

MBE Profile - PowerI Technologies



When the Marriott hotel in Marco Island needed to create a new Web site before completing a renovation, marketing executives considered their objectives for the new site.

It would have to host new pictures as portions of the hotel were completed. It would handle electronic commerce for room bookings and registration. And it would need search engine optimization to ensure the site came up on Web searches for vacation destinations. And the elements would need to be attractively designed to impress visitors, capture their attention, and entice them to book reservations.

"We needed a site that got out there before the renovation was done, but was able to grow as it neared completion," said Melinda Rhodes, regional director of marketing communications with Marriott Hotels Corp.'s Southeast region office in Plantation.

Marriott turned to POWERi Technologies Inc., a Plantation-based interactive marketing firm that has won clients and awards for its interactive marketing efforts. The firm, founded in 2002 by President David Andrade, put together a Web site that used flash technology that brought motion to Marriott's site.

The company has since earned business from other clients, such as the Shelborne Hotel and the Orange Bowl Committee, as well as ad industry awards for its work.

Most recently, the firm won a gold Addy award for interactive marketing at the regional American Advertising Federation award event in West Palm Beach. That work, a rich media e-mail campaign for a different Marriott property, had earned best of show for interactive marketing at the competition of the Advertising Federation of Greater Fort Lauderdale earlier this year. The entry will now head off to the national competition.

POWERi might have wowed the judges with the flash and panache of rich media, but it's national clients and viewers who are catching on. More than 40 percent of PC users connect to the Internet by a broadband connection. That allows music, video and motion files to download quickly, meaning those elements of flash are enabled quickly.

That has given rise to new flash marketing applications. Recent examples of flash include advertisements for Spider-Man, and a site for Ellen DeGeneres' television show, in which the comic interacts with Web visitors. Flash also includes e-mail messages with embedded animation or audio, or fading of images --all designed to attract viewers' attention.

At one time, Internet executives called a Web site's simple animation and on-screen motion "dancing bologna." Such applications were cute. But visitors eventually bored of the images, leaving marketers to look for more engaging marketing animation or elements.

Beyond the digital imagery and power of rich media, an effective marketing campaign must employ more traditional advertising elements, said Tish Trinidad, vice president of creative development with POWERi. The company typically creates campaigns that use interactive marketing, outdoor and print ads, and other marketing vehicles designed to reach viewers in a variety of settings, she said.

"You have to encompass all of that marketing to meet the client's goal," Trinidad said.

An example is the Web site for the Orange Bowl Committee, the producer of the annual football game, parade and a variety of other events. The committee's rich media site includes promotions, ticket sales, hotel reservations, e-commerce and merchandising to keep visitors and entice them to purchase event tickets or memorabilia.

Rich media helps the committee attract and keep viewers' attention, said Joe Hornstein, media relations manager with the Orange Bowl Committee.

"We're able to generate a lot of business off our Web site," he said. "They've ushered the Orange Bowl into this level of success."

As broadband moves into more homes and as marketers realize they need more creative vehicles to touch consumers, flash apparently will find a home on many marketers' home pages and Internet ads.

"Flash still includes bells and whistles, but if it reaches the visitor, then it's achieved its goal," Trinidad added. "There's a point and message behind the rich media. The possibilities are pretty much endless."