

SIPA UK AWARDS 2009

Product of the Year

Celebrate your company's diversity and success by entering SIPA UK's industry awards. These will be presented to publishers or other information providers who have demonstrated excellence in their work in the calendar year January – December 2008.

To enable the judges to make valid comparisons between entries you must:

- Use the correct entry form for each category
- Take care to provide supporting information that demonstrates excellence in each of the criteria

Your details

Name of person submitting the entry	Ali Cort
Your job title	PR Director
Company name	Browser Media
Department	PR
Full address	Suite 4a, Courtyard Offices, Braxted Park, Great Braxted, Essex, CM8 3GA
Direct dial phone number	0207 099 0945
Your email address	ali.cort@browsermedia.co.uk

Details of the person/team being nominated

Name of person or team being nominated	Ashley Friedlein
Their job title	CEO
Department	-

If nominating a team, please provide name and job title of all nominated team members below

Product of the Year – nomination criteria

This award is for a print or online product or an event that has made significant improvements over the last year. It can be a new launch or an existing product. Submissions should demonstrate consistent excellence, reflected by editorial quality and impact, customer satisfaction, innovation and ease of access, and show why the product is valued for delivering quality information.

Your entry must demonstrate excellence in the following areas:

Easy interactivity (if online) (word limit = 500)

Founded in 1999, Econsultancy has grown to become *the* leading source of independent advice and insight on digital marketing and e-commerce. Members include the cream of

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international retail, media, cultural and financial services organisations as well as major government departments.

During 2008, the challenge of effectively and efficiently delivering over 100K web pages led Econsultancy to develop the third iteration of its website. Given Econsultancy's raison d'etre is best practice in digital marketing and ecommerce, the in-house development team were keen to practice what they preach. Therefore the new platform (built using the highly-regarded Ruby on Rails web application framework) does not use inappropriate bells and whistles but is described by CEO and co-founder Ashley Friedlein as, "Doing the basics [such as URLs, information architecture, navigation, site search, forms etc.] 'beautifully'," with usability at its core.

The site's information architecture has been carefully planned to allow access to content via multiple user journeys e.g. digital agency staff and in-house experts. Allowing both *Topic* (SEO/Online PR/mobile internet etc.) and *Industry Sector* (automotive/finance/travel etc.) navigation routes, the flexible platform presents the most relevant and up-to-date content split out between Econsultancy's four main product areas: Reports, Training, Events and Directories.

The new site also enables a greater level of customisation and personalisation to allow the user to tailor the information they receive. This includes personalised headers on the site, personalised keyword alerts and geo-targeted pricing in multi-currencies.

Users can also experience a live feed of news and blogs from the Econsultancy site on their mobile phone by browsing www.Econsultancy.mobi or texting ECON NEWS to 60123.

A further addition to the new website is the 'Your Account' area where subscribing users can review their membership, update their member/supplier directory listing, upgrade/renew their membership, manage their email/topic alert settings and add or remove people from their corporate account. The improved directory listings mean that all membership activity by each supplier is logged and includes contact details and description as well as presentations, events, sponsorship, press releases, forum posts, awards and clients.

'Easy interactivity' is also crucial for the in-house marketing team to monitor subscribers/users and performance. Therefore web analytics are key to the new site and have been incorporated to measure the business's KPIs and drive optimisation in real time. Econsultancy approaches metrics more like a retailer than a publisher so key metrics include sales, conversion rates, average order value, cost per acquisition etc.

Econsultancy was the first publisher to be Segala certified for its site accessibility and also the first UK publisher to be certified by Bonded Sender (now Sender Score) for its email delivery.

Consistently accurate and interesting content (word limit = 500)

Econsultancy's content falls into two main areas:

Research reports produced by the analyst team focus on best practice and innovation in digital marketing and e-commerce. Reports are updated with fresh content every year to ensure that they stay ahead of industry trends. Reports cover best practice (including entry-

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level beginners' guides), benchmarking, innovation, buyers' guides, template files, and market trends and data.

The second type of content is focused around the forums and blog, providing a combination of user-generated content and expert comment. Dedicated Econsultancy bloggers, such as Chris Lake (Editor-in-Chief), as well as guest bloggers from across the industry, ensure the blog is updated with news regularly during the day. Readers are encouraged to provide comment, and Econsultancy publishes all feedback. The forum provides members with the opportunity to communicate with each other on the key areas of best practice and supplier selection.

The content is highly valued by users and can be summarised in a quote from Director of Europe, Warner Bros. International New Media:

"Econsultancy is a great source of knowledge that I can access without moving from my desk. It's a real time saver and an inspiration when there's nowhere else to find information and advice. It's now my first port-of-call when I'm looking for my expert alter ego."

As well as user testimonials, the quality and originality of content can be gauged in a number of other ways:

1. PR coverage. Econsultancy has built relationships with all key bloggers and opinion formers in its market place and has outstanding online coverage across all the niches in which it operates. The company is now regularly featured in the national press, trade publications and, of course, across the online media landscape.
2. Google Rankings. Econsultancy consistently ranks top of Google. This is in part due to the large number of high quality links it has received from relevant sites that have seen fit to link to its high quality content.
3. Unique content. All of Econsultancy's content is original and created to meet the feedback it receives from its subscriber base. Examples of industry-leading benchmark research it has published include: Agency Rate Card Survey, Managing an E-commerce Team and the User Experience Benchmarks etc.
4. Twitter. The Econsultancy Twitter account and staff accounts are also being used to reach out to a wider audience, and the amount of 'retweeting' of Econsultancy news and content is a good indicator of its appeal.

No other publisher in the UK provides this volume of specialist digital data and invaluable aides for its users.

Enhanced revenues and profitability (word limit = 500)

Econsultancy's understanding of its market has allowed it to develop paid for services way ahead of other publishers. Some of these additional revenue streams include:

1. Press release distribution. Econsultancy was one of the first UK online publishers to have a paid-for press release distribution service.
2. Work exchanges. These were initiated by Econsultancy to enable two people in non-competing organisations to meet in order to share knowledge, compare notes, and learn from each other. Econsultancy 'match makes' the pair and helps set the agenda

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for the meeting to ensure both parties benefit.

3. Econsultancy roundtables. The events are chaired and facilitated by Econsultancy with only 12-15 people and no journalists, no audience, no sponsors or advertisers and no presentations. They are a chance for attendees to discuss some of the most important issues and trends within a particular topic or sector with peers.
4. Recruitment. Econsultancy now has top Google rankings globally for 'online marketing jobs' where both agency and in-house teams pay to post adverts. To incentivise top level (Diamond and Platinum) membership, up to 5 job adverts are included in the cost of subscription.
5. Training. Up to 15 public training courses are held each month as well as more consultative in-company sessions, improving the skills of over 2,500 digital marketers each year. Postgraduate Econsultancy also runs a range of professional qualifications, including the UK's first MSc in Digital Marketing Communications (run in partnership with Manchester Metropolitan University) and Postgraduate Diplomas in Online Retail and Digital Publishing.

2008 saw Econsultancy's turnover grow to £2.9m and profits to £600k. Earnings growth for 2008 stood at 30%. The same 12 month period saw its registered user base grow by over 30% and according to ABCe figures, Econsultancy receives twice as many unique (145,461) users as Mad.co.uk (77,856) - the only subscription-based peer site.

Econsultancy has grown both commercially and in size of operation: the volume of events, training, and reports has increased as well as the number of registered users and subscribing members. To cater for the expansion, the number of staff has also increased from 18 to 27 – two in the US.

Multi channel integration (word limit = 500)

Due to the high esteem in which the Econsultancy brand is held, the company is able to extend its reach outside the realms of a traditional publisher.

1. Social media. Leading by example, many of the Econsultancy staff run their own Twitter accounts and regularly contribute to listings, online forums and networking sites with insight and advice.
2. Inaugural Innovation Awards held. Econsultancy launched the industry's first Innovation Awards - designed to give clients, suppliers and agencies recognition for genuine innovation, originality and pioneering work in digital marketing. The Awards are entered and judged 'virtually' enabling organisations from around the world to enter. An Innovation Report was published to coincide with the awards and is now updated regularly to showcase the best of what's new in the industry.
3. A community, both on and offline. Digital Ski is an annual not-for-profit ski trip organised by Econsultancy with the aim of gathering together colleagues from the UK digital marketing industry to have some fun, meet some new people and enjoy all that slopes have to offer. Digital Sail and Digital Golf operate on a similar a basis. Econsultancy also offers free-to-attend Summer and Christmas parties for informal industry networking.
4. Invitation-only Digital Cream, now in its third year, is an event exclusively for senior digital marketers and buyers to help them make better online marketing and e-

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commerce budgeting and buying decisions. It's a hands-on participatory event where attendees network and learn through peer-to-peer discussion, meetings and debate.

5. Email remains a strong channel for Econsultancy, with a weekly e-newsletter including interviews with leading digital marketing figures, daily topic alerts and monthly surveys (the findings of which are used within research reports).
6. An affiliate network also extends the reach of Econsultancy into other relevant communities.