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### **Media Genesis tackles web usability for largest Chamber of Commerce in the USA**

(Troy, Mich.) What happens when 22,000 of your members visit your web site, each with a different purpose in mind? Member based organizations are unique in that they often have a wide range of communication needs, from legislative, education or lobbying needs to unique needs of members. The Detroit Regional Chamber (DRC) is one such organization whose diversity resulted in a sprawling and complicated web site.

Working with Troy-based Media Genesis ([www.mediaG.com](http://www.mediaG.com)), DRC utilized usability techniques to overhaul its web site experience. The new web site was launched this December at [www.DetroitChamber.com](http://www.DetroitChamber.com) and provides a dynamic link between the chamber and the community that it supports.

At the recent holiday launch event, users were provided the first look at the new web site, in exchange for feedback on the new architecture and layout.

“This project was more than just making an attractive web site,” said Antoine Dubeauclard, president of Media Genesis. “We really wanted to empower the DRC with online technology that would allow them to engage their massive and diverse constituency.”

The first step in improving the DRC’s web presence was identifying what the old site was lacking. Before the restructuring, chamber members felt that information was difficult to find and navigation was tedious.

High fidelity usability tests were used by Media Genesis to collect real life feedback. Twelve people were put in a room and videotaped while experiencing the web site. Mouse movements, facial expressions and audible comments were recorded for later analysis and used to refine architecture, navigation and organization of content.

Another method used was the Media Genesis AMA (Audience Message Action) session with more than 30 DRC personnel where key audiences were identified, and core messages and desired actions were determined.

“This early participation helps reveal the values of the organization,” Dubeauclard said. “All groups begin to understand their unique and shared objectives.”

Traffic analysis highlighted what users really did on the site. By analyzing their patterns of use, the team identified additional opportunities to improve the user’s experience.

The culmination of these techniques resulted in a number of breakthroughs:



- The Detroit Online, the Chamber's publication now operates as its own web site ([www.DetroitOnline.com](http://www.DetroitOnline.com)) where users can preview stories and share feedback and have real time discussions regarding the topics.
- A Content Management System was rolled out so that various groups within the Chamber can manage their own section of the site.

"It was an awesome challenge to leverage these techniques on a project of this complexity" explains Mr. Dubeauclard. "Good news is that these techniques produce predictable results regardless of the size and scale of the organization."

Media Genesis is one of the largest and oldest web development companies in Michigan and specializes in servicing membership and nonprofit organizations. Media Genesis has helped develop and execute strategies for The Salvation Army, Greening of Detroit, University of Michigan and the Detroit Symphony Orchestra and others. For online marketing services for nonprofits please visit [www.DigitalHelpingHands.com](http://www.DigitalHelpingHands.com) or visit [www.mediaG.com/drcpress](http://www.mediaG.com/drcpress) for samples of usability studies and other resources.