

Commercial web sites – role models for improving democracy?

On what official governmental/municipal web sites can learn from commercial ones

What is meant by a deepened democracy?

- An increase of public/civil participation (more people are involved in the process of decision-making)
- An increase of public competence (enough for a *meaningful* public participation)

Participation

- More people are involved and political issues are being discussed in an informal context.
- FöräldraNätet, www.foraldrar.com, has 140 000 members and a lively debate. To be compared to municipal attempts with none or very limited public response.

But why is *FöräldraNätet* so popular?

- Transparent och well structured

The five levels of contributions. Each level is symbolized by a >> of different colour.

- >> Level 1: The first contribution to a discussion.
- >> Level 2: A reply to the first contribution
- >> Level 3: A reply to the reply
- >> Level 4: A reply to the reply of the reply
- >> Level 5: A reply to the reply to the reply of the reply!

- Well connected to the everyday life of the user creates commitment (not boring)
- Individuals have influence over the discussions – set the agenda. Real power. Note that this is not the same as the individual always having her own way
- Built on fellowship – parents only
- No means of bringing pressure is needed: "I should - I want to!"

But what about the competence?

- Participation demands competence and vice versa. A paradox.
- At www.foraldrar.com people learn from each other. An example:

Parental allowance (2004-03-02 07:24:35)

How much is it that you get compared to your usual salary. Is it half as much?

Clueless

Reply 1:

80% of the salary up to about 24600kr (2004-03-02 07:57:43)

Lotta Li

- Even the censorship is transparent, which creates trust. An example:

This message has been erased(2003-12-04 17:24:18)

It is prohibited to go to personal attack against other members or official persons.

Read our chat rules, those who need to:

<http://www.foraldrar.com/index.php?page=snackrules>

Susanne / redax

- Articles can follow up "hot" topics

So what can one learn from commercial web sites?

Good ideas for an official municipal/gov. web site:

- Do not patronize
- Connect to everyday life
- Get to know – personal contact
- Be transparent - motivate and explain why messages are erased
- Do follow-up articles

Bad ideas for an official municipal/gov. web site:

- Advertisements :
"Sponsored by Pampers"
- To let self-employed or companies use the web site for insidious advertising.

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