

Reno.gov Website Report

City of Reno, Nevada

April 14, 2010

This report provides a comprehensive analysis of the use of online services offered by the City of Reno through its website, www.reno.gov. Prepared by the City of Reno Web Services Program Manager in coordination with the City of Reno Website Committee and City Departments.

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Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the use of online services offered by the City of Reno through its website, www.reno.gov. The City of Reno website interfaces with all departments, and this report presents data from all of the major online systems, including transaction totals and revenue processed.

Data collected from Fiscal Year 2008-2009 on the performance of the City of Reno website is compared with data from Fiscal Year 2007-2008 in order to identify trends in service and website usage. This year-over-year comparison shows a dramatic increase in citizen usage of the online services offered by the City.

Report Highlights

- Processed a total of 27,108 online transactions in FY08/09, an increase of 121% from FY07/08.
- Collected a total of \$1,351,938 online in FY08/09, an increase of 579% from FY07/08.
- Launched online payment of sewer bills and traffic citations.
- Implemented social media technologies.
- Reno website named best in the nation by the City/County Communications & Marketing Association (3CMA).

All City departments have taken an approach to promoting 24/7 online self-service to encourage residents to make use of the services available at www.reno.gov. Our current self-service applications include service requests, police reporting, class registration, job application, parking ticket payment, sewer bill payment, traffic citation payment, email alert subscriptions, interactive GIS maps and our Virtual Permit Place. Numerous other 'quasi-service' features are available, such as RSS feeds, webcam feeds and other technologies.

Performance of the City's social media program and future online service delivery goals for the current and upcoming fiscal years are also included in this report.

Web Services Program

The City of Reno web services program operates out of the Community Relations Division of the City Manager's Office. One full-time staff member, the Web Services Program Manager, oversees the development of the City website and coordinates and trains over 80 staff members (Content Editors) representing every department. Content updates are generally performed by departments, while new applications and technology enhancements are coordinated by the Web Services Program Manager in conjunction with the Community Relations Director, the Communications & Technology Department and any involved departments. Management of the employee intranet also falls under web services, as well as the City's use of social media and new mobile technologies for access to online services.

An internal Website Committee comprised of one staff member from each department is designed as a forum to allow department representatives to share department online needs, report on website issues and challenges and discuss new ideas.

The web services program strategy is reviewed annually and is made public in the City Budget for the fiscal year. The City's strategic business planning approach involves identifying five-year program goals, ongoing and current service objectives, and performance measures for the web program. The web services program also supports the City's Strategic Communications Plan.

Reno.gov Website

The www.reno.gov website is a compilation of many separate web applications and services developed both internally and by external vendors. The goal is to integrate these applications in a way that is the most seamless and usable for the public. The City of Reno contracts with Vision Internet Providers, Inc. for the technology platform behind the website. Website updates are made via the vendor's content management system interface.

In an effort to make it easier to connect with the City of Reno online, the official web address was changed to "Reno.gov" in January 2010. This domain name replaced the former "Cityofreno.com" for both the website URL and email addresses.

There were many advantages to switching to the new domain. Shorter domains are easier to read, type and remember. Reno now has one of the shortest domains in the country for local government websites. We acquired the "Reno.gov" domain prior to new rules by the U.S. General Services Administration, which require any new ".gov" domains to include the state abbreviation. These domains can only be used by federal, state and local government organizations. Switching to "Reno.gov" is expected to contribute to a higher search engine ranking, allowing us to reach a large number of users who select only the first result.

Given the current financial situation, the new domain is slowly being phased in on printed materials and business cards in order to avoid additional printing costs. The 'Cityofreno.com' address will continue to be redirected to the website to avoid broken links.

Website Purpose

The City of Reno promotes the use of 24/7 online services. There are many benefits to offering online services for the public, including increased access to City services, reduced staff time involved in processing in-person, over the phone or mailed-in transactions, and convenience to citizens by reducing the need for trips to City facilities.

In addition to efficiently delivering City services, www.reno.gov is also designed to convey information and communications to the public in support of the City's goals and objectives. The website integrates public education tools including an email subscription service, RSS feeds, videos from the City's government access channel and news releases. The website also encourages interactivity through an instant poll, customer surveys and integration with social networking tools.

Another goal of the City website is to promote Reno as the ideal location to live, visit and start a business. An analysis of website traffic data suggests that many site visitors are first time visitors seeking information about Reno and activities to do in the area.

In the spirit of transparency, staff supports open and public information via the website and encourages public participation in City activities by publishing detailed staff reports, streaming Council meetings live online and striving to make more information available via the web.

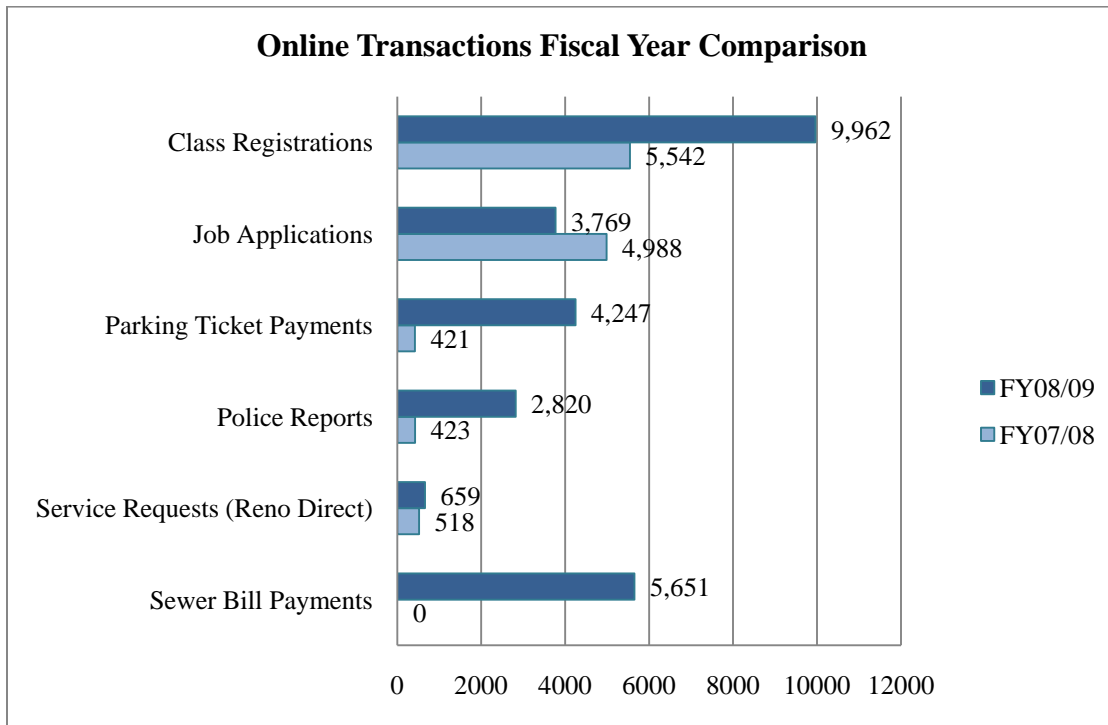
Integrated Systems

Our goal whenever possible is to integrate online transaction systems with existing back-end database systems in order to provide a seamless transaction and reduce staff time. We are already integrating our online recreation classes registration with our backend CLASS system; police reports utilizing CopLogic to interface with Tiburon; sewer bill and parking ticket payment collection interfacing directly with our New World financial system; and our online citizen service requests interface directly with our customer relationship software, QAlert, used by our Reno Direct citizen call center.

Online Service Usage

When discussing the direction of services on the City of Reno website and what resources will be allocated to website development, it is important to understand what services are currently offered and if they are being used by the public. In Fiscal Year 2008-2009, the City of Reno processed a total of 27,108 online transactions and processed \$1,351,938 in online payments.

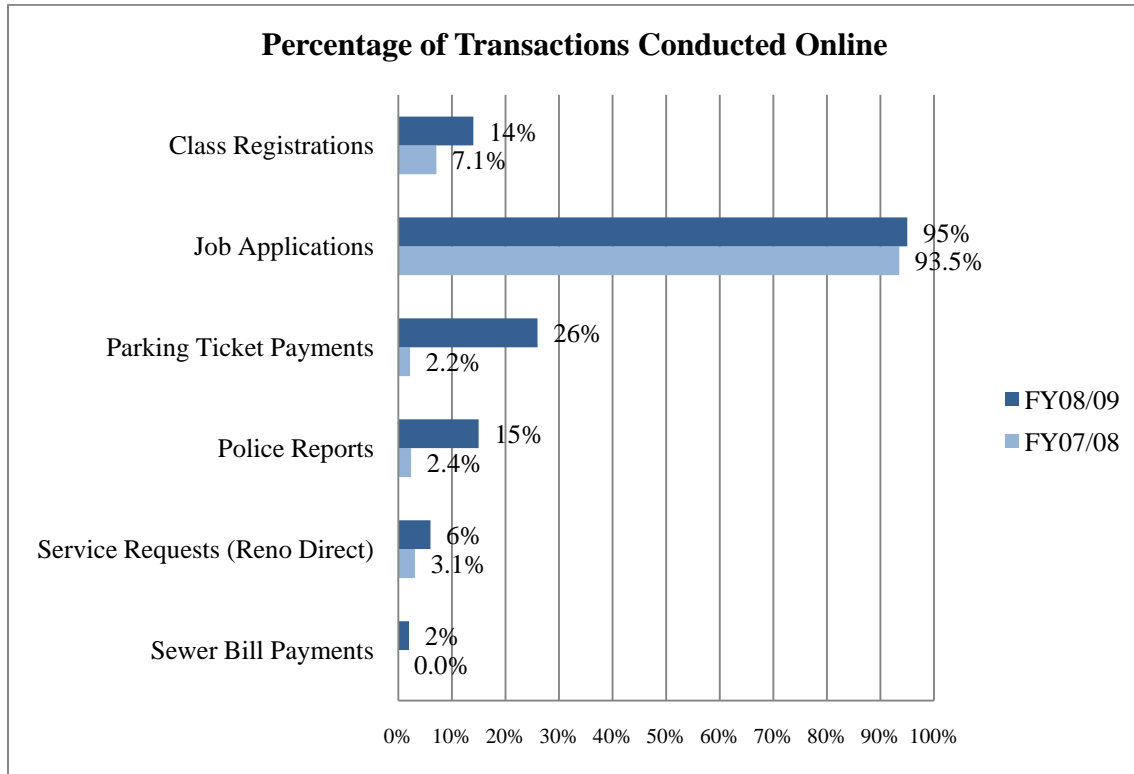
The following graph shows the increase in online transactions from Fiscal Year 2007-2008 and Fiscal Year 2008-2009. This year-over-year comparison shows a significant increase in use of all online services. The only service with fewer transactions is job applications, which likely correlates to a fewer number of job postings. Sewer payments came online July 31, 2008.



The total number of transactions processed online in Fiscal Year 2008-2009 increased 121% from the previous year. It should be noted that sewer payments were not online in Fiscal Year 2007-2008. The data for class registration, service requests and parking ticket payments for Fiscal Year 2007-2008 does not reflect a full year due to the services coming online throughout the year.¹

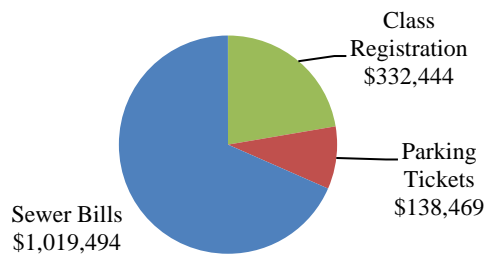
¹ Dates services went live online: Class Registration Aug. 1, 2007; Service Requests Dec. 2007; Parking Tickets June 3, 2008; Sewer Payments July 31, 2008.

To put these numbers into perspective, the following graph shows the percentage of each online service that was conducted online versus traditional methods such as in-person, mail or telephone. For instance, 14% of all class registrations were conducted online in Fiscal Year 2008-2009.



Three services in Fiscal Year 2008-2009 processed payments online. The City of Reno collected a total of \$1,351,938 online, an increase of 579% from FY07/08. The largest factor in the substantial increase is sewer payments coming online.

Payment Systems: Amount Collected Online FY2008-2009



New Online Services

The City of Reno website must constantly evolve to meet the needs of our citizens and our organization. Staff has been able to leverage existing resources and partnerships to launch several recent enhancements and individual departments have participated as well.

Recent Enhancements

Court Payments

Reno Municipal Court has recently brought court payments online. The system may be accessed via the Self-Service menu on www.reno.gov. Payments accepted include traffic citations, bail posting on warrants and payment extension plans.

Language Translation

The City of Reno is currently beta-testing language translation technology in order to reach non-English speaking residents online. The tool was implemented in March 2010 and translates the content and menu items on the website, including calendar events and news releases. The visitor can select from 52 languages.

Mobile Site

To promote 24/7 use of web services, the City of Reno launched a mobile site for www.reno.gov in March 2010. The mobile version allows any citizen with a smart phone to easily access Reno.gov online through a special interface formatted to fit a cell phone screen. Any emergency announcements will appear first, and news and events have been redesigned to be accessed easily from phones.

Reno worked with Vision Internet Providers, Inc. to develop the mobile site. Reno.gov is one of the first sites to use their new mobile technology. The City of Reno was able to leverage an existing contract with Vision in order to develop the mobile site, so there were no additional costs to the City.

Crime Reports iPhone App

A new iPhone app has made it easier for residents to access crime data mapping through the Reno Police Department in partnership with CrimeReports. RPD initiated local crime mapping and national sex offender data in February of 2008 in partnership with CrimeReports through a link on the police department's webpage. This data is now accessible through the CrimeReports iPhone app, available at no charge at the iTunes App Store. In addition to local crime, the iPhone app also features crime data for more than 600 other law enforcement agencies across North America, and includes registered sex offender data for all 50 states.



Police Report Lookup

The Reno Police Department worked with Communication and Technology database staff to offer a police report lookup system online. Citizens can use their case number for self-service access to the status of their case online, instead of needing to call the department for this information.

Future Enhancements

The goal will always be to provide more online services such as payment systems that integrate with back-end database systems. As technology and resources become available, robust online systems for business licenses and community development permits should be considered.

Accessibility Audit

An accessibility audit of the City of Reno website is needed. Section 508 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act lays forth standards that require technology to be accessible to people with disabilities. Our website should be evaluated against these standards, and an action plan should be developed to address any deficiencies identified in the review. Due to the current economic situation, staff will explore any possible partnerships with local educational institutions, technology groups and advisory committees concerned with equal access for all.

Usability Study

A usability study should be conducted in order to gain a real-world understanding of how the public uses our website. These studies are invaluable for identifying how to make improvements to streamline online processes and simplify the presentation of information. Staff is pursuing a partnership with Webmasters in Nevada Government (WING), to develop a testing environment to conduct usability studies for the websites of the City of Reno, Washoe County and the City of Sparks.

Volunteer Database

The City of Reno website will soon be connected to a volunteer database project, currently being beta-tested by Washoe County. Staff is working closely with other agencies to create a one-stop location for northern Nevada residents to sign up for government volunteer positions. The joint effort is expected to launch in 2010.

Live Chat

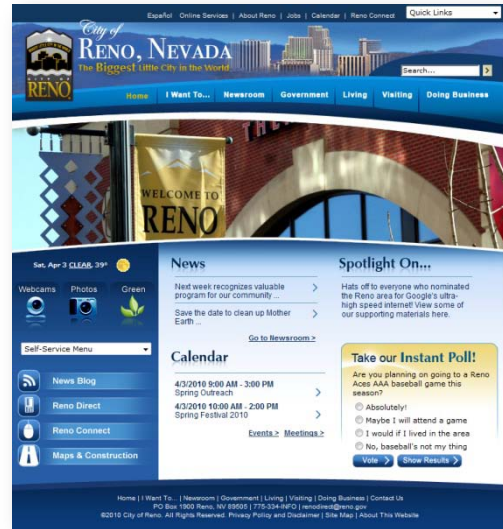
In an effort to enhance city-wide customer service, we will be implementing a “Live Chat” feature on our website. The tool will allow website visitors to ask questions online via text and receive real-time responses from Reno Direct staff. Live Chat provides another way to communicate with the City.

Service Request iPhone App

Residents will be able to connect with Reno Direct via their iPhones with a service currently under development with Qscend Technologies that will support service requests through the iPhone.

Reno.gov Usage Data & Analysis

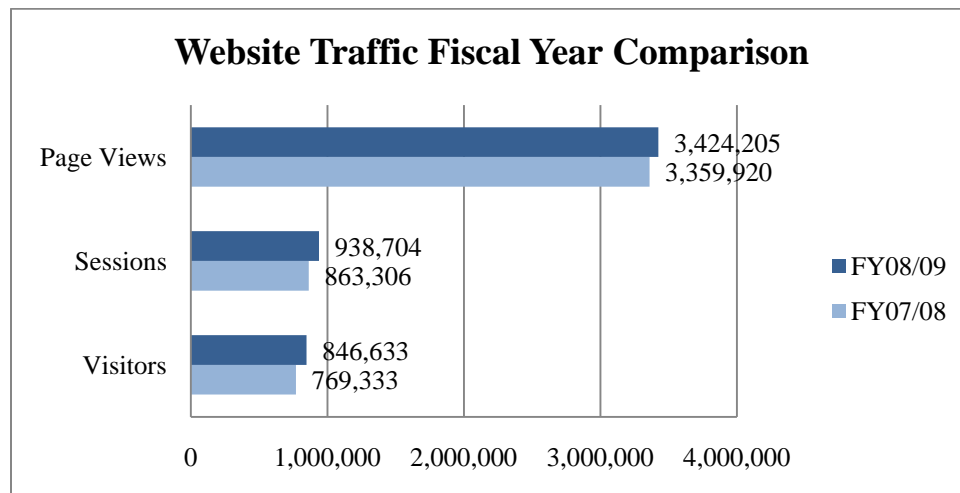
In addition to the online services available through www.reno.gov, the website also includes a substantial amount of information and resources from every department. The site is made up of approximately 1,050 pages and 8,400 documents. There are nearly 3,300 events and meetings posted in calendars, and over 2,200 items posted in the “Newsroom.”



Standard methods for evaluating the performance of a website include collecting and analyzing usage data such as website traffic.

The Web Analytics Association identifies the three most important metrics as unique visitors, visits/sessions and page views. In measuring website traffic for www.reno.gov, three indicators were used: the number of visitors (measured as number of visitors who visited a site for the first time during the active date range), sessions (measured from when a user clicks onto the website and ending when he or she leaves the site), and page views (measured as a request from a user's browser for a displayable web page). It is important to note that web analytics is not an exact science and the values are approximate. Still, usage data is an important starting point for assessing how many visitors access the site and what information they are accessing.

In Fiscal Year 2008-2009, there was a significant increase in website traffic from the previous year. The website had a monthly average of approximately 70,552 visitors (46,376 unique), 78,225 sessions and 285,250 page views in Fiscal Year 2008-2009. Sessions on average resulted in 3.65 page views. The graph below shows a steady climb in website traffic from the previous year. Site visitors increased by 10%.

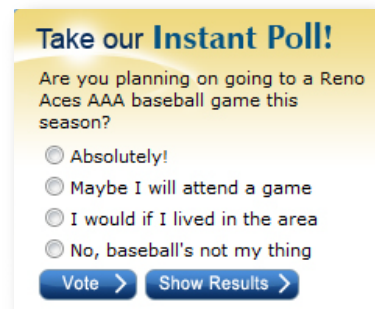


What are people doing on www.reno.gov? Besides using City services, site users are accessing many of the website’s 1050 pages. The most popular pages accessed in Fiscal Year 2008-2009 are listed below and compared with the previous year.

Most Popular Webpages on Reno.gov		
	Fiscal Year 2008-2009	Fiscal Year 2007-2008
1.	Homepage	Homepage
2.	Jobs & Recruitment	Jobs & Recruitment
3.	Job Listings	Job Listings
4.	Things To Do	Special Events Calendar
5.	Virginia Street Webcam	City Meetings Calendar
6.	Special Events Calendar	Police Department
7.	Parks, Recreation & Community Services	Parks, Recreation, & Community Services
8.	Reno Aces Baseball Stadium Webcam	Virtual Permit Place
9.	Whitewater Park Webcam	Photo Gallery
10.	Reno Skyline Webcam	Brianna Denison Investigation

In an effort to promote Downtown Reno projects and locations, staff replaced the ailing whitewater park webcam and installed a webcam pointing at the new AAA baseball stadium construction site toward the end of FY2007-2008. The outcome was surprising. The webcams quickly became one of the most popular areas on the City website, and feedback received from viewers indicated that they would like to see webcams in additional locations around the Reno community. Another webcam was pointed down Virginia Street to capture the Arch and special events, and a fourth webcam was positioned toward the Reno Skyline. Given the current economic situation, the installation of webcams in additional locations around the City and the upgrade of existing webcams have been put on hold.

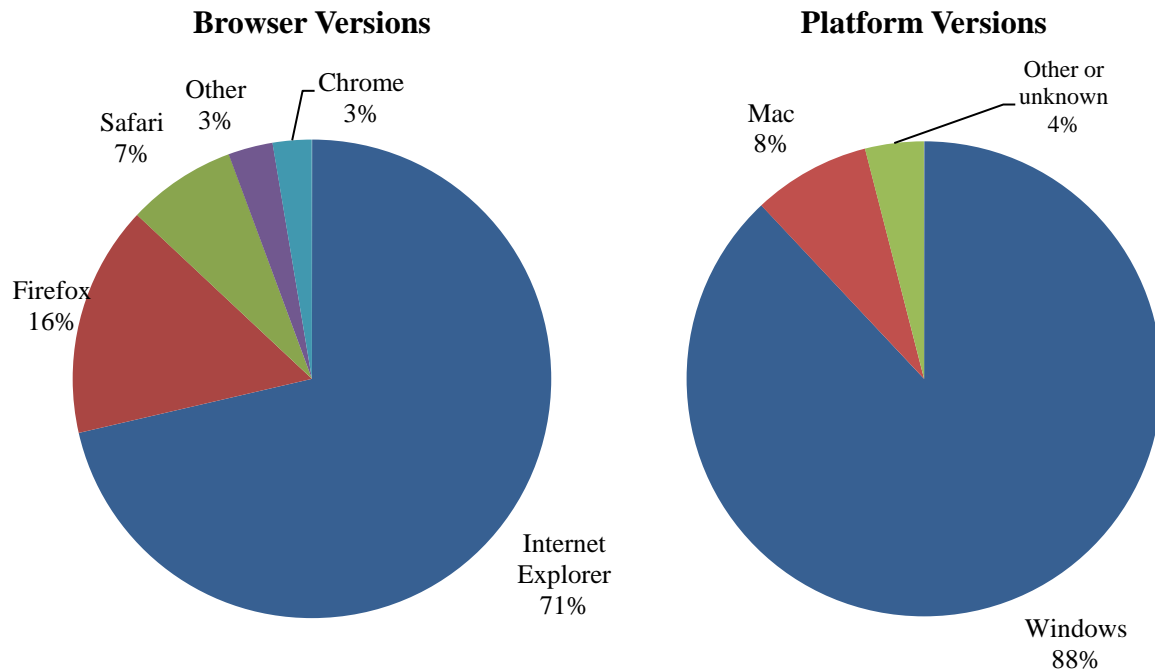
People are also participating in the “Instant Poll” on the homepage of the site. This feature gives site visitors the opportunity to answer a brief question and immediately see the response rate. Since its launch



in November 2008, there have been 42 polls, resulting in 4,020 responses at an average of 96 responses per poll. The poll has proved to be a simple way to encourage public interaction on the site.

Visitor Analysis

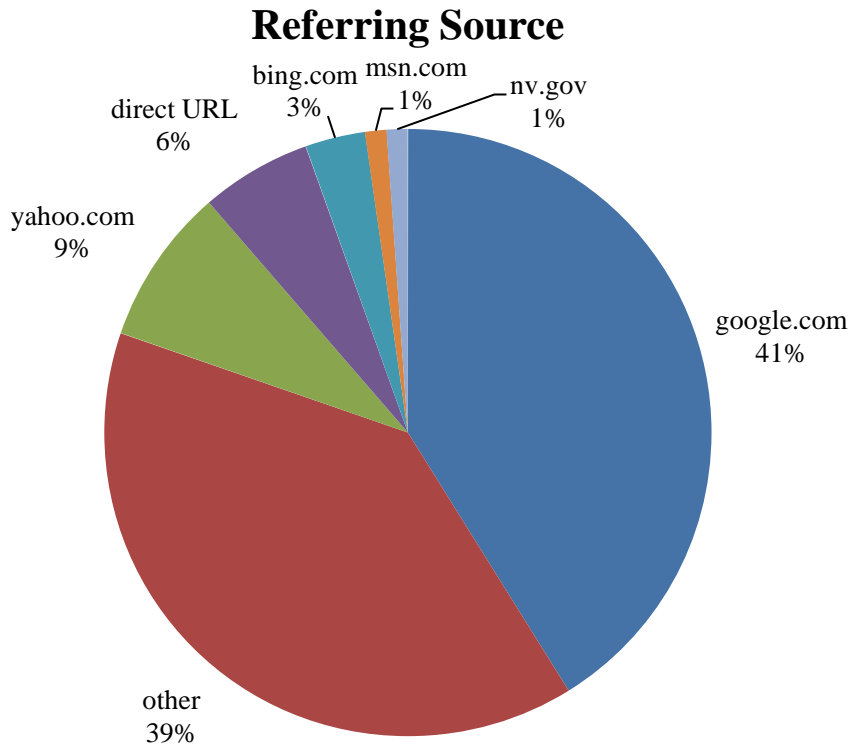
Examining the technology used by our website visitors as well as how they are finding www.reno.gov can help the City of Reno make informed decisions about technology enhancements and compatibility issues on our site.



Web traffic from the month of January 2010 indicates that Microsoft Internet Explorer is the most widely used browser to visit www.reno.gov, by 71% of our visitors. Most people are on IE8 at 49%, IE7 comes in at 36% and only 15% of our users are still on IE6. Firefox is the second most popular browser with 16% of users. Safari is at 7% and Google's Chrome users are slowly growing at 3%.

Microsoft Windows is by far the most popular platform, used by 88% of our site visitors. Of these, 67% use XP, 25% Vista, and 6% use NT. Mac users are steadily growing and were at 8% in January 2010.

The illustration that follows shows how visitors are getting to our site. Only 6% are plugging in our direct URL, www.reno.gov. The majority of people are finding our site in search engine results.



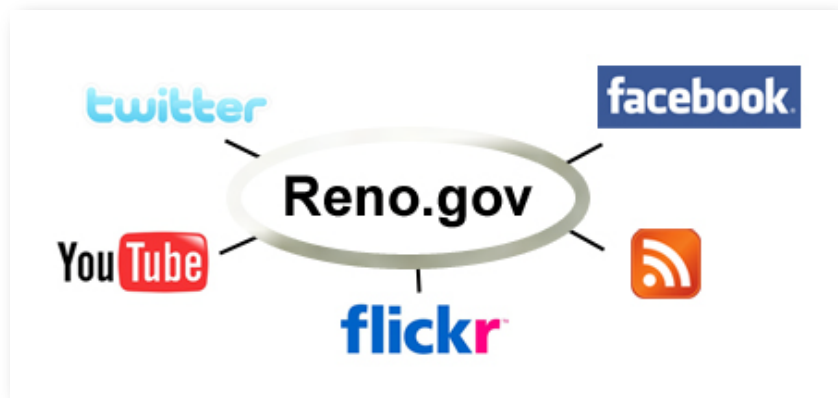
The majority of our website visitors, 41%, come from Google. The most common keyword searches that bring people to our site are:

1. reno nevada
2. city of reno
3. reno
4. reno nv
5. reno, nv
6. reno police department
7. reno, nevada
8. city of reno jobs
9. reno police
10. reno jobs

Social Media Program Report

Understanding communication channel options is imperative for conducting strategic and effective public campaigns and outreach. The City of Reno began using social media tools in Fiscal Year 2008-2009, with the goal of expanding the reach of communication efforts and interacting with more citizens and visitors. The fact that these new media channels are free or very low cost allows us to maximize our resources.

Our official government site is at the center of the City of Reno’s social media program. Our online social channels are designed to lead the individual back to www.reno.gov for additional information and online services. Due to the growing popularity of social networks, microblogs and video and photo sharing sites, there is a tremendous opportunity to connect with and engage individuals online.



Policies

The Community Relations Division of the City Manager’s Office developed an internal policy for the use and handling of social media through a review of best practices implemented by other communities. This policy is currently being followed in practice, and at the time of this report is under review by the City Attorney’s Office for consideration of formal adoption.

Commenting

The City of Reno is represented on several social networks, including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Flickr and our Around the Arch blog. We recognize that the value in social networks is in encouraging citizen communication. Our goal is to handle comments and replies made by the public according to the following standards:

1. To encourage engagement and increase transparency, it is the City of Reno’s intent to leverage social media as a method of two-way communications. To that end, when the appropriate resources are available, comment and forum features will be activated to allow users to make comments, ask questions, or request services.

- a. When activated, comments and forums should be reviewed every work day, before noon.
 - b. Staff will assess the content of each post or comment to determine it meets the standards described below or if it requires a response from the City.
 - c. Posts or comments requiring a response will be answered with a status of the response within 16 work hours (two work days) and with the full response within five work days. Whenever possible, responses should be made immediately.
 - d. Posts or comments requiring a service request will be submitted to Reno Direct for inclusion in the customer relationship management system.
2. City employees shall immediately remove any comment which violates any local, state, or federal law regarding discrimination, harassment, or violence.
 3. City employees shall delete posts that contain content that is offensive or commercial in nature. In an effort to provide a free exchange of ideas, if the content is positive or negative and in context to the conversation, then the content will be approved, regardless of whether it's favorable or unfavorable to the City. However, if the content contains offensive language, is discriminatory, a commercial message, or is out of context, then that content will be deleted or rejected.

Out of over 700 comments made by the public via social media to date, it has only been necessary to remove fewer than 10 due to violation of the above guidelines.

City of Reno Social/New Media Channels

The metrics that follow offer important insights for our development of social media strategies. The data runs through March 27, 2010.

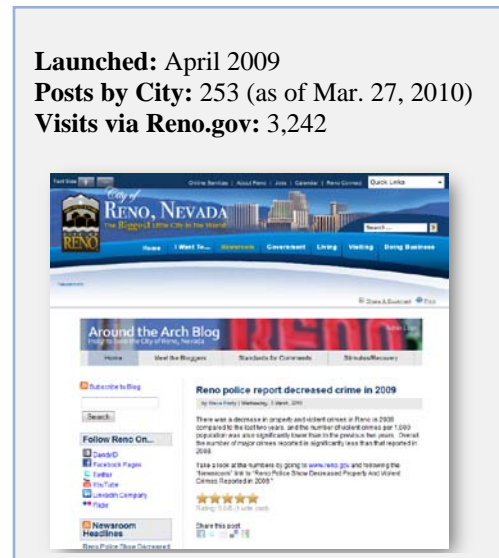
Around the Arch Blog

<http://www.reno.gov/index.aspx?page=1730>
www.aroundthearch.com

The current version of the Around the Arch blog was beta-launched in April 2009 without any formal promotion. The goal was to create a blog environment where the City could create conversational posts on a variety of topics.

Open source Wordpress blogging software is the technology platform behind the blog. City staff customized the site and developed the design. There were no costs involved in the creation of the blog.

Blog posts are set up to automatically connect to our Facebook and Twitter pages, pushing consistent messages to our other social media outlets. Content on our blog may be subscribed to via an RSS feed, and may be searched by keyword, tag or category. Site visitors can let us know their opinion of the posts by rating the



quality using a five-star scale. Visitors can also re-post our announcements by using our sharing tools to embed the posts on their own accounts, such as Facebook, MySpace, and eleven more. The Around the Arch blog is multi-media rich, including embedded YouTube videos and Flickr photosets. Photos and videos can also be shared by users to their own social media pages.

Bloggers include City of Reno public information officers and staff experts in specific subject matter areas, such as our Environmental Services Coordinator. Each post is transparent in identifying the author, with a link to additional information including an author photo, bio and recent posts by that author.

An upgraded and redesigned version of the blog is currently in the works and is due to be released in late April 2010. The new version will feature more integration with other social media platforms, simplified administrative capabilities and will be available via reno.gov/blog.

Facebook Page

www.facebook.com/cityofreno

Most of our direct social media interaction with the public comes from our presence on Facebook. This social networking site boasts 400 million users worldwide and recently surpassed the Google search engine as a referring site to other websites.

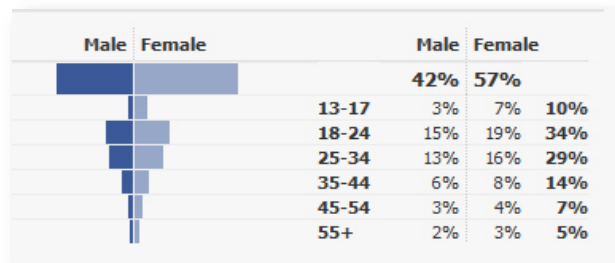
The public may become a “fan” of the City of Reno’s Facebook page, allowing them to see our updates and communicate with us through comments, “likes” and wall posts. At 6,262 fans, the City of Reno has more fans than most city governments have on Facebook.

Statistics on public usage of Facebook pages became available in April 2009. As of that time, we have had 1,445 interactions with fans. Interactions include anyone who has posted a comment, created a new post on our wall, or has given a “like” to something on our wall. A like is a button fans click to indicate approval or support of items on our page.

Besides the active interactions with fans, our Facebook page reaches those who passively participate as well. Reno’s Facebook page has been viewed 13,835 times since stats were available, 5,464 of those unique views.

It is important to understand the audience for each particular communication channel. Our Facebook fans lean more female (57%), and we tend to have a younger audience with 34% of our users in the 18-24 age group. Close behind is the 25-34 age group, representing 29% of our fans. A little more than half

Launched: December 2008
Fans: 6,262 as of Mar. 27, 2010
 (Stats available as of April 2009)
Likes: 715
Comments: 596
Wall posts: 134
Posts by City: 80
Page views: 13,835
Unique page views: 5,464

of our fans indicate their hometown is Reno – the rest from cities across the country, and some from across the world.

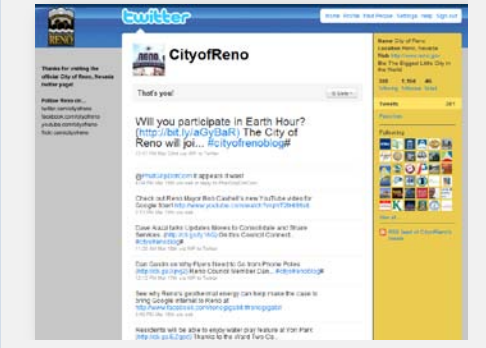
Twitter Page

www.twitter.com/cityofreno

Twitter is a microblogging site where users have the ability to write short status updates no longer than 140 characters. The public can become a “follower” of the City of Reno, meaning that our updates (tweets) will regularly be sent to the main home page of their own Twitter account. Users can also “re-tweet” our updates, meaning they send our updates to their own followers. Re-tweets greatly expand the reach of our tweets well past the number of followers we have.

At 1,113 followers, the City of Reno has more followers on Twitter than most city governments. We currently average approximately 2 tweets per day.

Launched: November 2008
Followers: 1,113 (as of Mar. 27, 2010)
Tweets: 311
Re-tweets: 34



YouTube Channel

www.youtube.com/cityofreno

The City of Reno has created a special government YouTube channel, allowing us to have more control over branding and longer videos than a regular account. Our YouTube channel allows us to extend the reach of videos created for RenoTV, the local government cable channel.

Reno has a high number of video views; over 29,000 at the writing of this report. Staff has uploaded 159 videos, including the Around the Arch newsmagazine program, Council Connections, and many other segments. Videos are grouped into playlists with similar subject matter, such as special events, public safety, green, arts & culture and more. These playlists are also embedded on www.reno.gov and Facebook and are automatically updated when new videos are added to YouTube.

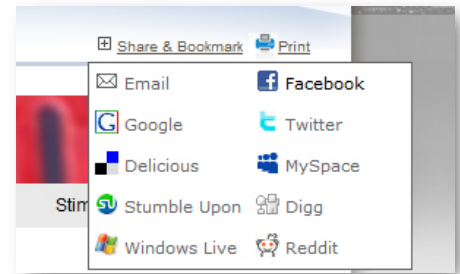
Launched: First video posted Jan. 2009
Channel views: 2,728 as of Mar. 27, 2010
Video views: 29,112
Favorites: 6
Subscribers: 67
Total videos: 159



Other New Media Channels

The platforms described in the previous section are key tools involved in our social media program. The City of Reno is also represented on other channels, such as a LinkedIn company profile page and a Flickr photostream. We have plans to further develop our use of Flickr, a photo sharing social network, by incorporating Flickr photos and slideshows directly on www.reno.gov. We currently have 304 photos on Flickr, which have been viewed a total of 4,050 times.

We are also encouraging Reno.gov visitors to turn any content on our website into sharable content. Share tools have been added to nearly every page on the City of Reno website in order make it easier for users to share their favorite content with their friends on multiple networks.



Awards and Recognition for Reno.gov

2008 Savvy Award
City-County Communications & Marketing Association

2008 WebAward
Government Standard of Excellence
Web Marketing Association

2007 Excellence Award
National Association of Government Webmasters
Pinnacle Awards Competition

2007 Members' Choice Award
National Association of Government Webmasters
Pinnacle Awards Competition

2007 Award of Excellence
Public Relations Society of America
Sierra Nevada Chapter
Silver Spike Competition

2007 W3 Silver Award
International Academy of Visual Arts

2007 MarCom Gold Award
Association of Marketing & Communication Professionals