

2004 GOLD QUILL AWARDS

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Category: 14– Electronic and Digital Communication
Title: **Rotman Web Site: www.rotman.utoronto.ca**
Time Period: 2003
Brief Description: The Web site for the Joseph L. Rotman School of Management,
University of Toronto

Need/Opportunity:

Under the visionary leadership of Dean Roger Martin, the Rotman School of Management has set out to become one of the world's top 20 business schools by 2005, and one of the top 10 business schools by 2008. To achieve this, the School must: build a critical mass of intellectual capital and become a Top 10 provider of research and program content; dramatically augment the global dimensions of our teaching and research; and increase collaboration and partnerships with other leading institutions and faculties, the global business community and Rotman alumni and donors. The dimensions affecting business school rankings encompass alumni relations, student recruitment, starting salaries of graduates, faculty recruitment, curriculum reform, fundraising, and overall branding and reputation. The need for effective communications and marketing lies at the centre of each portfolio.

When the Dean joined us in 1998, we were ranked 72nd worldwide. In just four years, he has taken us to 21st place (*Financial Times*, January 2003). Far behind the top 25 schools in both scale and resources, the Rotman School cannot expect to compete by replicating successful models of leading schools. Instead, we have adopted a strategy to pursue *uniqueness*, not replication – *distinctiveness*, not predictability. Our Web site is a key tool in communicating our message of quality and distinctiveness in the highly-competitive global business school arena.

Target Audience

The Rotman Web site is targeted to a diverse group that includes:

- **Program applicants** - prospective candidates from around the world seeking information about our programs;
- **Prospective faculty members**
- **Alumni** seeking School news, event details, or donor information, or attempting to connect with fellow alumni;
- **Current and potential donors** interested in what the Rotman School is up to;
- **The business community** seeking information about upcoming educational conferences and events; seeking students to fill job vacancies; or trying to connect with our faculty or staff;
- **Media and the general public:** seeking the latest Rotman news, or trying to connect with our faculty or researchers.

Goals/Objectives

1. **Increase awareness of the programs** offered by the Rotman School;
2. **Enhance the perception of uniqueness and quality associated with the Rotman School**;
3. **Promote the Rotman brand internationally**;
4. **Serve as a constantly-improving, dynamic interface between the Rotman community and its varied audiences**, where dependable information can be retrieved, suggestions made, and feedback delivered on;
5. **Serve as a ‘live’ resource for the Rotman community** – staff, faculty, students and donors -- to access and leverage a central repository of up-to-date information about the School and its initiatives.

Solution Overview

The business school marketplace is extremely competitive, so it is vital to clearly explain how the Rotman School differs from its competition, what we have to offer, and the excellence of our programs. Our homepage attempts to tell our story on a variety of levels. The ‘**Why Choose Rotman?**’ button, featured prominently on the homepage, takes visitors to a description of our efforts to reinvent business education. Since our degree programs are the basis for the school’s existence -- and the main reason visitors come to our site -- we have placed the ‘**Degree Programs**’ button first on our navigation bar, with a pop-up menu that takes users directly to the program of their choice. To give people a quick snapshot of our current activities and news, we placed a shortlist of news and events on the homepage, which links to more detailed descriptions. We have included some key ‘school personality icons’ at the left of the screen, including a ‘**Diary of a First Year Student**’ and an ‘**Applicant Profile**’, along with the latest ranking news from the top three rankings in the world (*The Wall Street Journal*, *BusinessWeek* and the *Financial Times*) which our various audiences demand quick access to. We also provide a link to our **Guestbook**, where we request feedback from our visitors. The School’s **latest news** is summarized on the homepage (‘Top Stories’), with links to all the details; and our **upcoming events** are listed as well. By necessity, our homepage contains a lot of diverse information, aimed at everyone from prospective applicants to the media to the business community, and the goal was to organize it in a clear, navigable manner. All in all, we want visitors to our homepage to see the Rotman School as a modern, energetic, dynamic place that they would gain greatly from associating with -- whether as a student, donor, faculty member or guest at one of our events.

Implementation and Challenges

The Director of Marketing & Communications acts as overall design and content manager for the site. She performs daily content updates and oversees the addition of all new information and features, working closely with key department heads within the school – including the Faculty, Academic Departments, Admissions and Recruiting, the Corporate Connections Centre, Alumni and External Relations, Media Relations and Special Events -- to develop and maintain content. An in-house Webmaster performs advanced coding and adds new graphic and animation (Javascript/Flash) elements. Our greatest challenge is working with limited resources to compete with better-funded world-class schools. While our competitors can afford external consultation, the

1,600+page Rotman Web site is produced and managed entirely in-house by a two-person team. A total annual budget of \$10,000 (Canadian) for Web initiatives includes an annual visual ‘facelift’ to the homepage, usually contracted to an outside design firm; the purchase of domain names with pointers to redirect users who enter incorrect URLs similar to ours (i.e. www.rotmanschool.com; www.mbarotman.com); and digital photography supplies for recording the school’s activities. Creative management of technology, content and design is a necessity. Another challenge is bridging the interests of a large and diverse community that includes current and potential students, faculty, alumni and program staff with one site -- often in the face of conflicting goals, priorities and opinions.

Measurement/Evaluation

Goal #1: Increase awareness of the programs offered by the Rotman School

Based on weekly *Web Trends* reports (which analyze our Web site log files) – *copy enclosed for the week of March 3 to 9, 2003* -- our site receives more than 5,300 visitors on an average weekday, and each person stays on the site for an average of nearly ten minutes. More than 19,000 pages are viewed on an average weekday.

Included in the **Top 40 most viewed pages** are the following program pages, as ranked for the weeks of January 6-12 and November 17 to 23 (see enclosed ‘Web Reports’ tab):

Full-Time MBA Homepage
Full-Time MBA Admission page
Master of Management & Professional Accounting Homepage
Degree Programs Homepage
Part-Time MBA Homepage
Executive Programs Homepage
Executive MBA Homepage
Full-Time MBA Curriculum page
PhD Homepage
Part-Time MBA Admission Criteria page
Executive MBA page

While the vast majority of leading business schools suffered a decrease in MBA applications for the 2003/04 academic year, the Rotman School’s applications increased by 8 per cent – a sign that our Web site is doing its part in communicating our message of uniqueness and quality.

Goal #2: Enhance the perception of quality, uniqueness, and value associated with the Rotman School

Our Homepage – which is viewed by more than 10,000 visitors per week -- features links to several ‘quality barometers’, including the current *Financial Times* rankings of business schools worldwide (where we are currently in 21st place); the *Wall Street Journal* rankings, where Rotman was named “a hidden gem”; and the *BusinessWeek* rankings, where we were ranked in the top tier worldwide. In terms of ‘uniqueness’, there is a link to our recruiting video, *Think Rotman*, on the homepage. This video

describes our unique approach to business education and defines ‘integrative thinking’, explaining how we are attempting to design a new kind of business education for the new century, and our reports show that 150 people are viewing it each week. Unfortunately, not all visitors have the technology to view the video online – so we send out copies of the CD-ROM and video to those who request it (approximately 2 per week.) There is also a link to ‘**Why Choose Rotman?**’ – visited by an average of 250 people per week -- which describes our unique approach and contains links to our video and other materials.

Goal #3: Promote the Rotman brand internationally;

In our efforts to become known as a leading global business school, our Web site is serving us well: During the week of November 17 to 23, visitors came to our site come from as far away as Singapore (192 visitors), France (175), England (588), Brazil (67) and Australia (162). (See ‘Web Report, November 2003’ tab.)

Goal #4: Act as a constantly-improving, dynamic interface between the Rotman community and its various audiences, where information can be retrieved, suggestions made, and feedback delivered;

Our **Guest Book** -- which can be accessed from an icon on our Homepage -- allows visitors to provide feedback and rate the site. The most important question we ask is, "Did you find what you were looking for?" If a user wasn't able to find something, I respond to them immediately and advise them where the information can be found, as well as who to contact for further information. To date, we have received excellent ratings from our users: 98 per cent of them have been able to find what they were looking for; 100 per cent say the site is "easy to navigate"; and our average ranking is 8.5 points out of 10. (See enclosed ‘Guest Book samples’ tab.)

Goal #5: Serve as a ‘living’ resource for the Rotman community to access and leverage a central repository of up-to-date information about the School’s varied initiatives.

The Rotman community has galvanized around the Web site, with each area of the School participating in developing Web pages for its individual area or center. Under ‘**Affiliated Websites**’ on our Homepage is a list of sites we have created in-house to meet the communication needs of our various internal constituents, including:

- Academic Areas -- Marketing, Finance, Strategy, etc. (70-100 visitors per week each);
- The Capital Markets Institute (107 visitors per week);
- The Clarkson Centre for Business Ethics and Board Effectiveness (88 visitors per week);
- The Institute for International Business (65 visitors per week);
- The Rotman Canadian Woman Entrepreneur of the Year Awards;
- Rotman Computing (34 visitors);
- Impact Consulting (57 visitors).

Other stand-alone sites have been created for several of our **student groups** – giving them an opportunity to get involved in the production and maintenance of a Web site and increasing their school spirit:

- Business & Technology Group (www.rotman.utoronto.ca/btg)
- Orientation (www.rotman.utoronto.ca/orientation)
- MBA Business Conference (www.rotman.utoronto.ca/businessconference)
- Rotman Hockey (www.rotman.utoronto.ca/hockey)
- Rotman Rugby (www.rotman.utoronto.ca/rugby)
- Rotman Women in Management Association (www.rotman.utoronto.ca/wima)