Case Study
Digital Revolution
SD Office of Tourism
April 1, 2010

Headline:
Online Sales Jump Triple Digits for South Dakota Tourism

Situation:
For years www.TravelSD.com has served the South Dakota Office of Tourism well. But since 2006 the design and underlying programming remained largely unchanged. Eventually traffic and online conversions hit a plateau. With increasing online competition from other travel destinations, the SD Office of Tourism decided to ramp up its online presence.

Solution:
In 2009, South Dakota Governor Mike Rounds announced "Digital Revolution" – a new travel website with opportunities for everyone in the visitor industry, both big and small, to control their own content and gain valuable exposure on the home page of South Dakota's official tourism website.

"Users on TravelSD.com are very engaged, and most of them are actively looking for information on where to stay and what to do while they're here. It's the perfect time to get your business information in front of them," said Melissa Bump, director of the Office of Tourism. "The amount of exposure depends on the number of partners, but the rotation is equitable for everyone."

Through Digital Revolution, the new TravelSD.com evolves from informational to transactional, from visitors looking at options to actually booking vacations. With a new design, reorganized content and a programming update to ASP.NET, a premium is placed on improved usability – making it easier for visitors to find what they want.

Every city, attraction, activity, lodging, dining, shopping and traveler service has the opportunity to become a Digital Revolution partner. By paying a one time fee of $250, businesses can add & edit their own description (hours, features, contact information, etc.), upload photos & videos, submit events and add hot deals. Related destinations, activities, vacation packages, events and news stories are automatically associated to businesses and displayed on their pages.

"The cross-selling is one of our favorite features. We believe offering up itinerary suggestions is a great way to show off some of our off-the-beaten-path destinations," continued Bump.

Visitors can add items to a personalized Trip Planner or click to book online. Other opportunities for engagement include requesting vacation guides, signing up for monthly emails targeted to their individual interests, "liking" attractions or destinations and uploading travel photos.
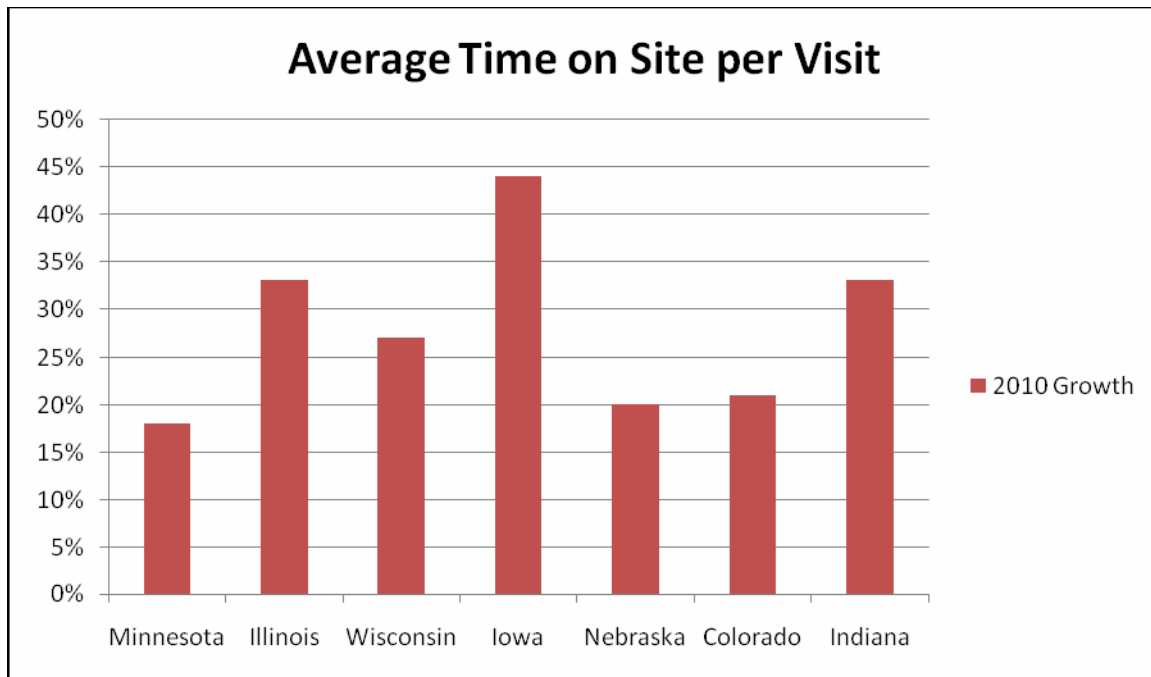
For an additional $250, lodging properties and events with ticket sales can add a booking widget to their partner page, making it possible for online visitors to book directly from TravelSD.com.

Results:
February 2010 is the first full month of operation for Digital Revolution. Compared to the same time period in 2009, the new TravelSD.com has seen dramatic increases in online sales and visitor engagement.

- Online sales are up 257%
- Use of the Trip Planner is up 57%
- Average time on site per visit has increased by 23% for U.S. visitors
- Average time on the Home Page has gone up 24%
- 411 – The total number of saved itineraries through the new Trip Planner tool since launching January 20, 2010. This means a user had to create a user name, and has logged in and saved their itinerary multiple times.

"We were especially happy with the level of engagement from our users. Time On Site and Pageviews are critical metrics to monitor, and both are showing positive results," said Bump. "The booking results were outstanding, and really show that users are not only using the site for planning, but also making the final purchase decision."

Average Time on Site per Visit

Minnesota: ~18%, Illinois: ~33%, Wisconsin: ~27%, Iowa: ~44%, Nebraska: ~20%, Colorado: ~21%, Indiana: ~33% (2010 Growth)

Pages per Visit