

FNOnline

Website Finds New Jobs for Massachusetts Residents

Posted on 28 February 2009.

By Gabrielle Tassone

Increased networking may jumpstart Boston's economy in this period of national stagnation, as a team of five seeks to infuse Boston with the tools for success.

"The message is the method," said David McLaughlin, Executive Director of Boston World Partnerships. "Boston isn't conventional, we don't want a conventional ad to define it."

The non-profit Boston World Partnerships launched BostonWorldPartnerships.com in late-February after 18 months of planning. The company, founded by Mayor Thomas Menino, plans to permeate Boston's economy throughout the state, nation and even the world. The organization will focus on raising global awareness of Boston and its "intellectual capitol and innovation," by promoting existing businesses and helping to establish new ones.

Their mission statement delineates the ultimate goal of BWP, "to inform business leaders worldwide about competitive advantages offered by Boston," and to connect them with the resources needed to grow in the city.

"The structure of the site is designed to leverage the other social networks already set up: Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter," said Chad O'Connor, an adjunct professor at Emerson College. "It blends into those sites, a pro Boston agenda."

With endowments from Proctor and Gamble and the Boston Redevelopment Authority, BWP has the opportunity and ability to innovate, which lead to the launch, and introduction of an "unprecedented model for metropolitan marketing."

BWP is here to strengthen Boston's general business climate, and to help existing business achieve long time success. Inevitably this reaches beyond just businessmen and entrepreneurs, reaching past the business sector and into communities across Greater Boston.

"When economic benefits happen in Boston, they spread, helping not only the city, but the surrounding communities," explained O'Connor. "Boston is the center, but other towns tout the benefits- they too will bring in opportunities for businesses and entrepreneurs. The economy will be strengthened through a ripple effect."

BWP, through promotion of Boston's businesses and entrepreneurs, on their own website and the aforementioned social networking sites, highlights the city's capacity for innovation and community growth. Establishing a presence in other areas of the web further allows BWP to reach out to those with a tie to Boston that may not have frequented the newly launched website.

The two main divisions of the website, Boston Life, and Boston Business, cater to the differences in Boston's growing community and reach out not only to business men and women, but also to those that may not be particularly interested in the business aspect of the city. "[The website] is curated," McLaughlin said. "You can cut through the clutter on BWP, look through the haystack that is Boston and pick out, like a needle, your individual pressing matters."

Boston Life, rather than focusing on business and entrepreneurship, draws attention to the way of city life. With sections like City life Wiki, News, Local Events and My Boston Blog, Boston Life lets the user focus on the social aspect of the city. A calendar of local events and timeline of news reigns in a wide perspective of the city and centers it on what Boston has to offer socially. In this division of the site, a user will find ads encouraging them to add BWP to Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn, as a means of social networking. "Gathering intellect is as important as sharing information," said McLaughlin in regards to networking.

For those more inclined to business or entrepreneurship, Boston Business focuses on six main components of business life in Boston: Ideas & Innovation, Finance & Investment, Healthy & Green, Creative Capital, Global Reach, and Growing Here. These six categories are meant to entice businessmen and women, and entrepreneurs of all sorts. According to McLaughlin, the ambiguity in the titles allows more people to picture themselves fitting into one or more of the categories.

Each heading offers a blog, a connector site, a calendar of events, and news pertinent to all of Greater Boston. In addition to these, Growing Here offers analysis on all facets of the economy, from competitiveness to education, to finance and creative endeavors, truly bringing the attention back to Boston and its economy.

"This isn't, fundamentally, another networking system," stressed McLaughlin, at a mid-February lecture at Emerson College. "There is a unique voice brought to the city by this website that can't be competed with," he said, when mentioning the "connectors."

The connectors are a group of 125 businessmen and women that help to promote BWP and the fundamental idea of establishing business opportunities and ideas. These opportunities and ideas are also known as "leads," and a new lead can be seen on the website every day.

In exchange for positive publicity and networking, connectors agree to complete a survey three times a year for BWP, they are accessible and responsive to the general public, helping to inform and connect.

As upholders of BWP's Mantra, the connectors "inform the world about everything that Boston has to offer." They then connect people to the resources that are mentioned on the website.

As a connector, O'Connor said, "There is a noble altruism to it. The whole site is about giving back, which is why I think it will have a successful impact as a creative endeavor. Because it's so new, it has the opportunity to evolve and grow with intellectual curiosity."

Intellectual curiosity is the differentiating factor between BWP and other developed social networking sites. BWP is a comprehensive campaign, not just a website promoting social contact. McLaughlin listed five components that help to set BWP apart and it is because of these five tools that BWP is able to provide a business lead a day for economic growth. One of these components is a feature called AskBoston- an email service that helps to match individuals with their business needs and business solutions found in the network. This feature is at the core of BWP's goal of informing and connecting, further setting it apart from other established networking sites.

By hopefully bringing in new businesses and entrepreneurs, BWP is helping to stabilize Boston's economy, for this generation and for others to come. McLaughlin and the board of directors envision the site as having a "pay it forward" effect, where each person helped by the site reaches out and helps to share the benefit with other members of the community.

With a staff of only 5 people keeping its cost low, with hopes of self sustainment by 2010, BWP is relying on active community members to become involved, helping to further the site and the goals set in mind when the project began. "We have a lot of good thinking here," said McLaughlin, "but it's not perfect thinking. At the end of the day, it's all about community. It's all about people."