

I. *General Description of the Program*

- A. Official Title:** *www.MississippiLPA.org*
(website of the Mississippi Legal Professionals Association)
- Classification:** State Association (program conducted exclusively by state association)
- Category:** Association Development – enhancement of image (website)
- Chapter:** Mississippi Legal Professionals Association (formerly Mississippi Division of NALS, Inc.)
Lisa Roberts, PLS – President 2008-09
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B. *Brief Description of the Program*

Simply put, our “program” is the website for the Mississippi Legal Professionals Association.

Thanks to an initial grant from the NALS Foundation in June 2002, the state has had a web presence for a number of years. The “format” and “purpose” of our website has always focused on our “target audience” (*NALS members and non-members*) and helping them to find information about NALS, available certification programs, the Mississippi association, and its local chapters. The state’s website also provides our target audience a resource for up-to-date listings of upcoming association-sponsored seminars and other state and local events, state officers and committee chairs and a means to contact them, as well as current and timely information on state meetings and necessary registration forms, activities and deadlines.

C. *Brief Summary of the Program*

Over the years our website has served its purpose in an effective, yet seemingly non-descript and unobtrusive manner. Over the last twelve months our website has undergone many improvements and positive changes with regard to its content.

The first change was implemented in the fall of 2007 - to include a password-protected page/area which would give *members only* a resource to the state governance documents (Bylaws, Standing Rules, and Manual of Policy & Procedures), as well as numerous form documents (including those from the Manual of Policy & Procedures), and minutes for approval at the upcoming meeting. This *Members Only* page is well on its way to being a “go-to” resource in providing quick access to documents, when and where they needed them – even when traveling to state or national conferences.

The next change was a major overhaul to our “image” following our state association’s name change (adopted at the May 2008 state annual meeting), and resulting new website address.

II. Judging Criteria

A. Needs Assessment

1. How was the need for this program identified? (surveys, requests, please quantify)

Our website was adequate and utilized a template that was originally provide by the website provider tools, below is a copy of the home page just prior to the annual meeting:



Many changes occurred at the 46th annual meeting of our state association (May 2008). The members adopted a new set of Bylaws and Standing Rules, thereby changing the association's name. With a name change comes the need for a new charter proclaiming the new name. With these changes in mind, as the state's Technology Chair and webmaster, I asked the members to consider changing our website URL to reflect the name change as well, and the members approved changing the state association's website URL to MississippiLPA.org (formerly MSNALS.org for Mississippi Division of NALS).

At the March 2008 NALS Professional Development Conference, NALS President Dee Beardsley asked the attendees to put themselves "on the line" each and every day by embracing professionalism. Our new state president embraced that challenge and at the state annual meeting announced her theme for the coming year and asked us to join her on her year's journey to "Professionalism... Linking Yesterday with Tomorrow."

After all the dust settled from the whirlwind of changes that had just occurred - we realized that our state association's name change would need to be announced to all of NALS-land, to the members of our state association, the local and state bar associations and the general public.

As the state's Technology Chair and webmaster, I thought we should rise to the challenges of our national and state presidents and seize the opportunity before us. We should take advantage of the whirlwind of changes by making one more dynamic change – to our website! What better way to tie in our new name but with a new “image” as well? In working with President Lisa, we decided that we should present a more appealing, polished and professional website – something our members would be proud to be a part of and one that would give non-members a sense of the professional image we wanted to portray for both our website and our association.

In summary, we changed our name to reflect that we are a professional association and what we “need” now is a URL to reflect our new name and a new website design the gives the user a feeling (from the appearance of our content) that we are a professional association.

2. How does this program address this need?

The need was identified – and we delivered a solution which met the need and objective – the end result was a website redesign that reflects that we are a professional association. The need was addressed by the selection of a crisp, polished and professional web template that presents our information in an attractive and professional manner, while also being user-friendly website with easy navigation.

The website's new design mirrors the professionalism embraced by the Mississippi Legal Professionals Association. The website, www.MississippiLPA.org, is an attractive website that the members of Mississippi LPA are proud of and one that can be shared by all members of NALS as well as potential members.

B. Planning and Design

1. List the program's objectives.

We identified our need (i.e., a website URL that represented the state association's name change, and a more appealing, polished and professional appearance for our site). Our goal was to redesign our website to (a) reflect a professional image for our association and (b) provide a go-to resource to meet the needs of our association members (calendar of events, contact information for state officers and committee chairs, as well as the state's forms and operating documents).

The redesign of the website would take careful thought, design and implementation in order to address our needs and, eventually, achieve our goals and objectives for this project.

2. Describe the steps taken to design and develop the program.

Our state association changed its name from Mississippi Division of NALS to *Mississippi Legal Professionals Association*. Our previous website URL was www.msnals.org, which mirrored the association name. So, in conjunction with changing the state association's name, it was also approved to change our website name (URL) to www.MississippiLPA.org.

The saying is true; you never get a second chance to make a first impression. We want to make a great first impression as well as provide the content that our members want and need. So, then we considered and researched ways to attract the younger members and potential members – and ways to design and present our content. We then researched reasonably priced or free web templates which could be utilized to aide in our quest and, therefore, achieve our goal of a more appealing and professional appearance for our site.

C. Logistics and Production

1. How was the program delivered to the target audience?

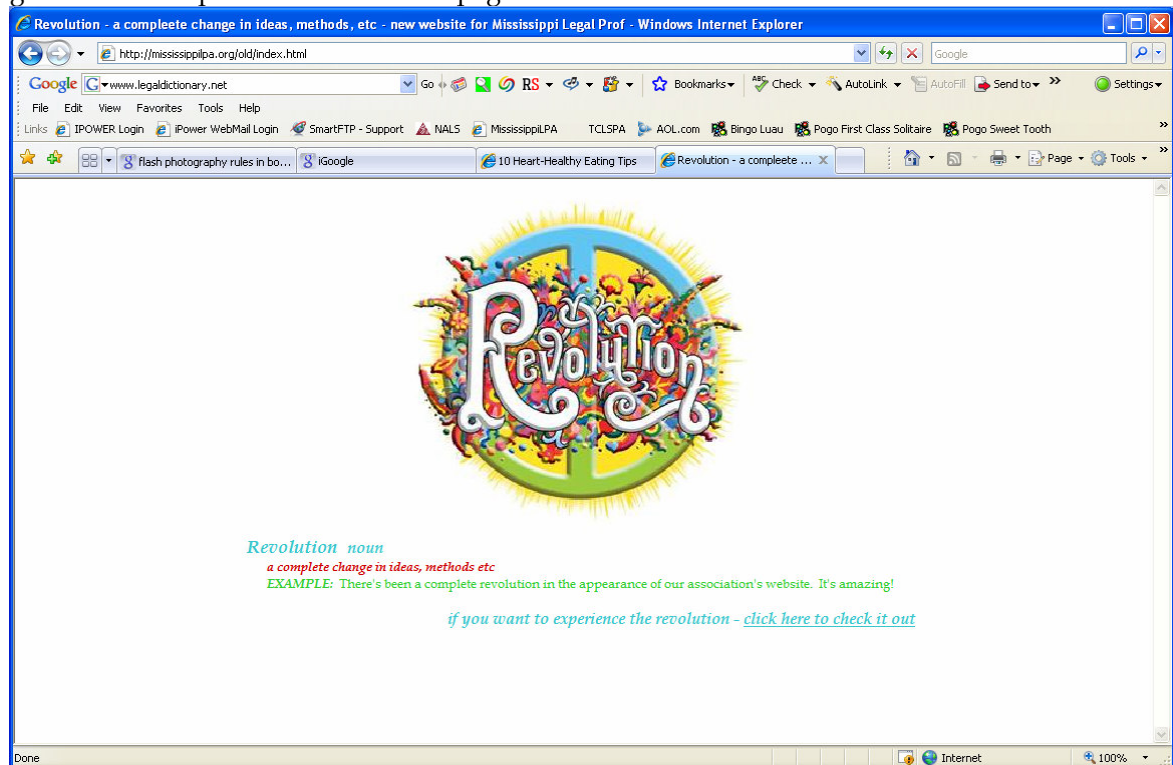
This is a two-fold answer. The first phase of “delivery” was to create the actual product – the redesigned website. The site was redesigned utilizing a template to create what we felt was a clean and professional image for our website.

The second phase of “delivery” was to make the public announcement regarding the changes.

The target audience for this phase was identified as members of NALS (state, regional and national) as well as non-members. The announcement of our new website URL (www.MississippiLPA.org) was announced to all members of the state association (via e-mail as well as at meetings and through the state publication, *the Profile*). The announcement was also made during the Region 6 summer conference. There were also published notifications in area newspapers, as well as to the state bar association, and e-mail announcements were sent to the NALS Resource Center and current NALS Board Members.

Research was conducted in order to attain a ranking in the top 10 listings on Google searches. The instructions were followed for setting up and submitting our website information to Google. Now, when anyone searches Google for “legal professionals in Mississippi” or “Mississippi legal professionals” – the search results show our association’s website as the NUMBER ONE listing. We are currently updating our website keywords so that we appear in the top 10 listings in a variety of similar queries involving legal professionals, legal secretaries, legal assistants, legal certifications, legal education, etc. During this process, it was also discovered that our home page title was listed incorrectly on this Google process, so we are trying to resolve that issue as well.

The announcements were made (examples given in C2 below), and visitors to our new site were greeted with a special announcement page:



This page also had an exciting twist never used before – the page loaded in the user’s window in a circular pattern (used to further enhance the excitement of our new look). To experience this for yourselves today, you can visit this URL <http://mississippilpa.org/old/index.html> (which has been archived on our site).

Once the link was click to visit the new page (and later this “intro” page was removed and all traffic was routed directly to our new home page), this is what the visitor would see:



2. Provide details describing education materials, methods and resources. Include samples of printed materials used.

See answer to C1 above regarding how the program was delivered. In addition, please see the following attachments to illustrate the delivery of our product to our target audience:

- e-mail announcement to all current state officers, chapter directors and state committee chairs;
- press release and e-mail request to publicity chair
- copy of technology/ website report published in state association publication, *the Profile*; and
- samples of search result listings for various Google search phrases.

D. Budgeting and Finance

1. What is the annual income and expenses of your chapter/state?

The total approved state association operating budget for 2008-09 is \$11,660 (balanced budget of income and expenses).

2. Was the program funded in whole or in part by a Grant from the NALS Foundation?

There was an initial grant received in 2002 to pay for the start-up cost and web hosting fees for one year minimum. In the six years following that initial grant, our state association has been fortunate to have chosen a website provider with reasonable annual rates and we periodically are able to take advantage of special promotions for even lower rates when paid one or two years in advance. The association continues to remain self-sufficient in terms of budgeting and paying for our website.

3. What were the program's broad financial objectives (profit, breakeven, or subsidized service)? Choose one and tell why.

There were no real financial objectives or considerations other than to stay within the modest annual budget. The state's website was never intended to be a money-making venture or a money-generating enterprise or venture for our state association.

4. Provide both the projected revenue and expense, as well as the actual revenue and expense.

	Projected / Budgeted 2007-08	Actual 2007-08	Projected / Budgeted 2008-09
Revenue	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00
Expenses	\$200.00	\$118.80	\$200.00

As mentioned above, our website was never anticipated, expected or desired to be a means of income/revenue for our association. Therefore, no revenues have been projected when budgeting for this project, only the annual expenses necessary to maintain the site.

NOTES:

1) actual expenses for 2007-08 included site hosting plan and one year domain renewal at the beginning of the fiscal year, prior to the expiration date of our hosting plan I saw that the hosting provider was running a special price and sought budget/overage approval to go ahead and take advantage of the low price of \$118.80 for a two year hosting plan (yielding a savings for the two year period and meaning that the hosting plan would not need to be paid again in the 2008-09 fiscal year.

2) the budgeted figure remained the same although the annual hosting plan fee would not be paid in 2008-09. When the name change was approved (and the change of the website name/URL), this would cause us to incur the fee to obtain a new domain. As it turned out, we had a free domain credit (\$6.85 value) on our account and it was not necessary for us to pay for the new name for the first year, so I took the opportunity to add the \$8.99 annual "privacy" feature for our domain registration information. Therefore, it is anticipated that the \$8.99 will be the only expense for 2008-09 (as we did not see the need to purchase a website template package, instead we utilized a free template download).

5. Provide your best estimate of association resources expended on this program. You might use, for example, total dollars and total volunteer time.

In addition to the money and items mentioned in #4, it is hard to say how many volunteer hours have gone into the changes on our website in the last 12 months. While I was the only webmaster over the past twelve months, I would be merely speculating as to any form of number of hours spent on the work of the website. But, I can say that the number of hours spent was a very high number – in order to create the new content for the website (fall 2007 – members only page) and redesign and new URL work done in April & May 2008. I would estimate that a rough, yet reasonable, guess would be well over 20 to 40 hours per week over a period of 2 to 6 weeks in both the fall of 2007 and April & May 2008. Routine weekly/monthly “maintenance” (updating calendar, posting any new documents & registration forms, and removing out-dated items & links) is much-less time intensive, taking approximately 20 or fewer hours in the busiest month.

E. Marketing, Promoting, and Advertising

1. List and describe the specific marketing, promotional and advertising vehicles used.

See responses to C1 and C2 above.

F. Evaluation

1. To what extent did the program achieve stated objectives (quantify results such as 10 new members).

As previously stated, the goal was to redesign our website to (a) reflect a professional image for our association and (b) provide a go-to resource to meet the needs of our association members. We believe we achieved our goals and that our website speaks for itself to that end.

A visit to our website will hopefully cause you to reach the same conclusion.

2. What broader impact, if any, did this program have on the growth, image or performance of the state/chapter or its members?

Using a feedback form on the new website (guestbook page), we received some high praises and favorable comments regarding our new website and its appearance.

Here are the kind comments received so far...

Your new website is great! Very easy to navigate! I'll be happy when the photo section has been filled in! Congratulations to all of you!
Mary Hand, PP, PLS (Arkansas) May 30, 2008

Excellent design Stephanie. I love it.
Rita S. Smith, Certified PES (Chapter President 2007-08, Gulf Coast ALSP) May 31, 2008

I think the new name was a good choice to clearly identify our state association and will help us to better market ourselves to legal professionals of any level (whether support staff or otherwise). The new website is attractive, very easy to navigate, "easy to follow..." and looks so professional. The new name goes well with the new look. Congratulations Mississippi Legal Professionals. We are going to have a good year.
Sherry M. Clark (Vice President 2008-09, Gulf Coast ALSP) June 1, 2008

Outstanding Website!!! Congratulations on the name change and new website! The website is clear and concise and easy to navigate! Your membership should double in no time!
Lisa Tanner, PP, PLS (2005-06 NALS of Missouri President) June 2, 2008

The website is great - very easy to navigate! Depicting a professional image with a new name and new website design. I look forward to a very good year as President of Mississippi Legal Professionals Association.
Lisa Roberts, PLS (2008-09 President Mississippi Legal Professionals Association) June 16, 2008

I am so pleased to see how great the website looks. I miss all of you terribly. We don't have any local chapters here, nor do we have a state chapter. I guess my work is cut out for me. My best to each and every one of you.
Kim Knox (Stephoe & Johnson / former state Vice-President) June 22, 2008

Members and visitors alike have remarked that our website has a polished and professional appearance, more so than before.

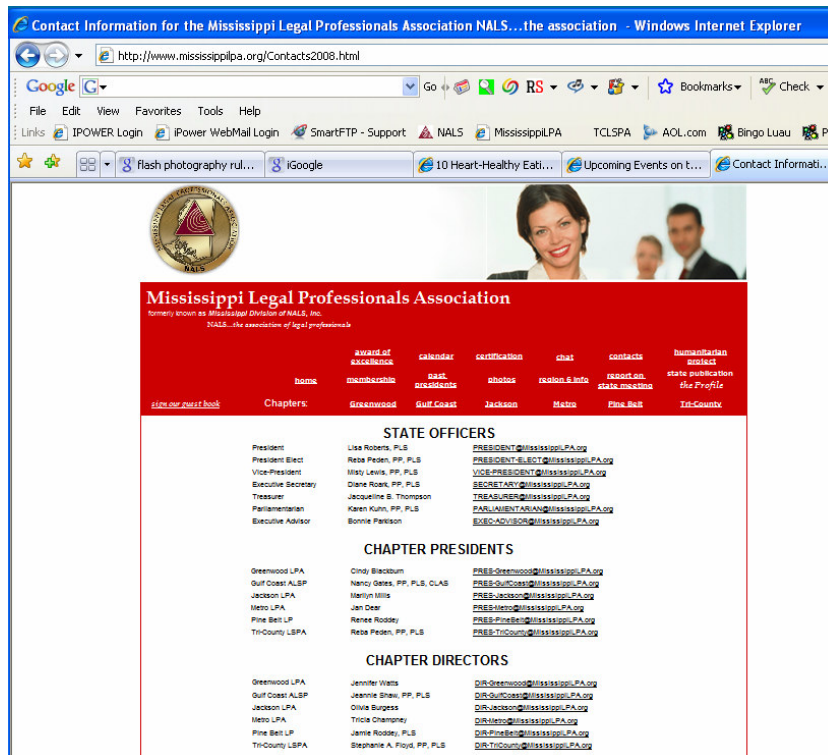
The impact of the website (whether through the newly linked Google searches or some other reason) may also be linked to our association getting two new at-large members over the course of the last four months. (Attached are website statistics for May, June and October 2008)

3. Based on the outcome of this program, describe the most significant changes that might be made the next time a similar program is offered.

Considerations for future re-design might include the inclusion of a long-range plan as well as the inclusion of a plan to market both the association and its revenue-generating items, that way we make a greater impact and generate possible interest in whatever revenue items our association is offering. Future redesigns could be based on a chosen theme, a membership plan, strategic purpose, or any number of ideas.

While a facelift for a website sounds like a great idea (and it is!) – it should be realized that it takes a lot of hard work, dedication and TESTING of your pages before they go “live to the public.” In the end, it is worth it – but it should be planned for and not rushed into.

Also, you need to remember that with a new URL (name) comes new e-mail accounts/boxes that must be created. Investigation into “forwarding” the e-mail addresses for your account is something that should be considered by all chapters. By utilizing a “forwarding” system, each of the e-mail addresses created for your association can be maintained on a simple annual basis, changing only the “address to forward to” for each account. This also protects the privacy of the recipient’s actual e-mail address, even though you have listed the e-mails with their name. See the example of our CONTACTS page:



I also highly recommend backing up the pages as they existed both before you start making changes as well as keeping your website current during the transition and then backing up the then-current pages just prior to the change. That way, you have a safety net. It is also good advice to periodically back up your data (either through your website host/provider, or directly on your own computer).

It's the little things that might get overlooked, so I definitely would recommend that you take your time to carefully think out what you want and make lists of tasks to be done. It also doesn't hurt to use your NALS connections and friends to do some networking, and get advice and hints from those who have created and updated websites before.