DPI, the specific objectives of the Web Services department and by default for the website are:

1. DPI maximizes efficiency and effectiveness through managing knowledge.
2. Improved departmental online business service delivery and online promotion of corporate expertise and capabilities in research, extension, and business, market and market and trade development.
3. DPI provides products and services of the future.
4. DPI achieves through establishing effective partnerships with industry and stakeholders in value and supply chains.
5. Increased public awareness of Internet resources and their potential in achieving successful business and communication outcomes.
6. DPIs' organisational achievements and outcomes are recognised by stakeholders and clients and community.

8.PHILOSOPHY/APPROACH:

The DPI Website's approach is based upon the information access model which focuses on the growing role of the internet, information CDs and distance learning. It deals with individual information seeking needs from a distance.

9. RESOURCES, MANAGEMENT AND STAFFING STRUCTURES:

In 1996, the budget for the DPI Website project was \$1 million, in the 2002/2003 financial year this budget has been halved. This ever-decreasing budget has meant that the project is currently under resourced in staff and operational dollars.

10.PROCESS/METHODS USED:

Information is published on the website in a decentralised fashion. The Web Services Group provides the publishing and technological framework while individual business groups provide the content for the website. These business groups or units are located across Queensland with an interest in using the web to reach their clients. Since 2001 each has been responsible for developing their own content for the website.

Information is published via 'Web projects'. This means that a designated staff member from each business group owns the project and works with other authors in their group who want to put content on the web. All editing and authorisation of content takes place within the discrete business units. This content is then sent to a manager at the Web Services group who publishes the information and ensures that a consistent quality of content is maintained across the DPI. The web services staff are responsible for assisting authors and project owners with structure, navigation, editing and design.

The web services group maintain responsibility for the system for publishing web pages, its design, structure, navigation and overall useability of the site.

11. IMPACTS TO DATE (AND EVALUATION APPROACHES USED):

Six DPI staff and two commercial consultants conducted a review of the website in May and June 2002. It involved extensive qualitative and quantitative research including in-depth interviews or workshops with 24 DPI staff and 48 clients and survey responses from more than 240 DPI staff and 370 clients.

The review involved six case studies of the DPI website's services to major client groups, two online surveys of DPI staff and clients and two studies of audiences with special needs; the primary education sector and the disabled. Case studies were conducted of internet information provided to the Beef, Grains, Pig, Fisheries and Macadamia industries and to the general public on Fire Ants. The DPI teams responsible for these information services were interviewed in person and clients nominated by them were interviewed by phone. Two online surveys were widely advertised for a month and inputs were sought from DPI staff and any DPI clients who used the internet.

Other evaluation methods included a high school online survey and information searching tests and a disability group workshop encompassing information searching, survey and focus group discussion.

The study found that the website had played an awareness and linkage role for users. Through the website's existence, agricultural, educational and community clients were more empowered through an increased ability to seek information relevant to their own needs.

The review also found that the role of the website emerged as a reference point for clients. There was little awareness by staff/information providers about the users of their information and hence inability to target specific client groups or ensure that information was accessed by specific clients. For clients to see the potential role of this site is to point them towards key research, relevant issues and contacts.

12. EFFECTIVENESS:

The review identified that the site provided an information role across the community including the agriculture, education, government and the general community. A degree of change was not quantified but identified in terms of a more informed and empowered agricultural, community and educational sector through the availability of this information resource.

According to the 2002 review, users are generally happy with the content and structure of the website, more so than the DPI staff. It was also found that although the website offered a number of interactive services including bulletin boards, email discussion lists and events calender, they were poorly used by clients and staff. Web services are aiming to address this through increased promotion and development of training modules to demonstrate how best to use these features.

13. PROJECT DOCUMENTATION AVAILABLE:

Easdown, W. Schmidt, D. Spencer, A. Bell, K. Starasts, A. Meikle, D. Casey, M. (2002) *Review of the DPI Website* Rural Extension Centre, University of Queensland, Gatton.

Gravatt, C (2003) *Web Strategies Response: comments on the executive summary*, Webs Services, DPI

Gravatt, C (2003) *Web Strategies Business Prospectus*, Web Services, DPI

Gravatt, C (2003) *Web Strategies Strategic Action Plan*, Web Services, DPI

14. ISSUES:

There is no clear clarification of the role of this website or its information and no clear targeting of clients or mechanisms through which to become aware of clients information needs. Clients indicated that information was too general with respect to their individual needs.

Clients also identified an emerging potential of this website to provide additional support to declining extension services and to provide additional information to clients beyond what is available through other means.

Researcher note: In support of current extension services, web technology offers potential to target specific groups of clients through the development of specific websites related to these clients learning needs. In this sense, information can be developed and provided that is specific to clients and play a more significant role towards learning and knowledge development.

15. COMMENTS/CONCLUSIONS:

The use of the website as an additional means of publishing the *same* information and the volumes of information on the website create an information system that is difficult to maintain and difficult to define. Clear goals for this website need to be developed within each industry group/department. Clients are looking to the website for new information and pointers to new information resources and contacts. By clearly targeting specific client groups and developing key topic areas (rather than trying to publish everything), this technology could be better applied and used as a knowledge management tool.

16. REVIEW METHODS:

- Reviewing available reports and literature on the project
- Forwarding the analysis summary to project managers and evaluators for proofings additions and challenge
- personal interaction with project managers and evaluators