

Get with the times, get a website

Two rink operators share their website successes and accolades

By Jim Morris

“If you ask kids today how to find a phone number, they are either going to text 411 or go on the Internet,” said Doug Foval, owner of Skate Galaxy in Baton Rouge, La. “They don’t know what a phone book is. So if they want to find out something about our rink, they go to our Web page.”

Foval, who has owned Skate Galaxy for about two years, said the rink had a Web site when he got there, but he’s revamped it.

Foval said the Web site is a “work in progress,” adding, “You have to keep changing it with new things you are doing at your rink. We would like to add some flash pages and music and we need to put more pictures on there.”

Despite his desire to improve the site, his design won the 2008 RSA Kooky Award for Best Web Site. (He also won Best TV Commercial.) RSA sponsors the awards and they are presented at the annual convention. The awards are named after the RSA character, Kooky A. Bird®.

In addition to receiving accolades, Skate Galaxy’s Web site has also saved Foval money. He manages the site himself, and having the site has enabled him to cut back to one phone book ad a year.

One area Foval feels the Web site has already helped is the booking of birthday and other parties. Instead of having to spend large amounts of time on the phone, he directs callers to the list of parties and prices on the Web page. Once the customers have decided on the party he or she wants, they fill out a form on the Web and submit it. Or they can call the rink with their specific needs. Once the rink has confirmed the date, all the customer has to do is send in a deposit and the party is booked.

“Instead of having to spend a lot of time explaining each party we offer on the phone, this saves us a lot of time,” Foval said. “And it gets better results with more information than a long, recorded message.”

Having a first-class Web site is also important to Charlene Conway, owner of the Carousel Skate Centers at Whitman and Fairhaven, Mass.

“We’re very proud of our Web site and what it does for us,” said Conway. “It helps us stay current with technology and it’s become so popular. We receive comments and praise for it all the time.”



Skate Galaxy, Baton Rouge, La., has a graphic intensive, kid-friendly look for their website.

The Carousel’s Web site is loaded with information about both centers, including a detailed map on how to get to each location. It also includes up-to-date information on upcoming events at the rinks and even provides a section on “Healthy and Safe Skating,” including a list of the health benefits connected with roller skating. The idea is to drum up some of the health club business while offering tips to the public on ways to improve themselves.

As an award finalist, the Carousel site had to impress the judges with its upbeat music and flashing promotions. And it contains information to answer every question a viewer might have about the rink.

“A good Web site can save you money,”

Conway said. “It has cut down on advertising for us.”

She also uses “email blasts,” weekly emails to people who have signed up for them, either in person or from the Web site. They serve as flyers, mostly, to promote upcoming rink events.

“It used to be people would call in to ask about something we had planned. So we would stick a flyer in the mail to them,” Conway said. “But now we just tell them what they want to know in the email or refer them to our Web site. So it even saves us some postage.”

You can view these award-winning Web sites at www.skategalaxy.com and www.carousel skate.com.

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