

Job Description: WEBMASTER

What Is The Purpose of the Web Site?

The web site is essentially a sign post. It tells people that we're here, what we do, when and where we meet and how to contact us.

It should be a point of reference for members, giving details of meetings, training courses and social events.

What could it do? Things like welcoming new associates and members, and congratulating successful test candidates are best done on twitter. Events can be set up on facebook as well as the web site.

Responsibilities

Domain Name(s) Registration for tvgam.org.uk and tviam.org.uk - ensure domain registrations are renewed before they expire. Domains can be renewed for a number of years at once. Watch for price increases and compare with other registrars.

Hosting - provide or arrange hosting for the web site and renew annually. It might be possible to get free hosting but there are usually strings attached, or the offer could be withdrawn at any time. Hosting is currently on a Linux reseller account with eUKhost.

Mailing Lists - manage mailing lists for Committee, Observers and Members. The Members list is currently for those members receiving the Newsletter by email.

Forwarders - manage forwarders for committee posts and other officials. Officials should not use personal email addresses for external communications. If a forwarder (e.g. chair@tvgam.org.uk) is used then only it needs to be updated in one place if the holder of that post changes.

Social Media - manage facebook page and twitter feed for the group. Consider if other social media could usefully be used e.g. Instagram, YouTube and LinkedIn. As we don't have a lot of exciting events so there is little photographic material to display.

Blog, Forum, Bulletin Board - a forum has been tried in the past but didn't gain enough support to be worthwhile. A critical mass of members is needed for it to work. We are a small and diverse group of people. The Observers' list could be used for discussion, but isn't.

Content. **IT IS NOT THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE WEBMASTER TO GENERATE CONTENT.** The Webmaster is the editor and curator of the web site. The committee should direct the Webmaster and provide content. Each committee member should be responsible for his or her own area. For example the Chief Observer should provide input to the Observers section. This has worked very well when we had an enthusiastic Observer Co-ordinator. The Newsletter Editor provides a copy of each issue for the web site. This version does not contain the Members' login.

Security - generate and change passwords and logins as needed. The Members' Area login is changed every two months with a one-month overlap. Currently we are using car marques as user names with some associated name as the password. Standard Linux .htaccess encryption is used.

Web Site Criteria

1: that the web site should be compatible with any browser and operating system with or without CSS, Javascript, etc.

2: that pages should be fast to download even with a slow connection.

3: that the site should be easy to maintain. The source code should be well laid out and can be maintained using a plain text editor if necessary. Various HTML editors are available.

4: CSS can be used to enhance pages but should not be relied on for layout. There should be no need for scripting except on the server e.g. for converting HTML contact forms to email messages.

5: pages shall validate as HTML 4.1 Transitional in the W3C validator. Internal and external links shall be checked periodically.

Committee Aspirations

Quoting from the Chair's column in the February 2020 Newsletter:

"Ensuring website content is managed actively and is kept up-to-date and fresh."

Note "managed", not "generated". The web site is updated regularly with meeting details, etc., and promptly when (and if) new content is provided or when old content is no longer current. If the Committee thinks that the web site is not fresh then please could it say in what way, and make suggestions as to how it should be freshened, and provide appropriate sketches, photos, layout ideas, etc.

Contrast this with "Newsletter: Publishing Group monthly newsletter from content supplied by Committee members, IAM RoadSmart (Inform newsletter), and other relevant sources."

So the Committee expects to provide content for the Newsletter but not for the web site. This is odd but not surprising. What's more the Committee has made things more difficult by using its own separate mailing list which doesn't include the webmaster and newsletter editor.

Then we have: "Technology and Social Media: Ensuring the most suitable technology is used within the group. Developing the use of social media to widen communications."

Social media may attract attention from outside the group, but how many committee members or group members for that matter have posted to our facebook page or followed us on twitter? I can't name any and I suspect very few. I sometimes try to be contraversial but the only reaction I get is when I accidentally post a political tweet to the wrong account.

I have no idea what the second sentence means. Incidentally social media can be managed independently of the web site, but why? What we actually need is a deputy webmaster who has access to the server and can take over should anything happen to the webmaster.

Selling road safety is difficult. The IAM has under 100,000 members, out of how many drivers? Nearly 50 million driving licences are held¹. Those who come forward to the IAM and RoSPA have the right attitude to start with. Sure most can improve but they're not the ones we really need to attract.

As far as other technology is concerned the Committee should consider using Zoom for committee meetings to save room hire and travel costs.

¹ RAC Foundation 2019 <https://www.racfoundation.org/motoring-faqs/mobility>

Content Management

It appears that the Secretary is/was trying to set up an alternative web site using Wordpress. We could of course have Wordpress Manager and scripts on our website if we wanted to, but he hasn't asked. Wordpress is a content management system (CMS). What's the point of using a CMS if you don't provide any content?

The Secretary hasn't said what he wants, although it appears that he doesn't like our web site and other functionality available on our server.

Going Forward

I am not on the committee and not up for election at the AGM. It is up to the incoming committee to decide whether it wants to ask me to continue looking after the web site, and if not then what it intends to do about hosting (the domain name registration comes up for renewal in 2023). If I am to continue then I need a) input from the committee and b) a deputy. But as the Newsletter Editor is standing down we need a new Editor as well.

Richard Porter
17/4/2020