

PhillyFuture.org - Media Giraffe Profile

PhillyFuture.org

Karl Martino - Founder

"America Online is a good example of an ISP that places users in a walled garden. I'm taking liberty with the phrase and am using it to label those sites that attempt to get you to click within them for as long as possible. I want you to come to Philly Future, see an item of interest, and then click away to whatever and wherever that is. That's the heart of blogging if you ask me. Sharing not capturing.

Karl Martino, in a Dec., 2004 interview with Ed Cone "

Location: Philadelphia, PA

Email: paradox1x@pobox.com

Website: www.phillyfuture.org/

About

In March 2006, Karl Martino gathered with a group of Philadelphia journalists and other media visionaries to consider at a one-day conference what the future of newspapers might be. They started using the term "norg" to describe their vision and they have begun a wiki site to advance the ideas.

A 19-year-old Philadelphian walked into a Sears telemarketing job not knowing what to expect. By the time he left, he had changed the way the company tracked customers and developed a working knowledge of programming and databases. Years later, he started a blog that has become an asset to the greater Philadelphia area. He is a software engineer for Comcast's online group.

Martino also spent time working for Philly.com as the lead architect of a content management system used by over 17 newspaper sites. As Martino says in his personal blog, "I've been smack dab in the middle of this new media web thing for some time now."

In December 1999, Martino started www.phillyfuture.org, a blog that allows people in Philadelphia to share ideas and network. "I started it to give something back to the city," says Martino. According to the software engineer, there is great potential for the internet to translate into real world change.

Posts harp on an array of issues including homelessness, poverty, and local politics. Discussions can be held about the future of the Eagles franchise and what the latest election means in the grand scheme of things. People post concert reviews, local stories and ask for input on polls.

Does Martino intend for his website to be a competitor of traditional newspapers? He thinks that is a little far fetched. He thinks that traditional journalism is under extreme financial pressure and senses the semi-closed nature of newspapers coming to an end. "Editors jobs have transformed," he says, commenting on how editors need to balance reporting and public opinion more than ever before.

The idea could easily catch on in areas outside of Philadelphia and probably has. "Barriers to entry have fallen terrifically," says Martino. Philly Future has been operating without a staff since it started in 1999.

Martino mentions that ten years ago thousands of dollars would have been needed to create a community space on the web such as Philly Future. Now, he says, as little as \$75 a month can maintain a similar website.

Martino has been running Philly Future "out-of-pocket" since its creation. Recently, hosting costs have increased, which made it necessary to run ads on the website from the ad network blogads.com. Blogads.com, which started in 2002, offers links to other blogs, making money by appealing to similar demographics.

The idea of niches is one aspect of this recent web development that has Martino a bit nervous. "I can read other points of view, but I have to drive myself to do it," says Martino. According to him, the internet shrinks time and space and although he sees the internet as more of a communication tool rather than a research tool, it may become difficult to communicate between different groups.

A major focus of Philly Future is to encourage geographical communication instead of just forming communities of interest. Although communities of interest are comfortable and interesting, are they healthy? If debate is necessary to sustain a democracy, are you going to find it if you communicate exclusively with those who share your same ideas?

One of the refreshing aspects of Philly Future is the way it encourages communication within actual communities, not just cyber communities. Although it may seem strange to use a blog as a way to meet your neighbors, it is a good way to get people to start communicating with each other.

One fear that has emerged, especially in the minds of journalists, is the way that blog entries can harm you, especially when competing for a job. One controversial post is enough to hurt your qualification. Martino understands these fears but is willing to take the risk. As he bluntly stated, "it can harm you or help you." He suggests people should balance their thoughts, use moderation and understand what audience may be reading their thoughts.

Martino makes it known that unlike other sites, which offer internal links and attempt to keep you on their page for as long as possible, Philly Future serves as a starting point and encourages users to wander off their page when interest strikes them. Martino hopes that most that come to phillyfuture.org will wander off somewhere and learn something. He hopes his website will become something beneficial to the Philadelphia region.

Profile updated March 12, 2007 and written by Media Giraffe Project researcher Matthew Alvey at the University of Massachusetts.

ALSO NOTED:

Karl Martino's personal "about" page
Personal mission statement
Ed Cone's interview with Karl Martino

Links

- [Read More](#)

Media Giraffe Profile Archive | ID: 108

Created: 2005-06-20 12:27:41

Last Modified: 2008-12-04 10:46:01