

Read All About It

A monthly newsletter for the associates of Freedom Orange County Information and its affiliated companies

February/March 2002

Going...going...but not gone

OCN goes dark but the studio and some equipment stay at OCR

By Maddie Gavel

OCN may have ceased productions but the studio and its surrounding 7,500 square feet of office, stage and conference space is far from quiet. The cable news channel program, started by Freedom Communications in September of 1990, had its last broadcast September 7, 2001. After a history of losing money, changes in ownership that included both Century Cable and Adelphia at the helm, the struggling home of Orange County's only cable news source was forced to go dark.

"It was very sad for all of us here," said Don Englehardt, OCR's chief engineer of media technology and the only OCN staffer to be hired by Freedom Orange County Information (FOCI). "It's left a big gap. We had very good acceptance in the community. We had a good product and very positive feedback from the public — it was purely a financial decision."

After Adelphia Southern California Vice President Bill Rosendahl announced the decision to pull the plug on the News Channel last fall, a Vision 2005 team was enlisted to review the situation and make recommendations for future TV and media options for FOCI. Englehardt was retained to help with the technical aspects, the nature of which, however, is still not clear. "A lot is yet to be seen," says Englehardt. "They're investigating partnerships with radio and TV. Our hope is to have some part in the broadcast community."

With that in mind, Englehardt and Financial Analyst Todd Collard attended the January 17 auction of OCN's cable broadcast studio and equipment. With the last sound of the auctioneer's gavel, FOCI as the largest bidder had



Wishful client Nancy Jones looks over the auction items available from OCN. Photos by Jess Andresen.

purchased approximately 20 percent of the studio's assets: two field cameras, two studio cameras, and editing/television graphic equipment.

"We had looked at four or five options for the space, even commercial production," said Joe Ames, current projects team leader coordinating the use of the new space and part of the original VOS review, "but in the end we just bought enough for a small one camera studio here with a few potential uses."

"We're starting slow, doing it right, and growing," said Ames. "What we have here is fundamentally a broadcast studio — and we're not doing that. They (potential radio

and TV partners) want our expertise, content and brand. We want their channel and signal."

According to Ames, if a partnership came through it would be a win-



A receptionist from Jeff Carroll Productions awaits shipping requests from purchasers.

win for both parties. "Our goal is to build a close partnership, almost a dependency, and build on the synergy of energy between the two."

All associates now eligible for bonus

Beginning this year, most Freedom Orange County Information associates who haven't participated in a year-end bonus plan are now eligible.

Called a Compensation At Risk plan (CAR), the bonus program will allow you to receive 1 percent of the total of your annual base

pay plus overtime pay if the company reaches predetermined financial goals by the end of the year.

If, however, the company fails to achieve those goals, the bonus pay will be less than 1 percent, including no payout if the results are lower than a certain

percentage of the budget. The good news is that if the company overachieves, the bonus can increase up to 2 percent.

The amount earned through this program will be distributed in February 2003. Program eligibility includes all associates who are not already eligible for another

CAR bonus, incentive, commission or piecework plan.

The more revenue the company generates and the more costs it controls when compared to its 2002 budget, the larger the bonus! More details will be distributed in March.

OCVive! es muy bueno

New Spanish-language portal launches in Orange County

By Maddie Gavel

Orange County's newest Web site, OCVive.com, launches in March with completely Spanish content targeted to the Hispanic marketplace.

Developed in conjunction with myOC.com, Excelsior and OCRegister.com, the colorful new portal offers a virtual community where Orange County's Spanish-speaking populace can tap into important resources, timely news and events relevant to Orange County.

"We conducted a lot of research to see how the needs of Hispanic groups were being met and how we could provide valuable, useful and fresh information in a way they wanted to see it," said Terry Moore, director of interactive content for OCVive!

The concept for the new site has been in the works for some time with implementation meetings beginning with Excelsior and Register staff last fall. Two focus groups were conducted as part of the Register's Vision 2005 efforts to identify the target audience's wants and needs.

Diana Molina, Hispanic content manager for OCVive!, described the process for defining the look, feel, and content of the Register's new Spanish portal. "We really started from scratch. It was a three-part process that began with a lot of research because of the huge size of our market," she said.

Indeed, Orange County's Hispanic population continues to grow at a rapid pace, with Latin Americans representing nearly one third of the county's population. Growth over the next 20 years is expected to climb more than 41 percent.

Molina's three-part approach focused on research, a thorough understanding of the cultural aspects of the audience and dialogue



with community leaders.

"We wanted to get as much information on the Latino community as possible — on both a national and county level. The next step was to understand the cultural aspects of our users. For example, 90 percent are from Mexico. We wanted to make sure we knew their tastes and feelings, what kind of colors appealed to them, and what they were looking for from the site," recalls Molina.

The last step before implementing design put Molina in touch with both the local community and its leaders, something she considers a highlight of her work.

"I met a lot of people and had the opportunity to see first hand how they felt about this. They were all very excited and a little surprised too.

For the first time they will have a virtual home to call their own."

According to The Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2000 Tracking Survey, the growth of the Hispanic population in Orange County also reflects a significant expansion of Hispanic household technology penetration — an 80 percent increase compared with 21 percent for the overall market. Add the fact that fully 50 percent of Hispanics who are 18 and older have used the Internet and you have a golden opportunity to be the information provider of choice to an emerging market.

Moore believes the "enterprising" concept works to the benefit of all parties. "We started by looking for an opportunity to serve the Hispanic community and to leverage our relationship with Excelsior by using its content," she said. "We wanted to look beyond the scope of our own work." Now the model is expected to be used by other Register partners who will use OCVive! as a shell with basic components and plug in their own local content.

Molina refers to the concept as the Freedom Portal and is proud that the Register is behind its coming to life. "I am just so glad that the whole company has become aware of the growing Hispanic population. This is just the first step toward better representation in the county," she said.

MyOC.com CEO Ginger Neal agrees. "The Hispanic community in Orange County needed to be recognized with specific content and identity. It is so exciting to add this new product to the family. It's a project that has been embraced with a lot of enthusiasm and excitement by everyone at Freedom."

Turning concept into reality

David Ethridge, media designer for myOC.com, worked with Diana Molina and John Kanavas, product manager, to get the proper direction for the look and feel of OCVive! Once he had the tools, Ethridge was free to work his special brand of design magic.

"My main concern was that the site reflect the cultural influences of our audience. I looked at several other Spanish language sites including Univision.com and Telemundo.com, both of which featured such vibrant colors," said Ethridge, who presented several designs for review before the current look was approved.

The site's internal preview brought

admiration on the part of Ethridge's design and Molina's thorough research for content. "It turned out really nice. A lot of people have told me how good it looks, how inviting it is. When they see it, they want to spend time there, looking at the stories and content," said Ethridge.

Just in case you haven't visited the site yet, here's an overview of what's in store:

News: One hundred percent of OCVive!'s original content is produced in Orange County, with world and local news coming from Excelsior.

Sports: World Cup soccer news, boxing, baseball, cycle and auto racing, plus a feature that lets users post photos of their favorite teams to share with contacts around the world.

Entertainment: The latest in music, concerts, films and gossip, plus events around town.

Immigration: Up-to-date information on immigration laws and Q&A with specialist Eduardo Plata.

Nuestra Vida/Our Life: Channels where visitors can participate in sharing tips and discussions on a number of topics including Traditions, Country, Family and Business.

Community: County-wide event listings, addresses and telephone numbers, as well as church information.

And then some: Job listings and how-to tips for obtaining a loan, buying a car, shopping, traffic, weather and transportation information.

Redesigned OCRegister.com will be fresh, fast and easier than ever

By Maddie Gavel

April marks the unveiling of a new and improved OCRegister.com site geared to enable users to view content faster and more efficiently. The update reflects a movement toward a more sophisticated technological environment featuring an integrated content management system that puts viewing of information in real time.

The new, cutting-edge Silverstream platform supports the delivery of content into multiple media channels such as wireless devices, personal digital assistants (PDAs) and other media properties, although personalized news content is still some ways off. Immediate benefits include standardization of content, real time content publishing and editing of stories, and enhanced search ability.

Lelani Bluner, vice president, Business Development & Marketing for myOC is excited about the innovation.

"For the last seven or eight years, pages were manually produced. Stories were cut and pasted in, and there was so much (content) that didn't make it," she said. "The new system draws directly from the CCI system (the Register's pagination program used to lay out the paper) where the news writers create the story."

"I like to think of this as our first step into the delivery of customized information," continued Bluner. "Imagine, being able to get your traffic update sent to your PDA, weather updates on your cell phone and top headline news to your email account when you arrive at work. I like to think about it as... what I want, when I want it, delivered the way I want it."

When users log on, they will see the changes immediately in a new visual layout. "It's more like the newspaper in its presentation," said Jim Zisk, director of media design. "We're going with left-side navigation. Instead of tabs across the top, it's a vertical list format, like ABCnews.com." Zisk feels the changes are especially timely. "The old SGI platform has been degrading over the years. The new server will be faster and the site will download quicker for both broadband and dial-up users."

The changes came out of user issues with the old format and the Register's desire for more comprehensive news coverage and better presentation.

"The redesigned OCRegister.com site gives us an excellent opportunity to connect even more closely with Orange County," said Ginger Neal, CEO of myOC.com. "As we offer more breaking news, more multimedia content and more personalization we become more involved in the lives of Orange County residents. If you want to know what's going on in O.C. we deliver — in the newspaper and on the Web."

Focus: Consumer Classified Staff

Hello? I'd like to place an ad...

By Maddie Gavel

Fluffy need a new home? Your husband's collection of rare fossilized sea life cluttering up the garage? Look no further, the OCR Consumer Classified staff is ready to help you place a winning ad that will make you and Fluffy — if not your husband — happy and satisfied.

Comprised of a team of two desk-manning sales representatives in the Grand Avenue lobby and nine sales reps and four customer service reps upstairs, the Consumer Classified Staff handles announcements, placements of ads geared to sell everything from autos to ukuleles to putting pets in touch with new owners. They handle inbound and occasional outbound calls, assist callers with wording for their ads, and even take photos of customer's cars for the Auto Focus Magazine.

Special classified sections such as February's Valentine Love Lines let staff members get creative. "They go out and buy decorations themselves and place them around," said Judy Jung, Customer Care team leader. "It gets the attention of the customers in the lobby and also gets everyone excited about the event."

Extra effort on the part of her staff doesn't surprise Jung. "In my nearly 22 years at the Register, this has been the best group I have ever had. They're a real hard-working group with great personalities. And they work beautifully together."

With nearly 3,000 calls a month for the sales team and 1,200 to 1,500 for the customer service team, camaraderie and synergy among the ranks is a definite plus, especially when working with the public.

"Our number one goal is to make an advertiser happy. We do a lot of customer relations work because we're the first contact many people have with the Register," said Jung. "That can sometimes mean taking abuse."

When things get a little stressed, team members can count on each other to lift one



Back row: Customer Service Billing Specialists Timothy Knecht, Ed Hall, Peter Pena and Hector Hernandez. Front Row: Telephone Sales Reps Donna Sison and Sandra Campos. Not pictured: William Butler, Richard Cottrell, Martalee Fields, Georgia Nutt, Martha Rios, Cynthia Shaver, Elaine Siegel, Ruth Miller, Pat Biloc, Sharon Paradise and Karl Robinson. Photo by Jess Andresen.

another's spirits. "Sometimes we'll share what's going on with each other because we've all experienced similar situations," said Richard Cottrell, a nine year-plus veteran of the Register. "We'll usually find a way to make a joke of it to lighten things up."

There's also the occasional "colorful character" or regular who contacts Jung or members of her staff, more often out of a need for companionship rather than a need to place an ad. One woman writes regularly, insisting her name is at the bottom of the Statue of Liberty and wants Jung to buy her poetry.

Cottrell recalls a classic blooper when one of his ads for a "found neutered male dog" ran without the word dog. Instructions for readers to "call to identify" created a humorous response, one which the customer fortunately took in stride.

Yet another interesting ad was placed recently with the help of Elaine Siegel, a 10-year associate of the Register who worked in OC Connections prior to her four years with the Consumer Classified staff.

"It pretty much fell under the heading of 'Can you believe they want to put that in the paper?'" said Siegel. [Editor's note: To keep our G rating, let's just say it was a study for an enhancement product.] "It was on the up and up," laughs Siegel, "they just wanted public feedback — but it was a little much."

"There's certainly never a dull moment," sighs Jung. "There's always something going on here."

Words from Chris



Over the course of 16 Town Hall meetings across our Metro businesses at the end of January, I got to see a lot of faces. Some were puzzled. Some frowned. Some nodded and smiled. Most of all, you were attentive as I described our new Metro division of Freedom.

And, whether you asked it or not, the question on many of your minds was, what does this mean to me? Will I have a new job? Will I have a new boss and a new workgroup?

I've thought about this as it relates to me. Not that I think I'm going to have a new boss, but rather that I am working with a new group of people and all of us are having to define our roles – and how we're going to work together.

How we work together is what we measure when we do our annual Q-12 survey. The results from 2001's study, done last October, show we have made very good progress in how engaged we are in our work. Freedom Orange County's grand mean score – the score that is a total of all the workgroups answering all the questions – rose from 3.49 in 2000 to 3.78 in 2001. Gallup says that is a significant increase.

The key to improving this score is the development of plans to address issues raised in Q-12. And the key to developing these plans, as many of you know from last year, is the involvement of the whole workgroup.

The Executive Team of FOCI just finished its Impact Plan in February. We

focused on questions 6 and 11, relating to development and feedback. The approach we decided to use was a team approach. Each person on our team would create his or her own development plan by working with other team members. First we would assess our strengths and weaknesses and what we could do to develop both areas. Then we would create the plan in concert with some colleagues. And a critical part of the Impact Plan is that we do regular checkups on our progress, again with other team members. Also important is a discussion of where we have common themes in our development plans, so we can think about how we reinforce each other by working together.

I tell you about this because it reflects what associate involvement is all about – working together. It would be easy to think that a development plan is something created for you by your boss. Or that a boss has the responsibility to solve all the workgroup's problems. That's not the case.

Figuring out how we work together is the key to making the changes necessary to build our business by serving more customers and creating stronger bonds with and in the communities we serve. Our Impact Plans will evolve in the next year.

It will take everyone's commitment – and most of all, engagement – to make us successful. I'll be delighted to hear about and share some success stories of how we make this happen.

— Chris

Applause



"The Price of Neglect," the Register's three-part series about the decaying Orange County sewer system, was given an honorable mention in the John B. Oakes Award for "Distinguished Environmental Journalism." The John B. Oakes Award was created and endowed in 1993 by friends and colleagues of John Oakes, the former Editorial Page editor at the New York Times.

Kudos

- Congratulations to the Commercial Classified sales representatives who met their 2001 sales goal and made Club 100:

Martha Villalobos, Rosa Aguirre, Lisa Winchester, Joe De La Riva, Elizabeth Martinez and Yolanda Mota.

Special congratulations to Martha Villalobos and Joe De La Riva, who made Publishers Council by meeting their sales goals by over 105 percent.

- Guillermo Perez, Efrain Aguilar, Fred Knillans and Briant Wiltz have earned their Class A License. Congratulations!
- PIP only had 16 lost time injuries in 2001 compared to 26 in 2000.

Rnet Guide (URL: Rnet.freedom.com)

- Remember to order your business cards using the template form on Rnet. The form is located under the Self Service tab. Click on Ordering Stationary, then select "business card order form." (Business cards can only be ordered by filling out this form and faxing it to Facilities Services.)
- Check out Career Opportunities (along the orange bar at the top of the home page) to see all the newest job postings. Positions are added regularly. If you find a job you're interested in, you can apply online and attach your resume. Just follow the instructions on-screen.

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