

INTERNET AND SEO METHODS BY ROAD TRANSPORT BUSINESS

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Abstract: *This paper deals with the use of Internet by the road transport business, especially with the marketing web services. The aim is to show the importance of the Search engine optimisation (SEO) methods for the creation of webpages, as their consistent implementation is relevant for improving marketing communication and improving the search-engine rankings. The results of a survey among small and medium enterprises in the road transport business show that proper attention given to the creation of a company website brings clear economic effects.*

Keywords: INTERNET SERVICES, MARKETING COMMUNICATION, SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION, SEO

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Communication over Internet

The use of modern information and communication technologies and Internet services is nowadays an inherent part of the management and decision-making process and in-house communication. Knowledge-based economy can be characterised by greater dependence on knowledge, information and highly-qualified skills and by increased need of both private and public sector to access them. Important changes occurred also in the area of marketing communication. Traditional forms of communication are insufficient; market situation requires targeted use of the Internet services. This naturally concerns also companies in the transportation sector.

Communication over the Internet is a natural requirement of today's national and international transportation. E-mail and online voice and video communication are commonly used. These means of communication in the area of transportation and logistics are used not only for marketing communication, but, considering the nature of the enterprise and workers' goods' and vehicles' mobility, also for the communication between drivers and dispatch, which leads to decrease in administration work, communication costs and to more efficient use of working time. The Internet access is also important, and it is, because of the necessary mobility, ensured through wireless access.

E-mail is one of the oldest Internet services. This service, especially after the implementation of the Act on electronic signature, has a tendency to fully replace the older way of communication by ordinary mail. Other tools of internet

communication are newsletters, discussion fora, chat and messengers. Newsletters are electronic news outlets sent to registered users by e-mail. They contain articles related to the company's area of operations, including news in its field, invitation to events as well as advertisement. [1].

Discussion fora are to be found relatively often. This communication tool enables participants to discuss the given topic using short text messages. Unlike the previous ways of communication that do not require real-time Internet connectivity, chat is an on-line way of communication, or, in another way, electronic group discussion, just as tradition phone-call, where all the participants are connected to the Internet in the real time. Messengers are software tools of internet communication, e.g. Windows Messenger. The applications used are usually free of charge or are a part of the operation system.

One of today's progressive technologies is Voice over IP (VoIP). It is a methodology and group of technologies for the delivery of voice communications and multimedia sessions over Internet Protocol (IP) networks, such as the Internet. [1].

The particularity of the use of Internet in the transportation is transportation databases. These network application offer online interface for use of other companies' capacities of transportation (trucks and other cargo vehicles) and for offer of one's own transportation capacities. Freighters and other prospective clients can find out about the most efficient use of their vehicle and possibilities of transportation of their goods. These services are

offered by multiple companies, such as RaalTrans.sk, Timocom.sk, Trans.eu and others.

Use of webpages

The use of webpages is an important part of company's informatics and a strong marketing tool. Webpage is – in a way – is a space, a folder on a server that is publicly accessible and includes information (text, graphic) to be published in the form of hypertext documents. A solid and prosperous company in particular should represent itself on its own domain, the title of the web. The content of the webpages should serve to present the company for the public, to prospective clients, as well as for communication with them. A current requirement is that the webpages are dynamic, allowing the clients to send queries, orders or to fill in a form. Webpages that are too slow are a great deficiency; this is often caused by a graphic presentation that is too demanding on the connection speed; this may discourage the visitors and the company may lose a prospective client. Trying to save the money, companies sometimes places their pages on public servers that are free of charge, however, this increases the risk of inaccessibility, slow download speed, loss of data or appearance of improper advertisement.

Webpages can be run on an own server place either in the company or in a data centre, on a rented server or through a webhosting. In the case the company decides to outsource the running of its information system (use a hosting), it should ensure that it hires a trustworthy and capable provider. [1]. The provider may use a virtual server, when the server fulfils the function of web and/or e-mail server for multiple client companies.

SEM – Search engine marketing

SEM is relatively young discipline of on-line marketing that deals with advertisement of web pages through Internet search engines. It does not address a passive customer, but an active user trying to find a company, a service or a product. SEM is composed of two parts:

- directly paid advertisement
- Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

In the case of the directly paid advertisement, the owner of the website is paying to the search engine for its prominent placement in the search results. Nowadays, more and more search results of the directly paid advertisement can be observed.

The PPC (pay per click) system of paid advertisement also exists; in this case, the company does not pay for publishing the hyperlink, but for the number of clicks on it, i.e. for the number of potential customers that decided to click on the link and download the company's website.

SEO – Search Engine Optimization

SEO is an aggregate of methods and tools to achieve a prominent placement in the search engine results, leading to increased website visits and increased number of customers. Today's Internet user is impatient and looks only at a few first search results. So, if the link is to be found lower on the list of results, it is likely to get overlooked. According to the statistics published at www.iprospect.com, 68% of users only read the first page of results, 17% of users read also the second page and only 8% of users read three or more pages.

Unlike the directly paid advertisement, the SEO requires highly professional skills and knowledge from the field of informatics; this is why the SEO is usually outsourced.

Companies offering SEO outsourcing usually offer complex services, starting with detailed input analysis of the web site – a Web Presence Audit. The website is analysed from different perspectives: content, source code with key words, hyperlinks,

accessibility, speed, visibility. This serves to identify the steps necessary to long-term improvement of its position, improvement of the online visibility, creation of the so called back links and sometimes also to increase the activities on blog and social networks. A strategy of complex optimization is prepared; this can last a couple of months based on the clients' preferences and its results are measurable. [4], [5].

In Slovakia, SEO is offered by multiple companies, for example:

- Pizza SEO (www.pizzaseo.com)
- H1 Slovakia (www.h1slovakia.sk)
- Seocentrum www.seocentrum.sk
- Internet Partners (www.internetpartners.sk)

Some companies also deal with the creation and management of social network pages and e-shops.



Fig. 1 Part of the services offered by PizzaSEO on its website [4]

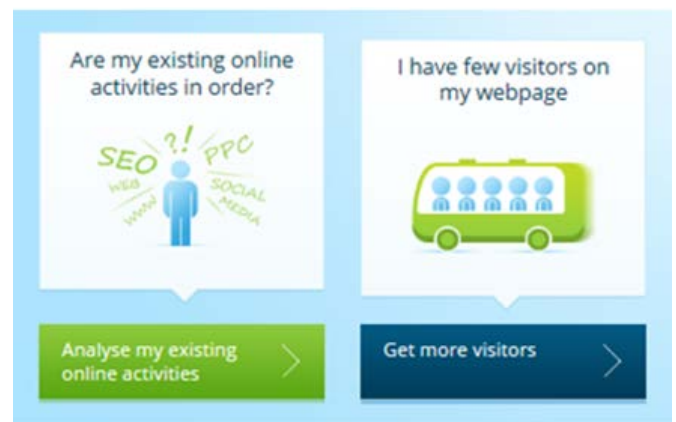


Fig. 2 Services offered by H1 Slovakia, as offered on its webpage - 4

What factors influence the Google search?

Looking for answer to the question which factors mostly influence the final search results in Google, multiple quantitative and qualitative characteristics were followed. (6 quantitative and 8 qualitative) [2], [3].

The analysis shows that **creation of own local webprofile on the Google map** that can be viewed in the contact section by a potential customer, has the greatest impact on the improvement of the company's website in the order of search results.

The second factor is having **the key word in the name** of the profile. The companies that have the searched key word in its name achieve better results in the search.

The only quantitative factor that influences the search results is **the number of references** of the company in the Google search engine, i.e. the number of search results with the same data on the company, such as the phone number and address. [2], [3].

We have verified the results of this research on the case of key words "road cargo transportation" and "cargo transportation" in the Google search engine. In both cases the results were comparable. In searching for "road cargo transportation", the search engine offered mostly websites of offices and institutions, or, more precisely, documents published by them dealing with road transport (ministries, district offices, laws, regulations). This is why we examined the search results for companies offering road cargo transportation with the seat in Žilina or Žilina region. The search was carried out in three consecutive days on different computers, but the differences in results were negligible, that is why average results are presented below.

Google offered 91 600 results while searching for "cargo transportation Žilina" ("A" from now on) and 312 000 results while searching for "cargo transportation" ("B" from now on). The prominent results offered directly paid advertisement of companies located close to the city of Žilina, even without searching for "Žilina". First five pages of results of each search were examined. In the "A" case, the paid advertisements were to be found on the first page 11 times on average. On the next pages it was 7, 3, 1, and 1 times. In the "B" case, the paid advertisements were to be found 9, 6, 3, 3 and 3 times respectively. The advertisements were used mostly by larger freighters and transportation databases, e.g. LKW Walter or Timocom.

We identified 4 companies that always placed on the prominent positions (apart from the advertisement). They all had their own local profile on the web on Google maps.



Fig. 3 Transport firms searched on the Google map

Three of them had the object of their activity (i.e. the searched key word) in their name. The fourth one did not have the searched key word in the title, but unlike the others, it had the search word in the website source code key words:

```
<title>STAVEBNÁ MECHANIZÁCIA, s.r.o.
Žilina</title>
<meta http-equiv="Content-Type"
content="text/html; charset=iso-8859-2" />
<meta name="KEYWORDS" content="STAVEBNÁ
MECHANIZÁCIA, Medzinárodná cestná nákladná
doprava, zemné práce a terénne úpravy,
uskutočňovanie stavieb, prípravné práce pre
stavbu, uskutočňovanie jednoduchých stavieb
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While examining the websites, we also found that one of the companies did not have its own website, only Google+ and other local servers profiles, which brought it surprisingly advantageous position. Other companies have nice, well-arranged and comprehensible websites, in all cases created by professional companies dealing with website creation and SEO.

We were interested to know why some companies from the transportation area we know did not place on prominent positions. We found out that none of these relatively well-known companies have a profile on Google+ and less than a half of them have their own website created by a professional company. Their websites are

static and not updated for a long time. It suggests that these companies do not pay enough attention to the use of online communication. This could be the reason for a worse search engine position.

The parameter "number of company references" was not examined, but our previous research does not suggest that it has such an effect as the above-mentioned qualitative parameters.

Conclusions

The results of our enquiry show that if a company wants to improve its Google search results, it should create its own local profile on Google maps and it should include the object of its activity in its title or in the keywords on its website. Investment devoted in the creation, management and updating of websites, preferably in cooperation with a company specializing in complex internet marketing, covering search engine optimization, design and management of pay-per-click campaigns, usability and accessibility services, as well as social network marketing and reputation management, brings benefits in the form of increased number of customers and improved economic results.

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