



## Russ College alum's website breaks into top 50

### Image sharing site gaining in popularity

May 22, 2011

By Pete Shooner

Two years ago, [imgur.com](http://www.imgur.com) [<http://www.imgur.com>]\* (pronounced "image-er") was nothing more than a side project of Alan Schaaf, then a computer science major at Ohio University's Fritz J. and Dolores H. Russ College of Engineering and Technology. Today, the image-sharing Web site is one of the most popular sites on the Internet.

The site allows users to quickly and easily upload and share images across various social media platforms. The simple design and function is what boosted the site's popularity in the early months, said Matt Strader, chief operating officer at Imgur.

However, the site soon began to collect entertaining and amusing images of everything from cute animals to hand-drawn cartoons to improperly worded street signs. According to Strader, this is the direction the site is going, toward "creating a viewing experience" that focuses on entertainment.

Listening to those who use the site has been a cornerstone of Schaaf's design plan and is what has made the site so popular today.

"All the changes have been driven by feedback, by the users," Schaaf said. "The philosophy that we subscribe to is to be responsive all the time."

According to [alexacom.com](http://www.alexacom.com) [<http://www.alexacom.com>]\*, Imgur is now the 46th most popular site in the United States. Even more astounding is that the company has never done any sort of formal advertising.

Strader said that the site's popularity spread entirely by word of mouth and online, especially through social media sites, like reddit.com. Soon, however, the company will be launching an awareness campaign for Ohio University with the help of several interns from the Scripps School of Journalism.

David Juedes, chair of the Russ College's School of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, and Schaaf's former professor, said he couldn't be happier for the site's success.

"I've been following Imgur's climb up the web-traffic rank list since early 2010," he said. "It's amazing that it is in the top 50 sites in the country. It's right up there with MySpace and Hulu."

The biggest change for the company will come later this year, when Schaaf moves the operation to San Francisco. They plan to settle in the SoMa, or South of Market, neighborhood, where the headquarters of sites like Twitter and Reddit have been for years.

"The energy in the city is really cool," Strader said. "A lot of people we're looking to develop relationships with are in SoMa."

This fall Imgur plans to hire more engineering talent to continue to develop the site.

"We're looking to build a world-class team, and that area has a tremendous concentration of talented engineers," he said.

According to Strader, the seemingly instantaneous popularity of the site is all a result of Schaaf's vision.

"People launch websites all the time," he said. "When you look at the growth at Imgur, you have to be amazed at Alan's ability to recognize a need and create an elegant solution that people really value."

\* Link will take you outside Ohio University server

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