

# PRINTED MATTERS

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MAGAZINES AND WEBSITES

## A delicate balancing act

For magazines, running a website is a bit of a balancing act, says Otto Vondrak, webmaster for Missouri-based publishing company White River Productions.

You want your website to shine, and you want good copy and advertising, but you can't let it outshine your magazine.

"A lot of what we put on the website supports an article in our magazine," said Vondrak, who also serves as associate editor and art director for *Railfan and Railroad Magazine*, one of the five commercial magazines published by White River Productions for train hobbyists and railroad modelers.



Exceeding our customers' expectations for more than 60 years...

White River Productions' websites do have short articles you won't find in its magazines, but all of them tie in with the magazines' overall content. In addition, many of the website articles provide links to relevant articles in the corresponding digital magazine. And the print magazines invite people to visit them online. "The websites and magazines go back and forth with each other without competing with one another."

Derick Mann, owner and publisher of *Show Horse* magazine, takes a similar approach to his magazine's website, [www.showhorsemagazine.com](http://www.showhorsemagazine.com). "For us, instead of trying to think of a way to profit on the digital side, we find a way to tie it to the print magazine and have them prop each other up," Mann said. "It's a very fine line to walk."

*Show Horse* has been fine-tuning its website and preparing to launch an app. "You'll be able to find horse shows with our app, but only if they're listed in our print directory," Mann said. "We don't add anything on the digital side you couldn't find on the print side."

Clearly, managing a website requires time, planning and a bit of financial investment. However, not offering a website or putting minimal effort into one could be depriving you of a tremendously valuable business tool. "This is another way to interact with your readers and strengthen your brand," Vondrak said.

With that idea in mind, we've decided to provide a few mini case studies on trade magazine websites. We hope this information will give you a few ideas and help you select the best approach for your own operation.

### **Railfan & Railroad Magazine**

This website, [www.railfan.com](http://www.railfan.com), caters to two primary groups: people who read

the monthly print publication and prospective publication readers. The original content usually comprises articles that the editors couldn't fit in the print version or small write-ups on topics of interest to rail hobbyists. "We hope people will find that the content on the website is a good indication of what they'd get if they subscribed to our magazine," Vondrak said.

The staff tries to select articles, photos and announcements that are "share worthy" by email or social media. Readers even enjoy sharing articles from Railfan Classics, which displays articles that were printed in the magazine decades ago. The site also features Railfan Timetable, a list of railroad events submitted by readers. "I also can export them, and we can publish them in our magazine because people use it as a resource," he said.

Vondrak also strives, without being intrusive, to incorporate magazine branding into the website pages, from Railfan Hot Rail News to Railfan Photo Line. With this approach, people who don't enter the site from the home page will still see the connection to the print publication.

Vondrak is in the process now of shifting White River Productions' magazine websites to WordPress. WordPress is easy to use, he says, and doesn't require computer code knowledge, so Vondrak will be able to involve more people in adding content. Normally, he updates the site's news weekly or daily, and he updates the photo galleries monthly.

### **Northwestern Financial Review**

The website [northwesternfinancialreview.com](http://northwesternfinancialreview.com), corresponds with a monthly print publication founded in 1894 to serve community bankers in 14 Midwestern states.

The website features include a

"Send Us Your News" tab with clear instructions and a "Nominate a Banker" tab that allows readers to recommend local bankers for recognition. Not only is there a blog section, with additions made about twice a month, the blog section links visitors to the websites of the other magazines published by Minneapolis-based NFR Communications, including *Northwest Weekly*, *CFPF Journal* and *NW Financial Review*. Each site has a similar look and feel and provides banking and financial information.

Additional website features: social media links, advertising information, subscription information, lists of banks by state (with quarterly FDIC updates), up-to-date industry data, and magazine archives dating back to 2009.


### **The Woodie Times**

This monthly specialty car publication does not have its own site, but it maintains a page on the National Woodie Club's website at [www.nationalwoodieclub.com](http://www.nationalwoodieclub.com). The site also provides visitors with classified advertising, a catalog and regularly updated event listings.

Access to the magazine page, which features the publication's current issue and archives, is limited to club members.

### **Marine Electronics Journal**

The website for this bimonthly publication, [www.marineelectronicsjournal.com](http://www.marineelectronicsjournal.com), describes itself as a "one-stop portal" for marine electronics information.

Features include blogs that are posted about twice a month; a manufacturer/dealer/product search engine; a buyers' guide; a newsletter sign-up option, and a link to the National Marine Electronics Association. 

# One on one

**JPA profile:** Michelle McBeath, bindery helper

**Number of years with JPA:** 6 months

**Why she loves JPA:** "I love the hours," McBeath said. "I can be home more with my kids. And the stress level isn't nearly what it was." It's not that McBeath didn't like her last position as a medical office assistant with Illinois State University. But two hours of commuting each work day,



Rick and Michelle



Front: Jake, Josh  
Back: Rick, Elizabeth, Marlee, Michelle, Christopher, Nikki Mills

combined with 10-hour shifts, was becoming draining. Besides, McBeath adds, her new role with JPA has been a great learning opportunity. "It's really interesting. I enjoy it a lot."

**Family life:** McBeath and her husband, Rick, have been married for 21 years. Their combined family includes Elizabeth, 29; Christopher, 27; Jacob, 17; and Joshua, 16. The couple also has two grandchildren. Marlee turns 4 in July, and Maddisyn is 1½. Shortly after Maddisyn was born, her mom (Elizabeth) fell on the ice and shattered

her elbow. So Michelle and Rick cared for the newborn for nearly six weeks. "I enjoyed it, but I felt bad because it was a difficult transition when she went home. All is well now, though. She's a little spitfire."

**Hobbies:** The McBeath family loves camping. "We have a permanent campsite; it's almost like a second home," McBeath says. "And I usually have the grandbabies there every other weekend." Christopher has a campsite right next to his parents, and spends a lot of time there, too. "We're a very tight-knit family," said McBeath, adding that their campsite is at Bayou Bluffs Campground near Cornell, Ill. There, in addition to their camper, the family has satellite service, storage sheds and golf carts.

**Cool fact:** "We're a family of Marines," McBeath says. "My nephew is a fourth generation Marine." McBeath's nephew, Lance Corporal Cody Anderson, is serving in Bahrain. Before him, McBeath's brother helped with the cleanup after Operation Desert Storm; her father served in Vietnam, and her grandfather served in World War II. "We're very proud of all of them," McBeath says. 📧



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## RECIPE

### Bacon Ranch Potatoes

2½ pounds red potatoes  
1 pound of bacon  
1 cup of ranch dressing  
1 cup of sour cream  
1 cup of shredded cheese

Dice and boil the potatoes until they are almost done. Fry the bacon until it is crispy, and then crush it into bacon bits. Mix the ranch dressing and the sour cream in a bowl. Next, add ¾ cup of cheese and bacon, and pour the dressing mix over the potatoes. Put the mixture in an oven-safe dish; cover it with the remaining cheese, and bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes or until it is bubbly.

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