

## Portfolio

### S&ME overhauls its web site

Discover how a branding initiative led this 800-person firm to redesign its web site.

As part of a larger branding initiative, which included fine-tuning the company logo and colors and reworking the firm's stationery and marketing materials, S&ME, Inc. (Raleigh, NC), an 800-person consulting engineering firm, redesigned its web site.

The web site redesign was the culmination of S&ME's branding initiative.

"At the end of 2004, we recognized that we were not taking an active role in promoting our brand. In early 2005, we formed a marketing committee with members from multiple office locations and departments (including operations, business development, communications, and executive)," says Executive Vice President Randy Neuhaus. "The marketing committee developed several major initiatives to improve our marketing program. The primary action item that came out of that committee was our branding initiative. So, we formed the branding committee to provide leadership and the first order of business was to select a branding consultant to help us." The firm formed its branding committee in April 2005.

S&ME began its search for a branding consultant through referrals and by looking on web sites. The initial round of the selection process resulted in S&ME sending five consultants a brief RFP. S&ME then interviewed all five firms and brought two firms back for a second round of interviews. "Both were solid firms and it was a difficult choice, but in the end, we felt Sinclair & Co. (Raleigh, NC) had the right mix of business

### The Details

**Firm size:** 800

**Marketing tactic:** S&ME did not directly market the redesign of its web site; Sinclair & Co, the branding consultant, released a press release promoting its role in the development of the web site.

**Distribution:** S&ME has mailed out more than 10,000 direct-mail pieces to past and current clients which say, "To contact one of our 22 offices located throughout the Southeast, visit [www.smeinc.com](http://www.smeinc.com)." The firm has three more mailers in the series that will go out over the next nine months.

**Cost:** The firm's budget for the web site redesign was \$35,000 dollars. The final cost of the overhauled web site was \$37,600. This included the graphic design, web site programming, Flash design, testing, and maintenance training.

**Results:** In the 30 days before the launch of the new redesigned web site, the average visitor spent 230 seconds on the site. In the 30 days after the launch of the redesigned web site, the average length of visit increased to 332 seconds. The redesigned web site is graphically consistent with the rest of the firm's marketing material.

savvy, creativity, and experience (specifically with other A/E firms) to help us succeed," Neuhaus says. S&ME then hired Sinclair & Co. as the firm's branding consultant.

Sinclair & Co. refers to S&ME's branding campaign as "glamour," says Karen Sinclair, president, founder, and creative director. "It's a tongue-in-cheek concept that plays up how S&ME isn't concerned about being flashy; it's concerned about doing the job right, on time, and on budget. The Internet is the fastest-growing source of information and commerce today, so we felt it was critically important that S&ME apply the 'glamour' concept to its web site right away. We are delighted with how well S&ME's web site turned out."

Although S&ME received many compliments on the usability of its old web site, the web site had been in use for about five years and needed to be redesigned, Neuhaus says. With the overhaul of the firm's web site, S&ME wanted to incorporate the firm's brand message of honesty and integrity in a subtle manner as well as adding a more personal feel to the web site. The firm also wanted to use its new logo colors—dark brown and muted orange—to match the look of the web site and be consistent with the marketing material.

To begin the overhaul, S&ME created a web site committee in June 2006. This committee was created as a subcommittee to the firm's branding



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