

Friday, January 26, 2007

### Here's how you get citizen journalists

Canadian site Orato.com is developing ways to get new users, more feedback and richer content. As a sign of its acquired credibility, two 'citizen correspondents' from the website will have media seats in the most important murder trial in Canadian history.

(Robert Pickton is accused in the killings of 26 prostitutes in Vancouver - one of the conditions for Orato's correspondents to report on the case was that they had previously worked in the business.)

The new media will be tightly supervised during the trial: they can't disclose information until the jury has heard it, and bigger media cannot point to websites that revealed unauthorized information.

The Online Journalism Review interviewed Orato's editor-in-chief Paul Sullivan, trying to figure out how it entices its readers and contributors:

Orato's current posting model relies on citizen journalists and professional journalists who make free contributions. The website offers a \$100 prize to contributors who wrote five highly-rated stories. It also offers \$100 for the best story of the month, selected both by editors and readers. The monthly winner is then posted on the home page with a link to his or her bio.

Other incentives for readers include a 'Orato's Top 10 Story Ideas' sent to Orato's official correspondents, but intended to give users some inspiration.

Another share of Orato's success comes from its emphasis on first-hand reporting, which is "more immediate and, I think, stories come naturally when they're told in the first person," said Sullivan.

Yet the style of writing and nature of content is open, to encourage everyone to post - the variety of headings and content reflects this liberal approach.

"We offer citizen journalists a platform, and we encourage citizen journalism, but we are not exclusive in any sense. Anyone can post on Orato."

Orato's business model offers mostly free advertising. This isn't Sullivan's main concern so far, which is to get the number of visitors and pages views up.

"Our plan is to build traffic to the point where we can offer custom onsite ads at an industry-competitive CPM. Further down the pike, we also plan to syndicate story packages to interested buyers."

Sullivan just gave away his bag of tricks to get a successful citizen journalism website on the roll. After that, all it needs is maintenance and your readers' motivation.

"Our goal is to create and sustain a quality environment so our visitors find the site and its contents accessible and readable and our correspondents feel some pride of authorship when they see the finished product."

Click below for the full interview.

Source: [Online Journalism Review](#)

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Posted by Jean Yves Chainon on January 26, 2007 at 03:59 PM

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