



Digital Collaboration for Marketing and Outreach

“From website to web presence at the Algarve Energy Park”

John Stone III, Founder and CEO at Revenue Architects, December 2009



Digital Marketing and Collaboration at the Algarve Energy Park

Globalization, inexpensive network connectivity, growth in social software and a new architecture of participation is driving an explosive growth in social networking and business collaboration. The Algarve Energy Park is embracing these trends and technologies to accelerate marketing outreach and drive collaborative working.

The Digital Context

Social software is connecting people across time zones and cultures. Platforms like LinkedIn and Facebook are widely adopted in both personal and professional networks. The assimilation of global teams within a collaborative working framework is far easier than ever before and no longer requires complex choices of often expensive and proprietary technologies and processes. Today, cloud-based applications are available on demand at little or no cost and it is easier than ever before for users from different organizations and with varied technical skills to quickly adopt these services.

At the same time, marketing leaders are transforming how they engage, educate and influence target audiences. Traditional media is declining as a model for audience outreach. Advertising is less effective as consumers gain more control of what they consume. People can now easily filter out the unwanted pushed messages and “tivo” through advertisements. Newspaper readers abandon print versions and consume content online - and using RSS readers, they bypass advertisements. The industry may arrive at a balance that helps monetize quality content, but within this environment, marketers recognize the need to engage audiences in new ways. Brands can no longer control their message through *owned* media and they are becoming more focused on *earned* media. They are moving beyond a focus on their *website* to a focus on their *web presence*.

With the advent of social media and web 2.0 services,

exciting and informative content can be easily shared across the social web. As my colleague Amy Hunt says, more than ever, content needs to be like “peanut butter” - sticky and spreadable!

So, what does this mean for the Algarve Energy Park?

When we consider the role of collaborative and new media technologies that support the Park, we can focus on two critical stages in the Park’s development and consider the corresponding roles of these new collaborative and digital technologies.

1. Digital Collaboration for Research As the Park develops, we will need to adopt strategies to use digital networks, community tools and collaborative technology that support our global research business and academic teams.

2. Digital Collaboration for Marketing and Outreach Today and on an on-going basis - we need digital collaboration and outreach to foster the support, dialog and engagement required to shape the direction of the vision and engage our audience to collaborate, support and partner in the success of the vision.

Digital Collaboration for Research

At its core, AEP is about collaboration. The Park will combine leading thinking across a combination of interrelated elements - academics, economists, business strategists, energy researchers as well as architects and master planners to create a sustainable community to design and develop new technologies and set standards for clean energy, sustainable living, and personalized medicine. The community will benefit from both in-person and digitally-enabled collaboration. By extending the physical interactions digitally, we foster greater global collaboration among experts across disciplines and accelerate the velocity of knowledge and science globally. AEP can be at the forefront of the work in support of sustainable energy.

Deep web experiences offer a blend with physical experiences to create a unifying human experience. As collaborators in the park, we will be considering how these enabling technologies and web collaborative social experiences will impact successful research. We believe that open platforms and social network technologies can effectively drive communications and support the research agenda. With a diverse range of collaborators working together on sustainable energy, we need solutions that are open, available and easy to use. At the same time, we understand that some projects will need deeper structures and security levels to facilitate formal research and economic agendas. As these technologies mature we will see a shift from social focus to a blend of social and business focus. We will see the greater levels of security, reliability and availability needed for mission critical program work. The challenge for AEP will be to find the right mix of openly available platforms and dedicated solutions. The right solutions will be ones that fit with the specific needs of the collaborating teams.

Digital Collaboration for Marketing and Outreach

At our early stage of development, we are marshalling support and capturing insights from many key stakeholders that help define the AEP vision and support program development. We are a collaborative global network of leaders, influencers, stakeholders and investors connecting across government, community, business and science leaders. We listen to these communities to incorporate insights and perspectives that shape a better outcome.

At our current stage of development, it would be irrational to launch an expensive outreach program using traditional media for communication. Could these strategies even succeed given the global range and diversity of our audience? With such a diverse set of stakeholders, we needed to consider how to best engage our audience? How can we reach out and be available to a global and local audience? How can we capture input and insights to shape the strategy? What are the best ways to foster interest and commitment?

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We believe the answer is to embrace a *new marketing* strategy. We are using new media to facilitate the outreach agenda. We use the social web and effective web presence to be where our stakeholders are. While branding and design are important to reinforce our core vision, we also place emphasis on content and functionality that support our stakeholder needs. Our strategy is to build a web presence beginning with an effective website and tools for interactive communications. We are extending our web presence with new media digital outposts. With these capabilities in place, we will have the foundation to grow incrementally with a focus on content and conversation. Below are the elements of our new marketing presence and outreach strategies:

Website: Our website is at the center of the discussions, content and information resources for the community. The site is using up to date web 2.0 features that encourage content engagement and sharing. The back end administration of the site facilitates continuous updates to valuable content. We will deliver content in the two languages that our audience is most comfortable with - English and Portuguese. A blog informs readers of updated insights and content from the Park. The foundation for the site is using an open source content management system and facilities to continually update of the site elements, content and promotional messages.

Digital Video: The team has already created some exciting video assets that introduce, promote and explain the Park vision. We know that video is a popular and important media for education and information sharing and we host these on the open web using Vimeo and YouTube. By using social media, we can expose the AEP vision to an audience that may not have otherwise found us at the website. Presence on these open video services enhances our search visibility and helps us expand our footprint.

LinkedIn: LinkedIn is the established social media platform leader for business networking and

collaboration. We do not need to build out our own community on our own website. We can engage a platform like LinkedIn that so much of our audience is accustomed and comfortable using. We can use LinkedIn to share the profile of the Park, leaders within the team and engage in discussions. We can share news from the park and bring people back to the website to learn more.

Facebook: We usually think of Facebook as a “social” network. We mostly use Facebook as a place to share our personal views and life activities with our trusted network of friends. We may not think of Facebook as a platform for business, but there are about 350,000 businesses using Facebook today. Facebook provides another extension of our web presence and allows us to share news with the community that is connected to us there. Big brands and sports teams gain a great followings and fans. Our presence may not attract a massive following, but we can be available to our constituents on another popular outpost and deliver another opportunity for them to engage with us. AEP also includes an innovative residential and living model and the Facebook presence may grow to be a vibrant part of the social fabric among park residents. In keeping with our strategy, why build or promote a proprietary private community application when we can carve out an appropriate presence on a very popular and engaging platform like Facebook.

Twitter: We are also preparing to roll out a Twitter presence. Twitter will be an important way for us to stay connected with the deeper web conversations. The depth of conversations and mentions on Twitter helps us find those potential collaborators on the park’s mission and research topics. Twitter will allow us to build a following as well - our community of stakeholders will be able to track developments from the park through Twitter updates. We can use Twitter and related platforms like co-tweet or Tweetdeck to engage in the conversations that are relevant to the park’s mission. The tools we will use will allow us to manage our micro blogging and status updates from one place. We can share links to meaningful content and valued insights for our commu-

nity - where they are. We will reTweet - or resend - the interesting tweets we find to our community. As our capacity and ambition evolves, AEP can stand out as a content leader on critical sustainable energy topics, but in the nearer term, Twitter will be a great source of insight and information sharing about the topics that drive the AEP agenda.

Bringing it all together

The Algarve Energy Park is about innovation and collaboration. By being connected and available in the social web, we are ready to begin the dialog. We are eager to hear from you and anticipate that our audience will be excited about the ideas and concepts that AEP is putting forward. We expect that collaborators will find their way to news and information across the different touch points and that they will find their way to our home on the web. When they visit us, they will have the opportunity to learn about the park, comment on content items, subscribe to feeds, and register to receive updated news and information on a more regular basis. We will offer different mailing lists to help them stay informed on the specific topics that drive their particular interests and encourage our guests to take action: Collaborate, Support, Partner!

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