Gents - bullets as usual:

John Donovan appeared on Radio Essex on Thursday - informal transcript on his website. IMF subgroup (including Legal and Web Comms) looking at possible ways of addressing new media, including blogs.
thanks - presumably some of the information here - the fact that he spends most of every day doing this - is good context when discussing the site with media?

regards

-----Original Message-----
From: maandaq 15 oktober 2007 10:39
Sent: maandaq 15 oktober 2007 10:39
To: RE: RDSplc website

L&G - ref our discussion at the IMF - John Donovan was interviewed on Radio Essex late last week - below is the unofficial transcript on their website.

Interestingly, the 'Live chat' line on their site has been getting very little traffic recently.

Regards

Thursday 11 October 2007

Unofficial transcript: BBC Radio Essex presenter Etholle George interviews John Donovan

Etholle: 3 minutes to 1, the 1 o’clock news coming your way...

But first the story of a high tech David and Goliath battle of the modern age

A man in Colchester has spent the last 13 years taking on the oil giant Shell from his home. John Donovan’s been doing it from a website that’s become known as one of the first so called gripe sites... this is where people set up websites to detail their arguments or gripes with a certain company...

But John’s site royaldutchshellplc.com was one of the first to become very well known... he’s in our Colchester studio now and joins us...

Good afternoon to you John...

JD: Good afternoon

Now your legal proceedings with Shell are ongoing so I don’t want to get us or yourself into trouble by going into too much detail but roughly why and how did this all start?

JD: Well, just too correct one thing there are no on-going legal proceedings at all... not against us. We devised and created games for Shell from about 1981 and had a very good mutually beneficial relationship.. the promotions were national promotions in Britain and overseas.. budgets of £4.5... and we won an award for one of them... putting their sales up by 30% and it was a very happy relationship... but then there was a management change in the early 1990’s and we put up a series of promotional ideas to the new management and I opened The Daily Mail one morning and I saw a colour advert for a promotion which was very similar to one of the proposals we had put forward...

ETHOLLE: So that’s where the complaint began... when did you actually set up the website?

JD: Its... it’s a long story... we sued Shell six times in the High Court for alleged breach of confidence in respect of various games and we the final case was in 1999 and we entered into what was called a peace treaty with Shell at the time...
Two years later we alleged that Shell broke the peace treaty... one of their directors... and we set up the website in response

ETHOLLE: So that’s about six years ago...
JD: That was in 19... 2004 in fact...

ETHOLLE: Okay
JD: early in 2004

ETHOLLE: We will talk more about the website... I’ve got it up on my screen at the moment... there are currently 32 people who are engaged in conversation on your website... absolutely fascinating... John stay with us and we will come back to you after the news and find out exactly how and why this whole thing has taken over your life...

We’ve talking to John Donovan from Colchester...

(BBC Radio Essex jingle followed by the news)

Interview resumes...

ETHOLLE: Hello Good afternoon, welcome to Thursdays programme...
Currently though we are in conversation with John Donovan... he set up a website campaigning about Royal Dutch Shell Plc set up back in 2004

John have you always been a campaigner?

JD: We have as far as Shell is concerned...

ETHOLLE: no prior to that you know was there anything which got your goat prior to that?

JD: No

ETHOLLE: Prior to that...

JD: No, no, no... its just been as a result of the litigation in the past and the fact that we weren’t happy with the outcome of the last case.

ETHOLLE: Now...
JD: Shell settled, Shell settled all the early cases in our favour and paid all our legal fees

ETHOLLE: what about the use of the internet and this website then...? That idea dawned on you prior to 2004?

JD: We had previously set up websites that were anti-Shell if you want to use that description... the earliest time about 10 years ago...

ETHOLLE: and were they very advanced, technically advanced...?

JD: No, no no, that technology that we are able to use now like the Live Chat facility wasn’t available then

ETHOLLE: Presumably you were one of the first of these so called grip sites were you?

JD: We were indeed... the thing... the thing that makes it unique is that it’s a news based website... we gather stories from all the way round the world about Shell and we put them on this website and all of the services... the search facility... there are over 17,000 articles about Shell available are all free... no charges at all

ETHOLLE: physically how are you able to do that... does it happen automatically?

JD: No

ETHOLLE: are there computers searching for key words or do you yourself actually have to sit down and seek out these articles?

JD: I do it all myself

ETHOLLE: How much time does that take up John?

JD: Quite a bit
Laughter from ETHOLLE and JD
JD: Quite a bit
ETHOLLE: Your retired now aren’t you?
JD: I’m retired yes
ETHOLLE: You could be fishing... you could be going out dancing... you could be doing all manner of things
JD: Yes that’s true but I’ve got a creative brain and it keeps me active
ETHOLLE: You could be doing some painting John
JD laughs
ETHOLLE: that’s fairly creative... so go on, how many hours a day to you spend on it
JD: I get up fairly early in the morning about 7 o’clock and I spend a couple of hours searching for stories loading them on the website and then I do it intermittently throughout the day and before I go to bed in the evening... so I sleep for about 6 hours and the rest of the time I am constantly checking for new stories and handling things that happen with... contacted by other people that are interested in Shell, other people that are disgruntled with Shell for one way for another... their own employees... we have lots of lots of information and leaked documents that come in from Shell insiders
ETHOLLE: Who are these people who are talking online? You’ve actually lost about five of them since we’ve been on air... there are only 27 people... who are these 27 people discussing stuff related to a multinational corporation?
JD: Well there from... there from people interested in Shell, Shell investors, Shell employees from all over the world... the site has most traffic from the United States... so its busiest at night... there’s lots of people on in the early hours of the morning
ETHOLLE: Your obsessed it’s fair to say?
JD: I wouldn’t, I wouldn’t... other people might call it an obsession
ETHOLLE: somebody, somebody who gets up and does anything from early in the morning to when they go to bed at night day in day out has to have an obsession of some kind
JD: they have an obsession or they have a strong motive... a very strong grievance against the other party and I think that’s how the world has changed... it’s very important now the internet and that if you feel that you are treated badly by a big company and that they ignore every reasonable approach that you make to them there is now something you can do about it other than litigation which is obviously very expensive
ETHOLLE: Do you feel that you are getting your own back... this is John and the rest of your family come to mention it... do you feel you are getting there?
JD: We’ve made a huge impact on Shell us lots of publications, the Financial Times, various research organisations have all put into print... there were several newspaper articles last month about the site
ETHOLLE: now I understand there’s a few people that think... mistake your website for the official website and there are one or two confusions as a result hasn’t there
JD: You mentioned legal proceedings... the last time there were any proceedings was in respect of that domain name royaldutchshellplc.com which is the top level domain name for the company itself, Shell which is a company worth $223 billion dollars. When they unified in early 2004 the Anglo-Dutch arms we got to the domain name before them and they then issued proceedings through the World Intellectual Property Organisation against my father who is 90, Alfred Donovan, to try to get the domain name back... they unfortunately for Shell they failed. We got a unanimous verdict in our favour because it’s an entirely non commercial site
ETHOLLE: But people have sent you job applications I’ve heard
JD: we get job applications with CV’s
ETHOLLE: and this is for people who want to work for Shell not for John Donovan
JD: Absolutely... and we get we've had terrorist threats against Shell against Shell installations
ETHOLLE: you pass those on... I hope you pass those on...
JD: We... I'm in almost daily contact at board level with Shell and I pass on all information to them
ETHOLLE: Do they have someone to deal with you? If there a John Donovan office you know that deals with all this paper and words that you are creating?
JD: A few months ago we made an application to Shell under the Data Protection Act and they released a lot of documents to us... and we found out that they had indeed formed a team to counteract our activities... if we write to a third party then Shell contacts them and puts their side of the story... obviously there is two sides of every story
ETHOLLE: Have you thought have you thought you know that your energies could be channelled into into something else? I mentioned fishing rather tongue in cheek.. I don’t know... you could even work for charity or something
JD: Yes... I get satisfaction out of what we are doing and it keeps me going every day, it keeps my brain active and I am motivated because of the grievance that we feel we have against Shell
ETHOLLE: Will you ever rest
JD: Well my father is still at it involved his laptop... we write our own articles and publish them about Shell and they are picked up by Google News and so on and it interests both of us.
ETHOLLE: Well it's very interesting to have you on our programme John, thanks for joining us today
JD: That quite okay
ETHOLLE: That's John Donovan from Colchester, from our Colchester studio giving us an insight into what life can be like if you try to take on a one man crusade or a two man crusade if you include 90 year old Alfred with his laptop.

Ends 14 minutes past 1pm