MEMBERSHIP MARKETING

How I helped modernize a 70-year old club's online presence & processes so it can keep going strong for another 70 years.

ElieJacobsen.com

How modern marketing helped transform a legacy membership organization

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BACKGROUND

Skiyente, a women's ski club founded in 1955, faced numerous challenges as it entered the 21st century. The club, with a majority of members well over 50 years old, relied on outdated systems for membership management, fundraising, and communication. Its website, initially launched in the early 2000s, was confusing to navigate and provided little value beyond basic information. Membership registration and dues collection were entirely manual.

THE CHALLENGE

- **Inefficient Processes:** Manual registration and dues collection placed a heavy burden on the Membership Director, requiring them to print hardcopy forms, distribute them in-person, enter member data, and collect cash or check payments. The treasurer then had to deposit these payments; on at least one occasion, money went missing.

- **Aging Membership:** With most members in their 60s to 80s, the club needed to attract younger members to sustain itself.

- **Disconnected Tools:** Member data was spread across multiple platforms (Gmail, Mailchimp, Evite, and personal spreadsheets) leading to inaccuracy and inefficiency. Website domain registration was managed through an obscure vendor, making it difficult for volunteers to track and maintain.

- **Security Risks:** Account passwords were weak and not updated regularly (the Gmail password was ~10 years old!); there was no secure password manager.

- **Fundraising Obstacles:** When the pandemic hit, it was not possible to conduct their annual in-person fundraiser, which was their primary source of revenue.

THE SOLUTION

I joined Skiyente in September, 2019 -- right before the pandemic hit. At the time, I'd been working at digital agencies for 10 years and by June, 2020, my employer decided to give up the office lease and become a fully remote operation permanently.

With plenty of free time, I decided to make updating Skiyente's online operations my pandemic hobby. My approach focused on modernization, efficiency, and creating a foundation for growth.

KEY CONSIDERATION: THE WEBSITE PLATFORM

When working with a 100% volunteer organization, you've got to plan for a constant rotation of platform users. A further challenge with this particular group is that many are unfamiliar with online platforms. Platform considerations included:

- Easy to use
- Reasonable fees
- Centralized functions
- A reputable vendor that will be around for 10+ years
- Have robust online resources for help

- **Website Platform:** Wix met all of my criteria: easy to create a user-friendly, mobile-optimized site plus offers a CRM, email marketing, payment processing, and domain management.

- **Online Auction Platform:** I selected BetterWorld because it is both free and offers an easy user interface, which was important due to a lack of technical proficiency among many members.

- **Password Management:** We now use LastPass to store passwords securely and easily transition as board members change annually.

- **Accurate Member Data:** By implementing online registration, members directly enter their own data into the CRM

- **Online Payment Processing:** We now receive dues immediately, without the delay, inconvenience, and risk of cash and checks.

- **Consolidated Data:** With Wix as a central data source, we discontinued using Evite, Mailchimp, and Gmail.

- **Professional Design:** While Skiyente does not have a large budget, I secured both a freelance graphic designer and a Wix developer. The result is a website that is among the best of its kind in the nation.
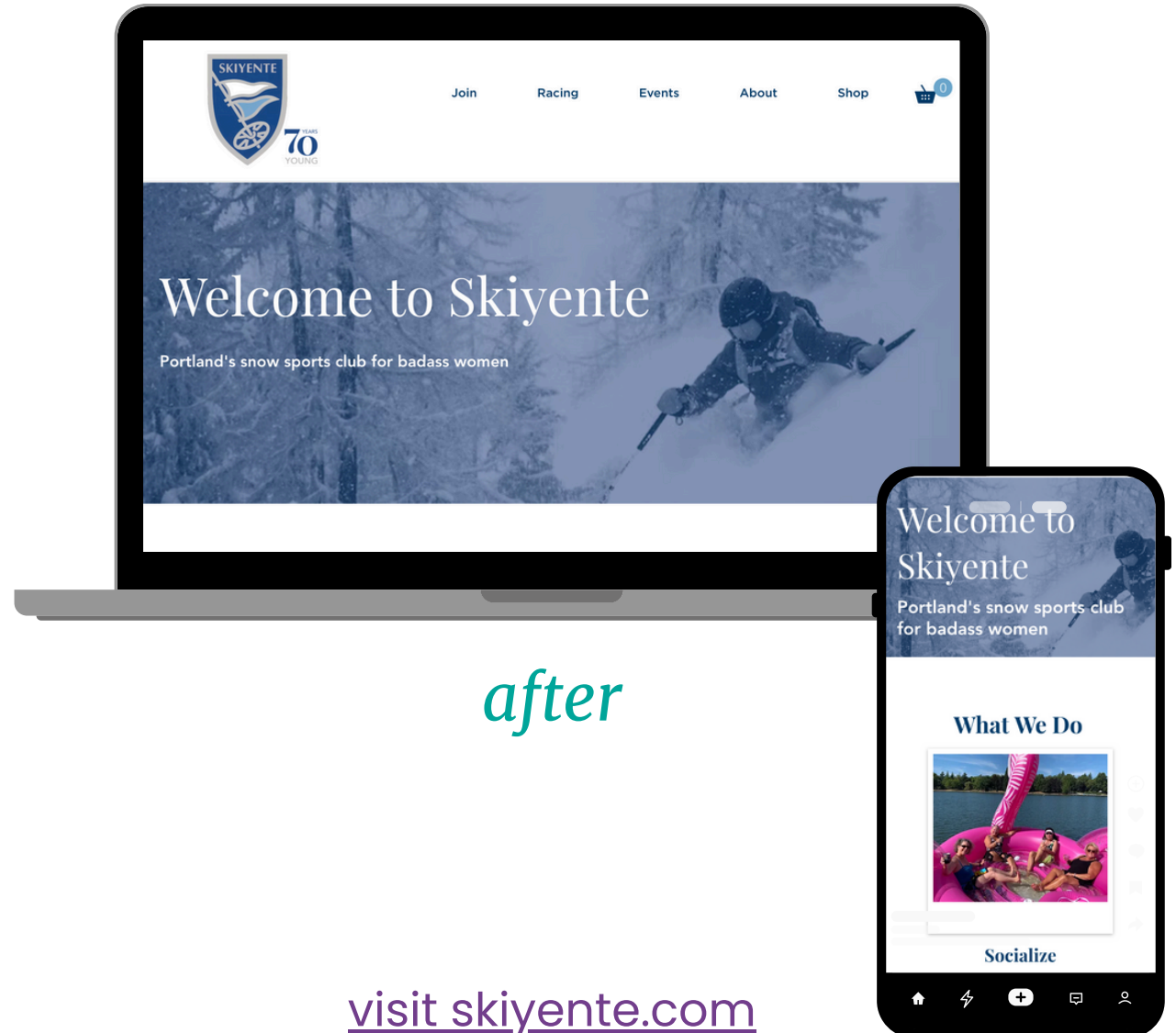
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THE RESULTS

- **New Recruitment Avenues:** For the first time in club history, new members found the club via web search, registered, and paid dues without any personal outreach.

- **Sustained Membership Numbers:** Despite the aging membership, we've continued to recruit new members even as similar clubs struggle to attract the next generation.

- **Enhanced Fundraising:** The online auction platform allowed us to expand bidders to non-members and run the auction over several days, as opposed to the traditional members-only silent auction.

- **Volunteer Efficiency:** Reduced administrative workload means Membership can now focus on recruitment activities, and it's easier to find volunteers to serve as Treasurer.

- **Robust Member Insight:** The CRM allows us to collect and retain more member data, allowing us to make more informed communications and event planning decisions .

- **Future-Proofed Operations:** By consolidating systems and modernizing processes, the club can operate successfully despite a rotating roster of volunteers.

This project shows how modern tools and streamlined processes can revitalize even the most traditional organizations.

By embracing digital transformation, Skiyente has both preserved its legacy and paved the way for future growth and sustainability.

CASE STUDY: Transforming a legacy membership organization

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before

after

Welcome to Skiyente
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LET'S CONNECT

Want results like this for your membership organization?

With over 15 years of experience in digital marketing and a true belief that membership organizations help people form bonds that improve quality of life, I'd love to help your organization thrive.

Elie Jacobsen

Visit my website
Check out my LinkedIn profile
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