

Overview

The Seneca Lake Wine Trail (SLWT) is a 501-C6 non-profit organization based in Watkins Glen, NY and staffed by 2.5 people, representing its 35 member wineries around Seneca Lake and is seeking proposals from qualified website design and developer contractors/firms (Vendor), ideally with expertise in Joomla or a comparable open source solution, to improve on our existing database driven site. Our organization is structurally most akin to a Chamber of Commerce, except our members are all wineries that reside within the federally-recognized Seneca Lake Appellation.

SLWT currently maintains a website at <http://www.senecalakewine.com> (an average of 50,000 unique visitors per month), as well as maintaining active accounts at <http://www.myspace.com/senecalakewinetrail> (3,800 friends and 18,000 views), <http://www.facebook.com/senecalakewinetrail> (3,600 fans), <http://www.youtube.com/senecalakewinetrail> (25 subscribers and 41,000 views) and <http://www.twitter.com/senecalakewine> (180 followers).

All written and graphical content unique to these sites and profiles are created and maintained by SLWT staff. The newly renovated site will utilize content currently residing on the existing site, with new fresh content also provided by SLWT staff. The Vendor will not be responsible for creating content, beyond the core site graphics used in the graphical user interface (GUI) itself.

We are currently utilizing Joomla 1.0.15 for our website, and are not adverse to continue using this platform, or a more current version of Joomla, going forward. If the vendor can recommend a robust, comparable open-source platform, that is completely acceptable.

The following Request for Proposal (RFP) is broken down into five components:

1. **Update Site Infrastructure.** Update the website's infrastructure and GUI, enabling it to be compliant with the most recent versions of at least the following browsers: Microsoft Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, Apple Safari, and Google Chrome.
2. **Social Site Connectivity.** Develop, deploy and structurally maintain robust and dynamic connectivity between the SLWT website, its four social media profiles listed above, RSS feeds and potentially other social media products like foursquare, digg, Google Wave, and others. SLWT has aggressively pursued social media as a marketing strategy for years now, but would prefer to begin doing so more strategically and efficiently.
3. **Backend Database Connectivity.** Tie all backend databases together into one elegant, easily managed pool of data. Currently the Trail manages approximately 4 different informational databases: ticket sales data from the shopping cart, event attendee data, customer data gleaned at trade shows, customer data acquired through the "request information" area of the site.
4. **Referral Marketing Support.** Develop system(s) to help foster referral marketing strategies, ie "word of mouth" through website and social network visitors. Examples include enabling SLWT to reward frequent customers with complimentary event tickets, facilitating group leaders' ability to encourage and invite their network of friends/family to visit the SLWT,
5. **Maintenance.** The staff and members of the Seneca Lake Wine Trail will continue creating all content for both the primary website, as well as the social sites listed above. However we will require an affordable solution to help maintain and evolve website functionality, as well as rapidly contend with issues, malware, updating SSL certificates and other routine maintenance.

Vendors are welcome to submit bids and proposals for one or more components, or aggregated bids representing all five components.

Update Site Infrastructure

Critical Examination of Current Site (structure, navigation, and content) –determine appropriate and feasible improvements with SLWT staff according to project budget & timeline. The existing site has a substantial amount of content and individual pages, most of which can be reached from the various links scattered around the home page. We anticipate largely replicating the overall structure in the revised site, though would prefer to strike an optimized balance between site depth (number of clicks required to find a piece of information) and page complexity (number of hyperlinks on the home page, for example). Furthermore the existing site, while fully functional, is arguably more visually sterile than is preferred.

Custom built open source template –build a custom template that is:

1. Aesthetically pleasing
2. User friendly and easy to navigate
3. Functional - serves the multi-purpose vision of the SLWT website
4. Standards Compliant - accessible to users with handicaps, all major platforms and web browsers, and mobile devices; meet contemporary usability and accessibility standards (if feasible)
5. If a custom built template is not within budget, request is to build upon existing template to best achieve the above mentioned criteria.

Software Upgrade - most recent stable version of Joomla -1.5 or functionally equivalent platform.

Member Access-

Currently all winery member content and associate (restaurants/hotels/transportation companies) content are maintained by SLWT staff. The ideal solution would be to maintain that capacity while simultaneously having the ability for those members and associates to maintain their specific page through a password protected intranet space.

Maintain/Expanding Existing Functionality-

We currently utilize osCommerce for our shopping cart solution, and would prefer either an updated version of that flexible platform, or something comparable. Perusing this area of our site will identify the complexity of our ticketed events: multiple “starting points”, multiple ticket types (Couples, Singles, Designated Driver) and multiple types of events (weekend wine and food pairing events and “passports”). The existing solution is secure, obviously a crucial attribute, but is not visually engaging at all, and has various constraints that are sub-optimal. An example of one specific frustration is that if a ticket buyer selects Pennsylvania as their state, that attribute fails and they are forced to re-select it.

We currently use PHPlist for our email communications mechanism to send out an estimated 6-12 emails per year to our opt-in list of 11,000 subscribers. The current version we utilize is acceptable as is, though if a better package is available, we are open to exploring new opportunities. We have not ruled out services like ConstantContact, though the price point of PHPlist and comparable products is appealing.

Joomla supports a robust content management system, easily enabling SLWT staff to create new pages and alter existing content. This feature will also be necessary in the revised site, whether Joomla or a comparable open source solution.

Training & Documentation –

For one or more of the five components you are bidding upon:

1. Document procedures in user friendly step-by-step instruction sheets for SLWT staff
2. Train SLWT staff to effectively maintain site content knowing that said staff is knowledgeable about the existing maintenance features.
3. Develop a standardized, predictable mechanism for effecting backend and/or database alterations

Social Site Connectivity

As noted in the overview section of this RFP, we have been actively engaged in various social media sites, and expect this trend to continue going forward. Maintaining all those profiles and website content manually is inefficient, and we are hoping the Vendor can help develop systems that will enable content to be deployed across most/all platforms most efficiently. Furthermore, we hope that these systems will increase the stickiness of both our site and our social media profiles, facilitating better cross pollination of fans/friends/customers across all platforms.

Backend Database Connectivity

Currently SLWT maintains a variety of databases primarily through Access and Excel that makes accessing them in aggregate very challenging. SLWT populates these disparate databases with information gleaned from a variety of sources including:

1. Our website, specifically the "Request Information" page of the existing site
2. Our shopping card located in our website
3. Information captured at various trade shows
4. Event attendee information
5. SurveyMonkey results from event attendees

We would like to begin mining and analyzing those aggregated data sets with features developed by the Vendor.

Referral Marketing Support

SLWT has tested this marketing strategy- commonly known as "word of mouth"- and found it effective. Vendor will develop systems that will help make this process more efficient and limber. A simple example of past exercises involved shipping a complimentary, single ticket to a person identified in our system as a key decision maker/influencer, in the hopes that they'll be inspired to convince their network of friends/family to attend a given event, or visit the wineries. We believe there are systems available that can greatly assist us with this aspect of our overall marketing strategy.

Maintenance

While SLWT staff will be maintaining all content on the newly refurbished site, our ability to code is highly limited. For each of the four preceding components, or all four bundled together if Vendor is bidding on the aggregated project, we will require a reasonably priced, annually updated maintenance agreement that will enable our site to be fully functional 24/7, with a current disaster prevention/disaster recovery plan. This may involve troubleshooting and resolving issues on the server side, updating whatever code or script is required to enable compliance with new, major browser upgrades, and permit us to make updates and upgrades to the site structure as needed with (if site is hosted on your server) a quote to move the site to another server.

Conclusion/Parameters

Proposed Timeline:

July 16, 2010: Proposals submitted by Vendors
July 21, 2010: SLWT submits potential questions to Vendors
July 28, 2010: SLWT informs finalists and potentially schedules interviews
August 10, 2010: Selected Vendor is notified
August 17, 2010: Initial Vendor/SLWT meetings and development commence
September 10, 2010: Quarantine begins (no new concepts/functionality added)
October 22, 2010: Beta site launched, review process commences
November 19, 2010: Official site is launched

All proposals should be submitted to the SLWT no later than July 16, 2010 at 5pm EST via email and should be sent to: paul@senecalakewine.com as a .pdf or .doc file format. Questions pertaining to this RFP can also be emailed to that address. All components of the proposal should be included in a single email message.

Terms and Conditions

SLWT must own, have full access to and have the right to customize site code.

Terms for proposal:

1. All proposals must include a statement of authorization to bid signed by a principal of the responding company
2. All proposals must use the proposal format outlined in this RFP
3. Parties submitting separate proposals may not discuss pricing information or they will be ineligible to bid on the project
4. Bidder status: bidder must disclose any relevant conflicts of interest and/or pending lawsuits

Format For Proposals

1. Executive Summary
2. Technical Volume
 - a. Web development process: explain the process you will follow to build the Web site, including major milestones and evaluation
 - b. Address usability standards and testing
 - c. Address any important technology information and specifications used in your solution (languages, platform, etc.)
3. Management Volume
 - a. Organizational structure: communication process; including lines of reporting and any special tools used.
 - b. Schedule of deliverables; include major milestones and testing proposal.
4. Budget Volume
 - a. Break down cost by production hours, tools and functionalities
 - b. Maintenance and support: Identify any costs that should be assumed as part of the site and ongoing costs for maintenance and support we need in the future.
 - c. License fees: Identify the costs we will need to pay to develop or host the site
 - d. Hosting: Identify whether we must or are highly encouraged to host with your company. If hosting is provided as an option or requirement, provide pricing options.
 - e. Training and Style Guide: Identify costs to train our staff to use site tools and provide a style guide.
 - f. Other charge areas: Please identify whether there will be other expenses, consulting fees, future work, etc. to complete this project.
5. Attachments
 - a. Qualifications and Experience: relevant case histories with information on accessing online demos or examples
 - b. Biographies of all who will work on account

Please also include in your proposal:

1. The names of 3 clients who can serve as a reference
2. Your firm's website address
3. The addresses of at least 3 clients whose websites you have designed and developed in the last 24 months (at least one using the recommended open source solution), highlighting features and functionality you were responsible for.
4. List features with pricing, also optional/recommended features with pricing
5. Details for pricing re: ongoing maintenance and administration of site, after RFP scope of work is complete
6. Provide payment terms, general terms, and a timeline/production schedule, structured in phases based upon the vendor(s) being selected by August 10, 2010 and a LIVE deployment date of November 19, 2010.

Thank you for your response to this RFP.

Sincerely,

Paul Thomas
Executive Director
Seneca Lake Wine Trail
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