



Affiliate Spotlights

Minnesota Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Website Update Leads to Improved Member Experience



The Minnesota Academy Board of Directors recently decided to update their website, initially designed in 2008. An outdated look and feel combined with inefficient functionality made the decision to update an easy one. One of the challenges faced by MAND was the old website was created on a customized platform by a developer which required edits to be made by the developer. This was cumbersome and costly resulting in updates not being made and content becoming outdated.

Challenges with the previous website

- Lacking a knowledgeable web coordinator resulted in no guidance, too many pages and confusing navigation. No central dashboard to find “members only” content.
- No shopping cart; essential for event and CPE approval.
- A not intuitive email system that was difficult to use.
- The website was a custom-built system so leadership could not research questions on their own.
- The look was outdated. Content did not display well on mobile and was not user friendly on any size screen.
- No social media integrated into the website.

The updated website is now housed on Wordpress which is easier to use and edit. Being a standard platform, troubleshooting is much easier to find without fees of a developer.

Benefits of the new website

- Added social media functionality into the website to connect communication channels and increase sharing.
- Syncing with the Academy database and Mailchimp to increase efficiency of volunteer time, member communications and automated emails.
- Addition of a “Member Dashboard” that customizes the website content for each member and provides a forum for members to interact as a community.

Making the decision to take on a website overhaul is one that requires plenty of discussion by the board. MAND appointed two key volunteers - Sharon Lehman and Debra Zwiefelhofer.

- Assembled a committee to work on the website project.
- Reviewed other websites for ideas including affiliate and other association sites.
- Created a wish list of features
- Collected quotes from various vendors

The Board select Stephanie Hofhenke with String Marketing as their vendor. Stephanie offered the most cost effective benefits. Stephanie took the reins and with the direction from the MN Board built a new Wordpress site. An added benefit for MAND

is that Stephanie works exclusively with RDN’s so she understands members and brings a valuable experience to the planning team. With Stephanie’s guidance, a plan was developed for sorting through content, developing the website, launching the site and training volunteers how to use it. The Board assigned a volunteer as the website “point person” to work with Stephanie as a project manager. The whole process took about one year.

MAND’s recommendation to other affiliates is to find a knowledgeable person to work through the process such as Stephanie did. Having somebody dedicated to the work with a clear plan made the project feasible. Also, the project took longer than the Board anticipated. Allow ample time to complete the project. With any project, funding is often a component. MAND hosted a fundraiser asking members to donate to the efforts. Through small donations of \$5-\$10, \$1200 was raised to fund the effort.

A Communication Director and Website Coordinator work together with the Executive Director to post timely and relevant content and communications. Stephanie provided detailed training via screen share and videos to help volunteers and members learn how to use the site. The new website has become a tool that the MN Board uses on a daily basis. Sharon Lehman shared, “*Stephanie has been an extremely valuable partner. She is so knowledgeable and easy to work with and has made herself very accessible to us. She has been a patient teacher and has helped us to create a website that provides value both externally to our membership audience and internally to manage many of the day to day processes of the organization.*”

Visit the Minnesota Academy’s website, <https://www.eatrightmn.org/> For more information about Stephanie Hofhenke and String Marketing visit <http://www.stringmarketing.com/eatright> to sign up for a consultation (at no cost). String Marketing provides website development as well as logo design & branding services. They work with RDN’s across the country and specialize in dietitians and related organizations.

For more information contact the Minnesota Academy’s Executive Director, Jami Burbidge, mand@eatrightmn.org.

