Model Comparison and Contrast Essay

Two Very Different Resources

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The amount of information a person can get from a simple web search can be overwhelming. For example, searching the key words “wrongful conviction” results in thousands of hits. The biggest challenge facing a person carrying out such a search is evaluating the trustworthiness of the information on these sites. A comparison and contrast of two websites that resulted from this search reveals some very interesting differences. The first site, for the People’s Law Office, is clearly commercial, while the second site, for the Innocence Project, has a broader purpose. Although both websites claim to help people who have been wrongfully convicted of crimes, they differ significantly in **content**, **purpose**, and **intended audience**.

The People’s Law Office website presents information about what its lawyers can do for clients. The website is appealing and easy to read; the pages are white and gray with bars of purple and green. The law office’s name, logo, and contact information are highlighted at the top of each page. On the site’s home page is a bright green bar that contains the main menu. Each of the menu’s six tabs takes readers to information about the law office’s successes. A tab titled “Victories” leads to a list of cases won. Another page describes the office’s “long and illustrious history” od protecting people’s civil rights. Under “Areas of Practice” is the office’s “remarkable track record” and a discussion of its “decades of experience.” Under “News and Commentary,” the People’s Law Office emphasizes its achievements and includes articles written by its lawyers. Below these tabs is a slide show that displays photos of clients who were freed by the efforts of the firm’s lawyers. Throughout these pages, the content emphasizes the dedication and the effectiveness of the firm.

The content of the People’s Law Office website indicates that its purpose is commercial and that its audience is people who need the services of the firm’s lawyers. The website attempts to attract potential clients by appealing to both logic and emotions. By emphasizing its successes, the firm established its credibility and tries to convince people that People’s Law Office lawyers usually win their cases. The People’s Law Office website also appeals to readers’ emotions with a slide show of photos. In one image, a police officer is shown mistreating an unnamed protester. In another, a joyful man, with his smiling lawyers, is pictured leaving a courthouse. The accompanying copy addresses the audience as you and declares, “If your constitutional rights have been violated, we can help….” This content makes clear that the purpose of the People’s Law Office site is to sell the firm’s legal services to people who believe that they have been victimized by the legal system.

Although the Innocence Project also presents fact about itself, it offers more extensive and varied content than the People’s Law Office. Like the commercial People’s Law Office, the nonprofit Innocence Project has mostly white and gray pages accented with bars of color; it also has a slide show on its home page. However, there are many notable differences between the two sites. One difference is that the Innocence Project slide show contains pictures of people who were declared innocent after they had been convicted. Instead of having its address and phone number at the top of each page, the Innocence Project has a search tab and a sign-up button for the organization’s email. Another difference is the main menu bar, which has two sides. The slightly larger, rust-colored left side has three tabs: “Know the Cases,” “Understand the Causes,” and “Fix the System.” Each of these tabs directs the reader to an extensive menu of sub-topics. The smaller, mustard-colored right side has four tabs: “Home,” “About,” “Donate,” and “News and Resources.” These tabs lead readers to information about the organization as well as to a list of related links. This design is not flashy, but it enables visitors to easily navigate the site.

Unlike People’s Law Office, the Innocence Project has several purposes and, therefore, multiple audiences. First, the detailed information, including the labeled slide show, indicates that the site’s main purpose is to educate. This material is aimed at anyone who is interested in knowing more about wrongful conviction or in reading about individual cases. Second, the organization wants to encourage people to take action. By suggesting numerous ways of getting involved, the site addresses people who already support the organization’s cause and want to do more. Finally, the nonprofit Innocence Project wants to offer legal services to people who think they have been wrongly convicted. Unlike People’s Law Office, the Innocence Project does not address the reader as you. Because this organization is not trying to solicit business, it uses a more straightforward, informative tone.

Ultimately, the purpose of the People’s Law Office commercial website is to sell services to a specific audience, while the goal of the nonprofit Innocence Project site is to provide free resources to its target audiences. The two organizations share a desire to free innocent people who have been wrongly convicted. They also have clear agendas. On the one hand, the Innocence Project is interested in addressing and remedying problems with the legal system. On the other hand, People’s Law Office is interested in soliciting business for its lawyers. Comparing and contrasting these two sites allows readers to see the objectives of each more clearly and thus choose a source that meets their needs.

Works Cited

Innocence Project. *Innocence Project.* Web. 26 JUL. 2014

People’s Law Office. *People’s Law Office*. Web. 26 Jul. 2014