

The Selective Echo

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NowPlayingUtah's online calendar off to fast start

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Since its launch in April, NowPlayingUtah.com, the state's first comprehensive source for unique arts and cultural events, has experienced significant growth.

Its features are distinctly user friendly — searchable calendar of events, highlights of directory listings for a wide array of organizations and venues statewide and a submission protocol that is free and simple to use. A new service has been initiated to provide a direct data feed of complete events information to other businesses' websites, helping organizations boost their site traffic while maintaining brand integrity.

"The idea has caught on like wildfire – so many people are using this now as a source to get their information on what's happening in the state. Businesses and arts organizations are beginning to realize this service provides a free and easy way to get their event information to the public," says Scott Beck, president & CEO of the Salt Lake Convention & Visitors Bureau. The site is an initiative of the Utah Arts & Cultural Coalition, a non-profit organization supported by the Utah Arts Council, The Salt Lake County Zoo, Arts & Parks Program, and the Salt Lake Convention & Visitors Bureau.

In addition, it acts as a strong resource to support companies' own web presence and brings increased traffic to their sites. It now boasts more than 550 current events to choose from, and has more than 75,000 total unique visits (e.g. more than 18,000 in July alone). Weekly event updates are being sent to a list of more than 1,500 registered email contacts, highlighting arts and cultural opportunities throughout the state. These weekly blasts have been effective, generating an impressive open-rate of more than 33 percent. There have more than 273,000 page views since its launch.

In addition, the site now hosts profiles of 145 Utah artists and that number will likely increase as the Utah Arts Council encourages their constituents to use the service. In its initial phase, the profiles have already drawn more than 7,500 page views. "We not only encourage our constituents to list, but any artist in Utah is welcome to take part. We link each arts performance to individual artists, and feel that this will become a catalyst for arts programming throughout the state, serving to bring the arts closer to the people of Utah," says Margaret Hunt, executive director of the Utah Arts Council.

DATA FEED FEATURE

Utah businesses now have the capacity to utilize a data feed of events information to assist them in building their own event calendars. This information can reside directly on the websites of any interested organization, provided via an XML or RSS-based data feed. Partners statewide are taking advantage of this opportunity for a minimal annual fee. "So many organizations have limited resources to produce their own calendars," says Heidi Falk, the site's program manager. "We are finding that this is an extremely valuable service to the community in a tight economy. It is our goal to reduce duplication of efforts for our partners."

LISTINGS ARE FREE AND SIMPLE

Anyone can fill out the submission form online [here](#) or simply send all event details to utahinfo@bedynamic.com. Organizations are encouraged to add this email address to their event distribution list. Video and up to six high-quality photographs can also be included. Video needs to be hosted by a program such as YouTube and photographs must be in jpg format and no larger than three megabytes. "All submissions post to the site within two weeks, so we recommend submitting at least a month in advance," says Falk.