



EUROPEAN DRAGON BOAT FEDERATION

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Introduction

This document will focus on the EDBF internet presence as the main, active component of the M&M Commission as I have been active with the EDBF web presence since its earliest beginnings. It is desirable that M&M also focuses on income generation and promotion of the sport, but that is not within the scope of this document. Either one of the other Vice Presidents with actual experience generating income through marketing of dragon boat sport could co-hold this commission and focus on promotion/income generation or the commission should include an active member with extensive experience in marketing as a manner to grow membership (especially vis a vis the competition for participants in EDBF vs ECA events) and to generate income.

Current Status

The EDBF maintains four main internet-based communications tools: the official EDBF website (www.edbf.org), the EDBF Facebook group, the EDBF Twitter feed and e-mail. Lesser use is made by some members of Skype and various other forms of instant messaging.

EDBF website vision:

- The EDBF website should be the reliable, go-to source of official information on the Federation and its activities. (Limitations: reliance on volunteers with limited time or skills to administer web content.)
- The site should be accurate, up-to-date and serve as the archive for official and historical documents of the EDBF. (Limitations: reliance on volunteers with limited time or skills to produce and upload official content. That said, there is an interface for the Secretary General so that individual can update news received.)
- The site should be designed and implemented to facilitate all users, including the visually impaired and non-English speakers (a content reader for the visually impaired is integrated in the site and Google translate is embedded in the site).
- The site should be as light as possible on bandwidth in order to facilitate quick loading and adequate display on a wide variety of devices.
- The site should be easy and logical to navigate. (Limitations: tastes and language skills among our users vary and impact the navigation experience. There is a link on the site asking for user feedback to improve navigation. To my knowledge, the technical webmaster has never received any feedback whatsoever on the navigation functionality.)
- The site should present a professional, visually appealing image of the EDBF and its activities. (Limitations: Budget – in my former role within M&M, I requested funds to solicit bids and have a professional graphic designer work together with the technical webmaster to create a more visually appealing look while maintaining the technical

infrastructure behind the database feed, Sec. Gen. interface, reader for visually impaired, etc. As of this date, no budget has been approved.)

- Where possible, data should be fed into the site from other sources rather than updated by hand (example: link to the IDBF website for athlete registration, race results and programs from the IDBF database, IDBF racing rules from the IDBF website, short news and updates from Facebook and Twitter, etc. This has largely been implemented and should be expanded and maintained. Action: Stefan & Slawek.)

The site should primarily focus on the following content:

- official news and updates from the board,
- board and commissions information,
- history of dragon boat racing/history of EDBF & IDBF,
- approved equipment lists,
- statutes & bylaws,
- rules & regulations,
- race results,
- race programs,
- meeting announcements, agendas, etc.
- advertisements (this is an area which should be examined as soon as possible in order to develop guidelines for advertising, pricing, and management of advertisements on the EDBF website in order to generate income for the EDBF)

EDBF Facebook:

The EDBF Facebook group should provide a combination of reliable, quickly-distributed information on EDBF activities along with providing a social platform for sharing interesting, helpful and fun information about dragon boat racing. The EDBF FB group feeds into the EDBF website in order to keep edbf.org active and current (although frequent changes in Facebook's API means the technical webmaster must continually make coding changes in order to accommodate FB's architecture).

Content: short news, short updates on meetings, real-time race program updates (and links to program changes, medals ceremony times).

Anyone can post and comment to the EDBF Facebook group, although there is a delay in posting to allow the administrators to monitor and edit content for appropriateness and errors.

EDBF Twitter feed:

The EDBF Twitter feed should provide commentary and interaction between the EDBF members at all levels of the organization on a quick and informal basis. The EDBF Twitter feed also feeds into the EDBF website in order to keep edbf.org active and current. The Twitter feed has been inactive for a long time, whereas the FB feed is active at least weekly. Should we be using Twitter for our audience? The M&M commission should examine this and provide an answer.

Other platforms:

Some experts advise amateur sports organizations to focus on four main social media platforms: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Linked in.

- *YouTube* is utilized by our members to share dragon boat videos, many of which are shared via the EDBF FB site. However, YouTube has underutilized as a promotion, community-building and educational platform. This is primarily a problem of not having someone who can develop this area. The M&M commission should try to attract someone with experience, interest and time to develop an EDBF YouTube channel.

- *Linked In* is the world's biggest professional networking platform and as such has potential for not only linking individual paddlers, coaches, officials, event and equipment providers, etc. but could also be utilized to generate greater visibility and income for the sport by linking to service providers who may be interested in sponsoring or otherwise tapping into our paddler base in some way. LinkedIn has not been utilized officially by the EDBF due to human resources issues. Again, the M&M commission should try to attract someone who can help develop and maintain this platform for the benefit of the EDBF.
- Other platforms such as Instagram or regional platforms (such as the Russian-language VK) are constantly and altering the landscape of the Web. Some groups make more use of these platforms than others and there should be a continued effort to monitor and adopt the most durable of these emerging platforms. As for Skype, instant messaging applications (What's App, etc.), these applications are handy for instant communication between a closed group of users (for example the ad hoc What's App group between Race Secretariat and Boat Marshalling at the recent EDBF CC/IDBF U-24 Championships in Divonne les Bains).

Other considerations:

Due to the Federation's reliance on unpaid, part-time volunteers, the current approach to the web presence has been to focus on distributing the most important information to our members (race and meeting information) as well as providing a sense of community to our members. Much more could be done through a combination of paying for services to update the platforms and (volunteer) submission and administration of content. In my 12 years of working within the EDBF Board, it is my experience that not having a permanent, fully staffed secretariat to support the organization's goals and implement some of the day to day work of the Board, there are real limits to how much can be achieved without attention to the content behind the EDBF's web presence. The technical experts behind the database (Slawek) and website (Stefan), have developed some platforms that could be better utilized and more frequently updated for the benefit of the organization and our membership.

Activities to date:

- Website development and maintenance
- Facebook group development and maintenance
- Twitter development and maintenance
- Database feed from IDBF racing database
- Implementation of best practices for visually impaired: 2012 (Note: ReadSpeak application no longer available – this was the free text reader used on the site)
- Translation function embedded: 2013
- Widgets and RSS feed: 2013 (so club/country webmasters can automatically feed news and calendar information into their own websites)
- Visual redesign and navigation update: 2015
- Ongoing content uploads
- Periodic review of trends and best practices

Activities planned:

- Recruiting
 - Recent resignation of M&M chairman and lack of commission members means the entire M&M organization should be re-built, with two focuses: 1. Marketing in the sense of increasing the profile of the

- EDBF/IDBF and securing sponsorships to fund EDBF activities; 2. Improve the EDBF's online presence and create a stable organization to manage it that is less subject to the limitations of too few volunteers
 - note: potential commission members will be screened by EDBF Executive Commission and M&M's Commission Portfolio Holder
- Networking
 - With organizations that can provide information and guidance on amateur sports and the Internet
 - With IDBF and national federations
 - With groups and individual paddlers
 - With related formal and informal organizations
- Research
 - Review best practices for online communication for amateur sports organizations
 - Extract relevant information and make recommendations for implementation in dragon boat sport
- Compliance
 - Ensure compliance with IDBF, IOC, Sport Accord and other relevant sports bodies' recommendations and guidelines
 - Ensure compliance with guidelines for best online practices & accessibility

Technical Data

EDBF.org is hosted with a company in the UK. Nigel Leigh (Nigel@kinhectic.com or nigel@worcester-dragons.org.uk) takes care of the hosting and also of the domain registration. The bills for hosting and domain registration are, as far as I know, handled by Dave Cogswell of the British Dragonboat Association, but that may have changed. Backups are created automatically every 1st day of every month. A dump of the database is zipped together with all the files that make up the website (including scripts, documents, images etc), and then that zipfile is uploaded to the personal Dropbox of Stefan Jager. This is a fully automatic process which has been running since December 2013.

Due to very high traffic on the website before and during championships, a lot of the larger documents are also stored on the same Dropbox account. This is because Dropbox, when using a paid account (Stefan pays for this out of his own pocket but this is an expense which should be picked up by the EDBF), allows for much higher bandwidth usage than the website itself. And just before and during championships lots of people start downloading bulletins and rules and regulations, causing the maximum bandwidth of the website to be exceeded.

For more details on accessibility and RSS feeds go to www.edbf.org/about/thewebsite.

Conclusion

I am satisfied that a lot of work has gone into the EDBF's online presence and that to cope with the lack of time and staffing to devote to the various platforms, the individuals involved with the EDBF website (Sec. Gen., technical webmaster, database developer & myself) have had to make some decisions to narrowly focus on the a few key communications issues via the web platforms

(namely race & meeting information & library/archival function). More, and certainly more reliable active members within the commission would go a long way to improving our utilization of the platforms available to communicate with our members via the Internet.

For more information or to refer volunteers to the commission, please feel free to contact me.

Yours in sport,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "K.M. Beckwith". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kim Beckwith
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