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## How a Niche Web Site's 'Telechats' Increased Credibility, Visibility and Google PageRank

by Laurie Lande

Case study published on 11/27/2007

**Company:** TheSpiritedWoman.com**Location:** Los Angeles**Contact:** Nancy Mills, Founder and CEO**Industry:** Publishing, B2C**Annual revenue:** Confidential**Number of employees:** 1

### Quick Read:

When the founder of a women's empowerment Web site set out to attract more viewers and free publicity for her site, she thought of using her contacts to help her establish a unique niche on the Web. A writer who had gotten to know various book authors in recent years, she asked a few of those authors to be interviewed on her site in a live, one-hour "telechat." That led to a series of telechats with established authors, some of which were promoted by the authors' publishers and fan sites, sending Web traffic and free publicity to her young venture.

### The Challenge:

A relatively new women's Web site needed to gain attention—and hopefully more regular readers—but at very little cost. It also sought a way to distinguish itself from the many other Web sites focusing on women's empowerment issues.

### The Campaign:

TheSpiritedWoman.com advocates empowerment for women. It makes money through ecommerce sales and by organizing special events in the southern California area, although it is now expanding nationwide. Los Angeles writer Nancy Mills began the site in 2005 as an extension of her workshop business, and she soon realized that she needed to get more exposure, albeit on a limited budget.

Mills knew a few well-established authors from her membership in PEN USA, a non-profit writers group. She decided to use those connections to try to form a niche for her site.

Starting in March 2006, she scheduled live online one-hour interviews with popular authors that her readers could attend for \$15. Mills called this series the "Spirited Woman Circle Conversation Series."

The first author to participate was Janet Fitch, who wrote *White Oleander*, an Oprah Book Club selection that was later made into a movie. Fitch's stellar reputation and the fact that she was willing to start the series helped Mills approach other female authors and probably encouraged them to participate.

"I really networked," recalled Mills, who approached some authors she knew because she had interviewed them for Spirited Woman newsletters. After many phone calls, Mills had lined up seven more monthly chats from April to October of 2006. The "Conversation Series" included Elizabeth Forsythe Hailey, author of *Woman of an Independent Means*, which was made into a play and a television miniseries, and Fannie Flagg, author of the bestseller *Fried Green Tomatoes*, which was made into an Oscar-nominated movie.

Being aligned with such famous authors gave Mills's site instant credibility, she reasoned, even if she didn't make a profit on the conversation series. "A potential reader or advertiser might think, 'If this well known author is willing to be interviewed by The Spirited Woman, this must be an established site. I trust this author and thereby I trust the site where the

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3. Three Powerful Press Kits (and Why They Work) [by Gail Z. Martin](#)
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author appears."

Not only did the reading circle bring new traffic to the site, TheSpiritedWoman.com received free publicity from the authors' Web sites. Fannie Flagg, for example, doesn't have her own Web site, but she has a Webpage on Random House, which is a well-trafficked site.

"Random House promoted the Spirited Woman Circle at no cost because Fannie is their author. The traffic came directly from their site to mine," said Mills. "How many ordinary sites have connections to Random House?"

Moreover, anyone doing an Internet search of one of these authors would find the Spirited Woman site, and sometimes stay to become a loyal reader. "I received many emails from people who said they found my site by searching for Fannie. When you affiliate yourself with well-known people, it really raises your visibility," said Mills.

The Web traffic related to the conversation series helped bring many additional page views to TheSpiritedWoman, helping to move up its Google PageRank from 3 in early 2006 to 5 by early this year. (PageRank is Google's assessment of a site's "importance," based in part on the number, importance, and relevance of the incoming links; for example, a page that is linked to by many pages that themselves have a high PageRank receives a high rank itself. Number 10 is the highest ranking under this system.)

"Was I doing this to get a higher Google PageRank? No. But it taught me an important lesson about the benefits of leveraging traffic (from other Web sites)," said Mills.

The success of the series led Mills to repeat it in 2007 with eight more authors, ranging from Carly Phillips, a bestselling romance novelist who has published 25 books that have sold more than two million copies worldwide, to Rita Williams, journalist for "O" Oprah Magazine.

Mills noted that the 16 authors who have appeared so far in the Spirited Woman Circle have sold a combined 20 million books, which represents 20 million potential readers for her site and potential customers for the CD and MP3 recordings she sells of her Women's Circle conversations. She has planned another series for 2008.

#### The Results:

In the two years since Mills launched the Spirited Woman Circle, her pageviews have jumped dramatically. Also, her site comes up first on a Google search of the term "spirited woman" or "spirited women," and it now has a Google PageRank of 5, up from 3 when she first started her telechats. The higher ranking should help her as she sets out to find a sponsor for the 2008 conversation series.

#### Lessons Learned:

**Look outside yourself or your company for a stamp of approval.** "You may have to look outside your comfort zone and risk rejection," said Mills. But the advantages of gaining benefits from other companies and their resources outweigh any hesitation you may have about the risks.

– **Your network of contacts may be your best asset.** Mills created a whole campaign—the Spirited Woman Circle Conversation Series—by starting with a few established authors whom she knew. She figured correctly that she'd be able to reach additional authors through them. New business owners shouldn't be afraid to ask their business associates for contacts

– **Repetition is a powerful tool.** By making the Spirited Woman's Conversation Series a monthly event for eight months each year, Mills draws new viewers who look forward to the regular event, like those who relish going to a book club. It has given her site a valuable marketing niche among women's empowerment sites.

#### Related Links:

– [TheSpiritedWoman.com](http://TheSpiritedWoman.com)

– [Random House page](#) highlighting the Spirited Woman Circle event with author Fannie Flagg

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