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City of Raymore
Case Study

Analytical Community-Driven Approach Transforms Raymore, Missouri Website

The Challenge: A 10,000 Page "Digital File Cabinet"

After seven years with no significant updates, the official city website for Raymore, Missouri had become a digital file cabinet that was visually unappealing and functionally inaccessible – undermining its credibility with the close-knit, suburban community it was supposed to serve.

When Mike Ekey was hired as the city's the new communications manager, he set a goal to transform the site to encourage the city's 20,000-plus citizens to get involved with community activities and make it easier for both residents and developers to do business with the city online.

"Over the years, there had been a constant layering of information and links on the homepage to fulfill information requests, which resulted in multiple pages and subpages that were never updated, weeded out or audited," Ekey said. "We had about 10,000 pages on our old site. Some related to projects that hadn't been around for years but remained on the home page. Our website was so broken, anything we did to upgrade it was going to serve people better."

The Solution: A Community-Driven Approach

After a competitive bidding process, the City of Raymore selected Vision for its expertise in municipal website development and analytical approach, which uses data to empower better decisions.

"Everyone else talked about making our site look nice. Vision was the only one talking about both looks and functionality," said Ekey. "Vision educated us on what a well-designed website means and how users should be able to operate in that kind of environment."

Vision's User Experience (UX) Analysis employs a variety of evaluation methods including usage "heatmapping," Google analytics, community surveys and other data to uncover critical insights into community wants and needs.

"Vision applied real thought, science and data analysis behind the recommendations that drove our site development decisions," he said. "We weren't just redesigning the website to make it look pretty, we were designing it to be functional."

The city's existing home page had 65 clickable links to website content. Vision's heatmap showed that none of the links were being used; visitors went straight to the search bar.

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> Communications Manager
> City of Raymore

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Additional analytics identified Raymore's top 10 most-visited pages, revealing a rapid falloff in the number of monthly visitors. The top three pages averaged 11,000, 7,000, and 3,000 visits respectively. Page visits became progressively smaller beyond that, with the 10th page getting less than 100 visits per month.

Internal and community input also influenced how the new website page was organized. Community meetings, held as part of the city's strategic planning process, helped to identify who Raymore's online "customers" are, what information they seek and how they prefer to access it.

Internally, each city department identified its top online business and information goals to help clarify the focus for the new site. For example, the Finance Department's primary business goal was to make online payments easy; its top communications goal was to inform residents of new services and make it easy to sign up. This prioritization led to some big changes over the existing site.

"The Finance Department used to have its own separate web page, which made no sense at all," Ekey said. "The first thing people saw were departmental goals assigned by City Council, and the finance director's performance goals for the year. None of that information indicated that the Finance Department was where residents needed to go to sign up for utilities. People searched the site for "Utilities" or "Water Department," not Finance."

The old site also featured large rotating images intended to advertise recreational programs, which the heatmap analysis revealed people ignored. This led to a decision to discontinue promotional images.

**The Results: A Stunning and Useful Digital City Hall**
The new City of Raymore website launched in July 2016.

"Our objective was to create a website that everyone would find stunning and useful," said Ekey. "We wanted it to showcase all of the amazing things this community has to offer."

The flexibility of Vision's content management system provided the platform Raymore needed to organize the site under the city's four main areas of focus: Live, Work, Explore and City Hall.

Departmental information was reorganized to align programs and services in the logical place. So instead of presenting Finance Department information on its own webpage, utilities information now is found under the "Live" section and budget information is under "City Hall."

Recognizing that heatmap results showed heavy use of the search function, the Search Bar is now prominently featured on the new site's home page.
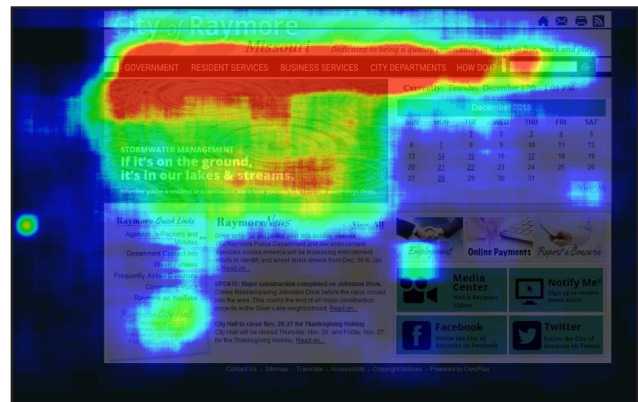
In addition, a "Most Requested" section on the homepage features large clickable icons that reflect the top sections people look for on the site:

1. Online Bill Payment (Utility, etc.)
2. Parks & Recreation
3. Employment Opportunities
4. Water Service

"The information Vision gathered through research and user experience analysis was invaluable," said Ekey. "People love the new site's ease of use. Residents can now easily find the information and services they need, and the site is a valued welcome point for businesses and first-time visitors. The first and possibly only interaction a resident has with your city and local government may be your website. It's important to put your best foot forward."