
Internet Strategic Planning at USDA's Economic Research Service

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Presented by



Agenda

- **About the Economic Research Service**
- **What is an Internet Strategic Plan?**
- **Internet strategic planning at USDA/ERS**
- **Key elements and lessons from ERS**
- **How to get started *tomorrow?***

About the Economic Research Service

- **USDA's Economic Research Service**
 - Approximately 450 employees, mostly economists
 - Main source of economic information and research from the USDA
 - Mission: inform and enhance public and private decision-making on economic and policy issues related to agriculture, food, natural resources, and rural development
 - Launched major site redesign in January 2001 to reposition agency as a “premier provider of real-time, real-value economic analysis to our primary customers”
 - Current site features briefing rooms on more than 80 different economic topics, hundreds of publications, and around 9000 data sets.
 - Averaging about 200K visits per month

What is an Internet strategic plan?

It's a process, an approach, as much as a document:

- **Mission**
- **Goals**
- **Priorities**
- **Actions and initiatives**
- **Monitoring**



And it can be a key element of long-term success!

Internet strategic planning at ERS

Key themes in ERS strategic planning:

- **Top-level support**
- **Mission-driven vision for services**
- **Audience-centric approach**
- **Building the Internet team**
- **Prioritization**
- **Performance monitoring**
- **Internal marketing**

Building top-level support

You need top-level support to succeed – and to assure you are serving your agency!

- **Cultivate support**
 - Speak to management priorities
 - Conduct presentations and briefings
 - Schedule individual meetings
 - Provide updates on special projects
 - Develop briefing book and one-pagers
 - Deliver regular, relevant progress reports
- **Involving your senior managers**
 - Do: Broad vision, prioritization, guidance
 - Do not: Detailed design

Mission-driven vision for services

Successful Internet services further an organization's core mission:

- **Draw from your organization's strategic plan:**
 - **Top level mission, vision for tomorrow**
 - **Core audiences**
 - **Key priorities, schedules**
 - **Measurable metrics**
 - **Terms and language**

Adopting an audience-centric approach: Define your key audiences

- Define and prioritize your key audiences
- ERS' priority audiences:
 - Policy makers and “gatekeepers”
 - USDA senior management
 - Researchers
 - Agribusiness / commodity industry professionals
 - News media

Adopting an audience-centric approach: Personas

- **User or audience “personas”**
 - **Who should we be designing for?**
 - **Provide focus for design decisions**
 - **Not real people, but hypothetical archetypes representing a specific group of users**
 - **Describe users’ needs and tasks**
 - **Based on in-depth interviews and research**

Adopting an audience-centric approach: Meet the Personas

USDA Senior Management Gatekeeper:



Matthew Johnson

*Program Staff Director,
USDA*

Background

- 51-years-old
- Married, 3 children, 1 grandchild
- Ph.D. in Agricultural Economics
- Comfortable using a computer, intermediate Internet user, with a T1 connection at work and dial-up at home
- Uses email extensively; uses the Web about 1.5 hours a day

Informational goals

- **Narrow** subject focus
- Seeks **decision level** information
- Prefers **summaries**, but also quick access to specific information
- **Access to experts** in subject matter
- Seeks **recent developments** and publications in areas of interest
- Values **timeliness, credibility and accuracy** of information

Adopting an audience-centric approach: User-assessment

- **Need formal, iterative process for usability testing**
 - **Integrate testing into your standard web product or site development process**
 - **Provide tools for web team to test early and often**
 - **Establish baseline “user success rate” for overall site and track over time**

Adopting an audience-centric approach: Web-analytics staff

- **Appoint a “Web Analytics Manager” to:**
 - Track / analyze site usage trends
 - Perform usability testing and expert (heuristic) analysis of ERS web products
 - Train and coach staff on usability and other user assessment techniques
 - Manage ERS’ usability testing facilities and equipment
 - Brief, “sell,” and educate ERS managers, technical experts and program executives on performance measurement, user assessment, and customer relationship management initiatives
 - Implement an integrated Web performance measurement system

Building a larger “ERS Web Community”

- **Start with an excellent core team**
- **Practice a standard, user-centered web product development process**
- **Establish a web community space (Web Design Lab) with reference library, software and other resources**
- **Hold monthly web brown bag seminar series**
- **Establish “Web Forum” list serv**
- **Develop “ERS Online” resource center**

Prioritization

Embrace key decision points as

opportunities to make your job easier!

- Identify, prepare, and manage decision making and priority setting at key stages:
 - Online “brand” (expectation of service)
 - Key audiences, objectives for each
 - Service roll-out (short, medium, long-term)
 - Defining “metrics of success”

Project	Rationale / Description <i>And specific Recommendations</i>	Under way?	Audience Benefits?			Org Cap.	Staff Cap.	Tech Cap.	Cost	Score SUM	Timing Period	Priority
			Public	Key	ERS / USDA							
		NY ○●	123	123	123	123	123	123	123		S M L	123
1. Focus on core clients												
User personas and use cases scenarios	Assure consistent focus on needs of core audiences by defining archetypal audience characteristics. <i>Recommendation: Use personas to guide design, new services development, and tracking success.</i>	●	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	20	S	3
Audience-specific "guide" pages	Improve service to core audiences with tailored entry pages, e.g. Policymakers, USDA management, Media, Researchers, Educators, General Public. <i>Recommendation: implement and study usage.</i>	○	1	3	2	2	3	3	3	17	S	3
ERS staff profiles and bibliographies	Enable users to better understand and use ERS expertise and collaborate with ERS staff. <i>Recommendation: Begin with Senior management and subject experts; integrate with "publications" info.</i>	●	1	3	3	2	3	3	3	18	S	3
Private project workspaces (Extranets)	Private online workspaces to enable ERS/USDA collaboration on pre-decisional issues. <i>Recommendation: Expand current extranets (a.k.a. ProjectSpaces); seek solution to work with InsidERS, CMS.</i>	●	1	2	3	2	3	3	2	16	S	3
External marketing and outreach	Reach core audiences better by raising profile of ERS services. <i>Recommendation: "URL everywhere" – promote Web site in online and all offline opportunities.</i>	●	1	2	1	3	3	3	3	16	S	2
ERS content syndication	Reach core audiences better by disseminating ERS content across other Web sites. <i>Recommendation: Syndicate ERS content to other Web sites that serve core audiences</i>	○	1	3	1	1	2	2	2	12	M	2
E-mail notification service	Increase dissemination and notification of ERS products with improved e-mail notification service. <i>Recommendation: Short run: improve management and use of existing services; Long run: "build your own" on topic/frequency of choice.</i>	○	2	3	2	2	2	2	3	16	M	2
E-mail newsletters	Increase value of ERS to users by delivering ERS expertise by e-mail. <i>Recommendation: In the short run, pilot test marquee newsletter(s) -- short, periodic, known author.</i>	●	2	3	2	2	2	2	3	16	M	2
"E-Zine" to	Showcase (and consolidate) key ERS publications with a	●	2	3	3	2	2	3	2	17	S	3

Performance monitoring

Need to be able to measure to manage, to be successful, to justify investments.

- **Ideally?**
 - **Mission > actions > impact > mission**
- **Focus on core “metrics of success”**
 - **Hint: not “HITS”**
 - **Metrics: Profile, reach, transactions, cost**
 - **Integrate online and offline performance**
- **Examples:**
 - **ERS Performance “dashboard”**
 - **Customer satisfaction survey**

Performance monitoring: ERS Dashboard (in works)



ERS Web Index Report

October 1, 2001 thru October 31, 2001

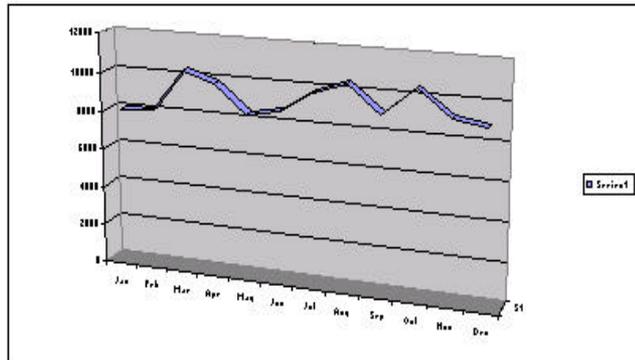
Packaging and Distribution



Last Month: 7.7

	weight	baseline	target	current	score	weighted
Number of email list subscribers	30	8000	###	12000	0.24	0.07
Self defined visitor constituency						
Researcher	10	100	500	300	0.50	0.05
Policy Maker	10	50	55	56	1.20	0.12
Media Member	10	100	500	300	0.50	0.05
USDA Management	5	500	1000	300	-0.40	-0.02
Outside Site Referrers	10	800	1600	1500	0.88	0.09
"Heard of through Web" Inbound Calls	5	10	20	19	0.30	0.05
Search engine placement	20	6	2	3	0.75	0.15
Total	100					5.53

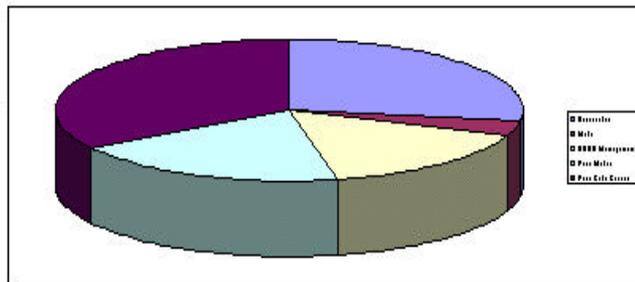
Number of List Subscribers



Self Defined Visitor Constituency

Current States Against Target

Researcher	-20%
Media	5%
USDA Management	-2%
Policy Maker	-20%
Policy Gate Keeper	20%



ERS Web Index Report

October 1, 2001 thru October 31, 2001

Influence



Last Month: 4.9



Packaging and Distribution



Last Month: 7.7



Relevance



Last Month: 3.9



Access and Collaboration



Last Month: 5.6



Quality



Last Month: 6.7



Performance monitoring: Customer satisfaction survey

ForeSee Results Survey - Microsoft Internet Explorer prov...

Your Logo Here

Customer Satisfaction Survey



Thank you for visiting our site. You have been randomly selected to take part in this survey to let us know what we are doing well and where we need to improve. Please take a minute or two to give us your opinion. The feedback you provide will help us enhance our site. All results are strictly confidential.

1: Please rate the **accuracy of information** on this site.

1=Poor 10=Excellent

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Don't Know

2: Please rate the **quality of information** on this site.

1=Poor 10=Excellent

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Don't Know

3: Please rate the **usefulness of the services provided** on this site.

1=Poor 10=Excellent

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Don't Know

4: Please rate the **convenience of the services** on this site.

1=Poor 10=Excellent

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Don't Know

5: Please rate the **ease of reading** this site.



ERS Content + Search

02/26/03 - 04/18/03

Satisfaction Summary

Elements Drive Customer Satisfaction

Elements	Score	30 day Δ from Aver.	Impact on C.S.
Content	78	0.0	0.6
Functionality	74	+0.3	1.0
Look and Feel	74	0.0	1.6
Navigation	68	0.0	1.3
Search	72	+0.7	2.0
Site Performance	81	+0.7	0.7

Satisfaction Drives Behaviors

Customer Satisfaction:

Score: 73

30 Day Change From Average : +0.3

Future Behaviors can change your company.

Impact on F.B.	Future Behaviors	Score	30 day Δ from Aver.
4.1	Likelihood to Return	85	0.0
4.6	Recommend	82	+0.7

Change Average:

Marketing your plan internally

- Continually market and sell your strategic plan (remember... organizational change!)**
- **Take it on the road**
 - **Presentations regular staff meetings, division-level, branch-level meetings**
 - **Presentations on specific Web topics**
 - **Use top-level champion as spokesperson**
 - **Use Intranet to communicate your plan, progress, to recognize accomplishments.**

How to start your Internet Strategic Plan tomorrow!

- 1. Cultivate senior management support**
 - Ask for help, work towards it, speak their language
- 2. Clarify your mission: define goals and objectives**
 - Base Internet plan in organizational mission
- 3. Target your key audiences**
 - Identify who you are serving
 - Collect feedback: testimonials, quotes, comments
- 4. Prioritize**
 - Identify where you want guidance; tee-up the issues
- 5. Build your Web Team**
 - Recognize your team; professional development.
- 6. Performance monitoring**
 - Start a monthly “Metrics of Success” report to management
- 7. Internal marketing**
 - Put plans, timeline and accomplishments on Intranet

Thanks!

- For more information visit:
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