

Tools for User-Generated Content Tap Local Interests

BY A.S. BERMAN

ONE OF THE GREATEST newspaper trends in the last few years has been the adoption of user-generated content. Not only does this allow a newspaper to offer its audience stories, video and other content from areas it might not otherwise be able to cover, but it also gets more people involved with the newspaper and each other. Not surprisingly, several companies have brought innovative user-generated content-based applications to NEXPO®.

MediaSpan (Booth 700) demonstrated its YouNews and Fan Frenzy applications, which harness the love many Internet users have for social-networking Web sites such as MySpace and Facebook.

YouNews allows a newspaper's readers to post video and photos of local breaking news events they've captured with their video cameras, digital cameras and cell phones to the newspaper's Web site. Perhaps more importantly, it also enables papers to moderate that video easily before it ever reaches the Web. Moderation by MediaSpan is included in the monthly fee, but newspapers can jump in at any time if necessary as a second level of protection against undesired content.

"We realize that newspapers have very powerful brands that they need to protect," said Tobey Van Santvoord, MediaSpan's senior manager of network development. "It also allows them to attract a younger audience. [Younger people] want to be

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— TOBEY VAN SANTVOORD,
MEDIASPAN



RINGO H.W. CHIU

Matt Serpe of CommunitySportsDesk (Booth 2923) cites online interest in local sport coverage.

online, and they want to be on their cell phones, and they may not necessarily pick up a newspaper."

YouNews already is being used by newspapers and broadcast outlets in more than 50 U.S. markets, he said.

For sports fans, the latest edition of MediaSpan's Fan Frenzy allows users to interact with the newspaper and each other. They can upload video of enthusiastic fans and their own tailgate parties, comment on sports articles and engage in spirited discussions with one another in fan forums. While the company has offered Fan Frenzy for more than five years, recently the service was reconfigured to provide content for a wide range of sports, Van Santvoord said.

The previous edition was keyed specifically to individual sports such as football so, for example, after the Super Bowl, readers would stop using it until the next football season began. The newest edition isn't linked to any specific event or game so users are encouraged to use it year-round.

CommunitySportsDesk (Booth 2923), developed by the Kenosha (Wis.) News, is another Web-based application designed to turn interest in local community sports into

page views for newspaper Web sites. Using it, members and coaches of local youth and recreational leagues can post scores, photos and articles about their games.

"It's a media platform that brings readers' enthusiasms for sports online," said Matt Serpe, business development specialist. "It creates a bonding experience with the community and...re-energizes it. It also offers advertisers a new channel to distribute their marketing message."

Newspapers pay a monthly licensing fee; the Community Sports Desk carries the newspaper's branding. InLocalSports.com (Booth 2922) offers a similar solution.

For weather-obsessed readers, Weather Underground's (Booth 422) Wunder Photos enable them to post photos of local damage caused by tornadoes, hurricanes and other natural disasters. Newspapers can then display these local images on their own Web sites with their own branding, said Chuck Prewitt, vice president of sales and marketing. "It gives a sense of what's happening on the ground at that particular time." Individual photos can even be incorporated into a newspaper's print edition, he added. ■