



Dayspring

ThingsAsian 2006

Online Community Grows—Guided by Flexibility

Client

Global Directions, Inc.(GDI), a San Francisco-based developer of Web properties including the online travel magazine ThingsAsian.com and ThingsAsianPress.com.

Situation

In 2001 GDI chose Dayspring as its partner to develop its first-generation site ThingsAsian.com, a premier and content-rich online travel magazine, among a suite of other Web and marketing solutions. In five years, driven by the development of the Internet, ThingsAsian's business focus was evolving, mirroring the Web's development along several key themes: content management, advertising-driven revenues, e-commerce, and community. Growing pains for ThingsAsian meant it was facing the same challenge as many others—how to increase user-generated content and how to increase traffic, that is, how do you put down a larger welcome mat for more authors and their admirers?

Vision

Global Directions imagined a redesigned site that would dramatically decrease the barriers to content contribution making it virtually frictionless and thus encouraging increasing growth in its content, community, and visibility.

Execution

The existing site was built on a custom community system that allows users to contribute content—which is subject to editorial approval—from anywhere in the world. Content includes stories, photos, and tips about hotels, restaurants, sightseeing and shopping, and was organized via geographic and topical hierarchies.

For the redesign, the Dayspring team addressed three primary questions:

- How do you draw visitors to the site?
- How do you engage visitors once they've arrived?
- How do you convert visitors into participating community members and encourage existing members to contribute?

Addressing the first question, search engine optimization was a key consideration in the restructuring of the site to include home pages that aggregated content about various topics and destinations. SEO best practices were used to optimize page content and link structure.

In answering the second question, Dayspring's development team responded with a smart solution that combines information about a visitor's previous behavior on the site as well as the behavior of the community of users to intelligently anticipate the answer to "What do you want to read next?"

To answer the third question, the Dayspring team assessed the existing site to identify areas to improve the user experience and streamline community involvement. Dayspring developed simplified flows for submitting content, organizing images, commenting, rating, and tagging. The new design also exposed page view and commenting statistics in a member "control panel." All factors work together to promote participation in the community.

Technologies employed: Java, Ajax, MS SQL Server, Apache, Tomcat, Web 2.0, Amazon E-Commerce, Google AdSense

Dayspring has served as Global Directions, Inc.'s Web design and development partner since 1999.

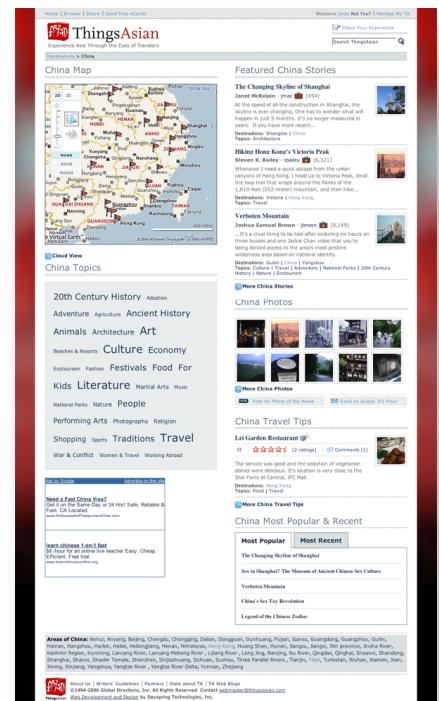
"In 1999 I decided to out-source our entire technical department. Now, I create the content and Dayspring takes care of the rest. I am a very happy web publisher."

Albert Wen
Founder
Global Directions, Inc.



ThingsAsian

Experience Asia Through the Eyes of Travelers



www.thingsasian.com