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Why Aren't You Using Audio?

By Ronni Rhodes

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As use of the Internet continues to grow geometrically, we see an increased demand for information to be provided by a variety of media. Viewing options can range from simple text to PDF documents to video clips. Unfortunately, each option requires more and more resources and technological know-how. As convergence moves inexorably forward, we have to ask ourselves if there is a practical way to combine the best of this technology and still provide the user with a satisfying Internet experience.

The answer, at this stage of Internet evolution, is audio.

Voice, by itself, provides the means to enhance a user's enjoyment of the Internet. Voice conveys many of the intangibles underlying the written word. A voice can touch the human spirit and deliver a message on its' own merits. Audio can build community and maintain relationships.

Audio is the most mature of the streaming technologies and doesn't have the bandwidth requirements associated with video. Any Internet user connecting at 28.8k or better can enjoy FM quality sound without experiencing buffering and other annoyances that can affect video at lower bit rates.

It is common knowledge that people only retain 20% of what they read, but they do remember 70% of what they see and hear. That fact in itself increases the value of an audio message delivered from a website for the typical user. And, the implications of how audio can increase Internet enjoyment for the handicapped are overwhelming.

Why Aren't You Using Audio?

Streaming audio provides Internet businesses with unlimited opportunities to reach their audience and to simplify their interactions. Streaming audio broadens a product's appeal and helps to stimulate sales. People are comfortable with audio and have few qualms about using it in their day-to-day lives.

Retailers can integrate audio into their operations in several ways. Use it to enhance product descriptions and deliver product information in ways far more persuasive than plain text. Booksellers can have "special events" that offer audio excerpts from selected titles. Art dealers can use voice to give value added information on an artist or a period of history depicted by an artist's work. (Think of those audio tours that museums offer.)

Organizations that specialize in selling educational tools can use audio clips for potential clients to preview and evaluate the material being offered. The ability to sample the product is a potent and practical selling aid.

Business-to-Business sites and corporate Intranets can also harness the power of audio. The need to provide up-to-the-minute information for employees and customers can be well served with streaming audio and the telephone. Integrating audio into the corporate communications mix is a tool that is easy to use and addresses the need to communicate with a distributed work force.

In both the retail and business-to-business marketplace, audio can and should be used to maintain those all important customer relationships. Voice messages add a personal touch that intrigues the listener and encourages them to remain on the site.

Employee training is greatly enhanced with audio. Use it to orient new employees and keep the information archived on the site for easy reference. Sales training can also be archived and quickly retrieved when needed. The ability to offer customized audio training materials on a 24/7 basis makes streaming audio a very versatile and efficient learning tool.

Some words of caution are also necessary. Audio, just like any other value-added technology, has to be used judiciously. It should be employed for a specific purpose and to enhance the text based message being delivered. Think of your audience and how you'd like them to interact with your website. Keep in mind that your visitor may be coming to your site while they're at their place of business and plan accordingly.

The future of streaming audio is bright and filled with promise. More and more Internet users have become familiar with streaming audio and use it everyday. Internet radio broadcasts are extremely popular and are now being employed as effective advertising vehicles. Audio e-mail messaging is becoming widely available and is being positioned as a practical business tool. Consumers are attaching audio messages to greeting cards and experimenting with Internet telephony. Streaming audio will allow the average Internet user the ability to create content that conveys the power of voice and the emotions that it conveys.

So...why aren't you using audio?

Ronni Rhodes is the owner of WBC Imaging, an Internet company that specializes in web site

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enhancement utilizing streaming media technology. With her husband, Don, a digital media engineer, they work with companies to incorporate streaming as part of successful and meaningful sales and marketing programs. Please direct all questions and comments to: Ronni@wbcimaging.com 520-742-5780 <http://www.wbcimaging.com>

Audio Books - 10 Frequently Asked Questions - Part 2

By Paton Jackson

The audio books era is already here. I keep hearing phrases like: Audio book rental, free audio books, audio book club, audio books on CD, online audio book rental services etc.

Here are the next five frequently asked questions about audio books (and the answers of course):

6. What kinds of audio books do you recommend to listen to? Listen to audio books that you would read. Meaning, if you like thrillers, listen to thriller audio books, if you are looking for children books, get children audio books etc.

Yet, I suggest you get to know more other successful audio books kinds such as language tutorials and motivation audio books.

7. Are the old fashioned books going to disappear? I don't think so. In fact, I still prefer reading books before I'm going to sleep. The experience is a different one, and some people still prefer the old books. Yet, I believe that the reading habits of most of the world's population will change in the next century thanks to audio books.

8. Can I find any book in an audio book format? Unfortunately not any book could be found as an audio book. Yet, almost any new book and any bestseller from the last century are getting published as an audio book. Most of the old books could be found in the format of books on tape and the new ones as downloadable audio books and audio books on CD.

9. How can I listen to downloadable audio books? You could listen to downloadable audio books using a media player on your desk top or your note book computer. However, most people use audio players like iPod to listen to downloadable audio books.

10. Where should I get my audio books? The best place to get audio books from would be one of the online audio book services.

Paton Jackson is the audio books' expert of 911 corp. Find the best audio books sources and more about audio books on

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and more – The audio book bible

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