

USA Today Demands End To Framed Link

IN THE WAKE of the recent legal settlement in which six media giants forced TotalNEWS to cease linking to their sites through an ad-bearing "frames" structure, *USA Today* has also demanded that its Web site not be framed by TotalNEWS.

In a letter to Roman Godzich, president of TotalNEWS, Allegra Young, *USA Today* Online marketing manager, said the Gannett Co.'s online service was withdrawing its earlier permission to allow frames around its Web site.

Young said that in light of the recent legal settlement between TotalNEWS and other media plaintiffs, *USA Today* wants the same treatment as the other online news services involved in the legal action against the suburban Phoenix, Ariz., company.

In a settlement with six major media companies, TotalNEWS agreed to cease "framing" the plaintiffs' Web sites.

Young's letter to TotalNEWS said, "We note that one result of your settlement with Dow Jones & Co., the Washington Post Co., Reuters New Media Inc., Time Warner Inc. and Times Mirror Co. is preferable treatment for those who filed suit. . . . Our content receives a smaller portion of screen space and is hemmed in by your advertisements. We would like to be afforded equal treatment with other news media organizations."

She said the frames around the *USA Today* Online site should be removed as soon as possible. Her letter did not say what further action would be taken if the frames were not removed.

"Let's see if we can resolve it amicably before we bring the lawyers in, which of course would be the next step," said Young.

TotalNEWS's Godzich said he is in discussion with *USA Today* about how to handle the online newspaper's non-framing request.

"I explained to her [Young] that those people not in frames have got a significant drop in traffic from TotalNEWS. People who go to TotalNEWS go so that they can compare different news sites. I talked to her about it and we are looking at finding some kind of agreement at this point," said Godzich.

He said there has been a lot of "disinformation" written about this issue.

"I think that once people get the whole story that will not be the case. We've gotten other sites that since the settlement have asked that we add them to our site in frames. Most of the people who come from the Internet community don't see it the same way that people from the publishing community see it and that's still the majority of people online," Godzich said.

Godzich said he has not received other requests to remove frames from other media sites.

He claims he would have taken the case to court if he had the financial resources, but feels that the settlement was "sensible."

"We were on a very, very unlevel playing field and we didn't want to allow the setting of a precedent on that unlevel playing field and I think that we walked away with that solution," he added.

Young, in a phone interview, said that last December, *USA Today* Online sent TotalNEWS a conditional permission letter to link and frame to the online newspaper, with the understanding that permission could also be withdrawn.

"We just want equal treatment," said Young. "We've been supportive of their organization and we don't think that our support should penalize us with a smaller screen space."

She said that *USA Today*, which tracks where online traffic is coming from, said TotalNEWS is not among the top 25 sites that directs traffic to the online newspaper.

"We measure the top 25 referring URLs and they are never in it. We don't measure beyond the top 25, but we can say that they have not been a large traffic generator for us," said Young.

Among the top 25 referring sites are: Netscape, Yahoo!, AT&T, San Jose Mercury News, among others.

The issue of framing is a recent development in the ongoing development of so-called browser software, such as Netscape's Navigator, which allows a
(See Framed on page 114)

Tells TotalNEWS it is withdrawing earlier permission to allow frames around its Web site

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— Roman Godzich,
president, TotalNEWS

Shop Talk

Continued from page 128

who drop subscriptions after a short period).

A newspaper company will waste enormous amounts of time, money and news space trying to attract fringe readers, and it will cut other expenses so much that core readers will find the quality of the product declining.

An information company will publish a high-quality newspaper for people who want to read, who happen to be the people that advertisers most want to reach.

The information company will resist the temptation to stoop to the level of local television news' "snuff and fluff" journalism, which offers an improbable blend of violence and frivolity.

- ◆ Develop products to serve "communities of interest."

People with shared interests constitute a "community," and that community can be based on either geography or subject matter.

A newspaper company will seek to serve geographic-based communities like suburbs or neighborhoods by placing zoned sections in the daily central-city paper — sections that sometimes lump together localities that have nothing in common.

An information company will investigate starting weekly papers in suburbs of sufficient size or starting weekly newsletters in smaller areas or developing online services.

There are many people within a metro area who want in-depth coverage of a certain subject area, such as business or international affairs or high school sports.

A newspaper company might try to serve those subject-based communities by sending them an extra section in their daily paper once a week.

An information company will seek to establish stand-alone weeklies or online services in a variety of subject areas. Some of the people who are served may be among the fringe readers abandoned by the daily newspaper.

- ◆ Develop products to serve businesses.

A business whose customers are found primarily in its metro area needs specialized local-level information that can facilitate either business-to-business marketing or consumer marketing.

A newspaper company typically will ignore that market.

An information company will develop publications or online databases aimed at businesses, an example being a constantly updated collection of metro-area

economic and demographic data that would be valuable to retailers, banks and real estate firms.

The information company also will find ways to market the wealth of historical metro-area information contained in a newspaper's archives.

- ◆ Begin planning for the era of "video news."

A newspaper company will invest lots of money to develop an online version of its paper with the goal of providing people another way to "read" the paper. But in the future, you can expect most people to read their morning newspaper the same way they do now: by turning pages while eating breakfast or riding mass transit.

The old-fashioned method beats scrolling pages on a computer screen.

In contrast, an information company will invest heavily in online technology to position itself for new opportunities involving databases and video.

The information company, for example, knows that soon the typical television set will be able to display full-motion video that has been transmitted over the World Wide Web.

The information company wants to be able to combine expertise in news-gathering, databases and video to put a newspaper on your doorstep in the morning and bring you a television news program in the evening.

- ◆ Move forward with a sense of urgency.

Big-city newspapers face the prospect of further declines in readership and advertising share, the danger of cutting costs to the point that newspaper quality is irreparably harmed, and the likelihood of ceding profit-making opportunities to non-newspaper organizations.

The time for action is now. An information company, in contrast to a newspaper company, can push ahead immediately to develop and market a creative blend of products that can generate profits themselves and can raise the profile and profits of the daily newspaper.

An information-company structure will afford a newspaper a better chance of satisfying the needs of readers and advertisers and a better chance of meeting its obligations to shareholders and society.

Lawsuit

Continued from page 73

and the jury ruled for the newspaper, which belongs to the New York Times Co. group.

McNely appealed and the 11th U.S.

Circuit Court of Appeals granted him a new trial. The appeals court said people who sue under the ADA need only to prove that bias against their disability was the main reason — not necessarily the only reason — their employer took the action. The paper's lawyers told the justices that other appeals courts have required people to prove that such bias was the sole reason they were fired.

Framed

Continued from page 102

Web page to be divided by frames, with each frame being able to link to a different place on the Web.

The plaintiffs filed a trademark and copyright infringement lawsuit in February in New York.

They claimed that users who linked to their Web site through TotalNEWS would see those Web sites surrounded by a frame, which was made up of advertising sold by TotalNEWS.

The settlement allowed TotalNEWS to continue linking to the plaintiffs Web sites, but without the frames.

For example, a user who clicks on TotalNEWS's hypertext link to the *Washington Post* site will now go straight to washingtonpost.com without any frames, images or other content provided by TotalNEWS.

French Police Assault Journalists

A MEDIA RIGHTS group sent a protest to the French government calling for an investigation into a police attack on two journalists working for the Associated Press. Reporters Without Borders sent a letter to the Interior Ministry about the incident, in which police clubbed and detained photographer Gael Cornier and struck reporter Jean-Marie Godard.

The Interior Ministry had no comment on the incident or the protest.

Cornier was taking pictures of illegal immigrants demonstrating at a Paris sports stadium when several police officers knocked him down, clubbed him and took his film, Cornier and witnesses said. Godard was struck on the hand with a police club.

Cornier was held in custody for four hours before being released after an AP editor called the Interior Ministry.

Neither Cornier or Godard was charged, and neither suffered serious injury.

— AP