

'FIRST-CLASS' SITE GETS ABOUT 150 'HITS' A MONTH

Two-partner firm true believer in Web potential

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By Alan Salmon

SHOULD public accounting firms spend time and money on an Internet Web site? For at least one small CA firm, the answer is definitely 'yes.'

Find <http://www.interlog.com/~fmackan/> and you're at the Web site for Ormsby & Mackan, Chartered Accountants. The Mississauga, Ont.-based firm has had a World Wide Web page operational since August of 1995.

By last fall, all the Big 6 firms all had their sites up and running, but there was a dearth of Web pages from smaller firms. I did a search in Lycos on "Canadian public accounting firms" and up popped the Ormsby & Mackan home page.

I was intrigued that a two partner firm would go to the trouble of building such a first-class site. Over the next few months, I checked in from time to time and watched the site evolve. I demonstrated the site during my Microsoft tour as an example of what could be done with a little bit of effort.

Why would a public accounting firm be a pioneer on the World Wide Web? For Francis Mackan it was a recognition that even though the Web at that time was in its infancy, there was the potential to get online early and use the medium to convey information to existing and potential clients. He also recognized that the Internet could level the playing

field between the big and small accounting firms, both in terms of providing information and gaining exposure. Mackan said: "small firms [such as] ours don't have the budget to sponsor sporting or entertainment events or to place ads in national newspapers. But we can have a Web site for relatively low cost. And we are able to provide information that is just as invaluable as the Big Six provide at their sites."

Mackan started working on the site in June 1995 and took the traditional approach of keying HTML, hyper-linking, and experimenting with font styles and graphics.

It took him about 30 hours, in his spare time, over a period of five weeks to get the site up and running. Since that time he has added information and links to other sites that he believes are of interest to the firm's client base. The "Topics of Interest" area is a gold mine of relevant information. As the site has evolved over the last year, Mackan added some excellent graphics, plus a counter to keep track of the number of hits on the site. The cost to the firm is about \$25 per month. (Mackan did not pay a Web designer to create the site.)

Ormsby & Mackan's objective in creating a Web presence was to try and market the firm and attract new clients.

The firm also saw the opportunity for their existing clients to dial

in and get useful information. A more subtle objective was to demonstrate to existing and potential clients that the firm is technologically up-to-date.

Mackan said the site has been getting about 150 hits a month and has had visitors from as far away as Hong Kong, Switzerland and Australia. The partners can identify six inquiries for services that came directly from their site. Last December, Ormsby & Mackan

received an award from Harcourt Brace Professional Publishing in the U.S. as one of the top five accounting sites on the Web.

Ormsby & Mackan recently moved their offices and e-mail was used to send new address information to clients and suppliers. Mackan uses the Web for research, often to review tax case rulings. The firm downloads tax forms from Revenue Canada. Two of its clients are public companies so the partners use ISDN

and Canada Newswire to track public information about these clients.

"We have started a newsletter for the firm called *These Taxing Times*," Mackan said. "Copies are on our Web site in both WordPerfect and Adobe PDF formats." The firm would like the site to become a support resource for its client base and plans to register a domain name so the address (URL) will be easier to remember. □

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Who We Are...

Located in Mississauga, Ontario, *Ormsby & Mackan* was formed in 1993 and is essentially a continuation of the working relationship between George Ormsby and Francis Mackan which began 10 years ago. For complete details, see the profile of our partnership. For more general information on what the role of Chartered Accountants is, visit the [Canadian Institute Of Chartered Accountants](#)

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