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New energy-efficient Web site draws hits from eyes of Texas

Houston Business Journal - by [Ford Gunter](#)

Russell Mullins went online nine months ago to check out replacement of weather-stripping on French doors.

Three weeks after launching on March 10, the TexasIsHot.org Web site he co-founded boasts some 90,000 hits from Texans looking for a one-stop research shop on all things energy efficient.

Hours of distractions in his search for weather-stripping answers on countless energy-efficient sites led Mullins, Matt Valdez and Curtis Seidlits to decide that consolidation was key.

“There is information on energy efficiency out there,” says Valdez. “The problem is it’s everywhere. And some of those sites are trying to get you to buy things.”

Access is free and nothing is sold on the TexasIsHot site.

Parent site EnergyEfficientNation .org, the first incarnation, was sent only to about 200 family and friends. Two months later Valdez and Mullins were overwhelmed by 40,000 hits and the volume of write-in questions.

“We took the idea and scaled it down to Texas,” says Valdez. “The backbone of this is not only does energy efficiency exist, but here are the benefits, here’s the information and how you can use it to save.”

Information ranges from simple — what kind of light bulbs to buy — to complex — online calculations to determine what a building is spending (and can save) with certain green measures.

Original sponsors Visa and Mastercard have growing company on the site. TexasIsHot now counts the Association of Electricity Companies of Texas Inc., CenterPoint Energy Inc., Entergy Corp., Luminant, Oncor, TXU Energy, Time Warner Cable Inc. and Pedernales Electric Cooperative Inc. as “founding member partners” that have co-sponsored the site.

The three founders are still in debt, and Valdez says there are no concrete plans to generate income from ad sales on the site.

“Our whole idea is, let’s go all in and get it to the point where we can live and that’s all we need right now,” he says. “Our business plan in terms of operating for larger profits, didn’t really come into the equation. I wish I could say the idea started with us becoming millionaires.”

In addition to personally pending “tens of thousands,” the founders faced an uphill battle in contracting with larger companies.

“It was a hard sell because the point is we’re going to control this message,” says Valdez.

The group plans to target solar and wind associations and companies next in building out the alternative energy sector. Long-term plans call for once again going national (they still own the EnergyEfficientNation.org domain name) and maybe get a sit-down with the Pickens Plan team.

Says Valdez: “The site is set up to go national, but we have to make sure it works here.”

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