

SEO - Technical Assessment

Client Name

Here

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Executive Summary

This document provides an overview of short-term and long-term technical improvements Client Name Here can implement to improve the organic visibility of their web assets. Agency Name Here was tasked to accomplish three goals:

- Evaluate the current international strategy and recommend improvements
- Provide insight into how to better utilize existing content to maximize search engine exposure
- Identify any secondary technical issues that are hindering the site's overall organic visibility.

Agency Name Here analyzed the website's structure, reviewed recent structural domain changes, language focus, and best practices for region-specific international content presentation to guide recommendations that will help improve Client Name Here's organic search visibility.

In the short term, there are a number of specific technical and content issues that are affecting Client Name Here's organic visibility. We recommend a systematic optimization effort to address these issues. Short-term Optimization goals should include:

- Use Permanent (301) redirection rather than Temporary (302) redirection.
- Improve resolution of redirects from international Domains to the new subdomain structure.
- Improve the Crawler control mechanisms across the websites, particularly with regard to country-specific sitemap.xml files
- Modify AJAX-served data on the www.Client Name Here.com site so crawlers can see the content.
- Move content onto the www.Client Name Here.com domain from the subdomain sites, especially the investor site.
- Create better meta descriptions.

Long-term, Client Name Here should consider changing their website's IA and online service model to create a richer, more interactive and dynamic website. Critical parts of this effort should include:

- Migrate international content from subdomains to dedicated domain names with appropriate country codes. These sites should be hosted within the country referenced by the domain.
- Ensure that content currently inaccessible to crawlers, particularly PDFs hosted on the Salesforce.com server, is made visible to crawlers whenever possible.
- Consistent information architecture that uses the same terminology model for all page titles and URLs on the site.
- Aggressive internal linking of text across pages to create different taxonomies and organizations that will increase the site's relevance to visitors and crawlers.

How to use this document

This document focuses on how the technical aspects Client Name Here's sites are affecting SEO. It is designed for three audiences:

1. **The web marketing team** should at least read the executive summary closely to identify the major initiatives that will be considered by the webmasters as a result of this document.
2. **Project managers** should at least read the overview and recommendation section in order to determine potential project scope and effort.
3. **Webmasters will want to examine the whole document with an eye to helping prioritize the recommendations based on effort level.**

The recommendations in this document are extensive and vary in terms of scope and effort. We fully expect this to be the start of a discussion about effort and objectives instead of being the final word on what will work best for your websites and your organization.

Overview

Client Name Here recently made a number of significant changes to its Top Level Domain (TLD) strategy. These included:

- moving from country-specific domains such as www.Client Name Here.co.jp to country or region-specific subdomains of the overall site such as jp.Client Name Here.com.
- consolidating press releases onto the investor.Client Name Here.com site.
- shifting to Salesforce hosting for whitepapers and other content.

These shifts have affected not only how users find and interact with information on the site, but have also created a number of blind spots for search engine crawlers, changed the apparent content emphasis of the site and fragmented content across a number of domains. Our analysis describes how these changes affected Client Name Here's organic visibility and recommends ways to mitigate their impact.

Methodology

Our analysis made use of multiple sources, including Google Analytics, SERP ranking reports, and a subset of available log files. We examined the following site components:

- Domain-Level Analysis:
 - Domain and subdomain interaction (with special attention to international implications)
- Site-Level Analysis:
 - Crawler control mechanisms
 - Site presentation based on human user agents (i.e., Firefox or IE 7)
 - Site presentation based on a crawler-based user agent (i.e., Google or Yahoo! crawlers)
- Search Engine Algorithm and Recommendation Review:
 - We reviewed the communities of practice and expertise in the SEO domain, as well as examining in-link and pagerank trends for the Client Name Here site in Google, Yahoo!, and Bing.

Client Name Here derives almost all of its traffic from Google. With this in mind, we've targeted recommendations at Google's expectations and practices, though not to the detriment of other search engines.

Immediate Impact Recommendations

This assessment uncovered issues at a number of levels: domain, site structure, and page structure. We have identified a number of short-term and long-term areas for improvement. The recommended improvements outlined below are the changes that will generate the most benefit to site ranking with reasonable levels of efforts and with minimal impact on overall site structure.

These improvements are organized by our recommended prioritization of effort. If possible start at the top and work your way through them to systematically improve SEO and click-through rates.

Change 302 Redirects to 301 Redirects across all web assets.

Redirects employed across the websites, especially to redirect from international domains to the new subdomain structure, use 302 [temporary] redirects instead of the 301 [permanent] redirects. Because 302s have been used rather than 301s, there are a number of instances where search results still point to the older, country specific TLDs despite the fact that they contain no content at this point, as seen below in a example from Google France:

[Compuware Corporation](#) - [[Translate this page](#)]
Logiciels pour le développement d'application ou l'assurance qualité. Inlus une présentation de la société et des services proposés.
[www.compuware.fr/](#) - [Cached](#) - [Similar](#)

[Compuware Corporation](#)
With **Compuware's** Business Service Delivery approach, IT leaders get comprehensive ...
Looking for the latest information about **Compuware**, Covisint or Gomez? ...
[+](#) [Show stock quote for CPWR](#)
[Careers](#) - [Contact Us](#) - [Products](#) - [About Compuware](#)
[www.compuware.com/](#) - [Cached](#) - [Similar](#)

[Products by Compuware](#)
About **Compuware** · Mission · Company Management · Corporate History · Corporate Headquarters · Press Releases · Partners · Analyst Reports · Press Mentions ...
[www.compuware.com/products.asp](#) - [Cached](#) - [Similar](#)

[+](#) [Show more results from www.compuware.com](#)

[More results for Compuware](#)

Improve resolution of redirects from international TLDs to the new subdomain structure.

Currently, the vast majority of international TLDs held by Client Name Here are using 302 Temporary Redirects to pass users on to the appropriate international subdomain. There are a number of cases where this redirect is not properly setup. Those domains are listed below:

Domain	Redirect status as determined by nslookup
Client Name Here.ch	Resolves intermittently
Client Name Here.nl	Doesn't resolve
Client Name Here.co.uk	Doesn't resolve

Domain	Redirect status as determined by nslookup
Client Name Here.ca	Doesn't resolve
Client Name Here.pt	Doesn't resolve
Client Name Here.no	Doesn't resolve
Client Name Here.es	Doesn't resolve
Client Name Here.hk	Doesn't resolve
Client Name Here.pl	Doesn't resolve
Client Name Here.de	Resolves but times out
Client Name Here.co.in	Infinite Redirect Loop

In these cases, the domain fails to redirect or, in several cases, enters an infinite redirection loop. These issues should be remedied as soon as possible.

Improve the Crawler control mechanisms across the websites, particularly with regard to country-specific sitemap.xml files

Currently, sites directly under Client Name Here's control utilize both robots.txt and sitemap.xml to direct crawlers on the Client Name Here site. Implementation of this needs to be improved and emphasis on crawler control moved to sitemap.xml files whenever possible.

The most important short-term issue is that currently all subdomains (de.Client Name Here.com, uk.Client Name Here.com, etc) share a single version of sitemap.xml file, which provides all URLs as www.Client Name Here.com. This gap is a major issue that is hiding these domains from search crawlers.

Additionally robots.txt is used to disallow access to specified pages, and it is not used to ensure auto-discovery of a sitemap.xml standards compliant site map. Use both of these standards to ensure that crawlers can easily index the entire site.

Action Steps:

- On all international subdomains, sitemap.xml points back to www.Client Name Here.com, effectively hiding all language or region specific content from search crawlers. Each subdomain needs a sitemap.xml file that specifically deals with that subdomain's content.
- robots.txt doesn't provide for auto discovery of sitemaps.xml files on any Client Name Here related site. All robots.txt files on the site need to provide this.
- robots.txt on offers.Client Name Here.com explicitly rejects all crawlers, hiding all material there from being indexed and benefitting Client Name Here's SEO efforts. A way to surface this content to crawlers, preferably on the offers.Client Name Here.com subdomain needs to be created.
- investor.Client Name Here.com lacks either control scheme. Both need to be put in place as part of Client Name Here actively taking control of its sites are crawled and indexed by search engines.

Notify Google which subdomain is primary for each language through tagging

The best way to obtain high visibility for Client Name Here country-level subdomains would be to create and maintain localized country-specific content. Currently, Client Name Here serves up similar content for different languages at country-specific subdomains. In cases where the website content is largely identical (e.g. ca.Client Name Here.com and www.Client Name Here.com) Client Name Here should specify which page is the primary one for search engine crawlers using rel="canonical" tagging. Client Name Here should choose one primary one per language (e.g. www.Client Name Here.com, fr.Client Name Here.com, de.Client Name Here.com, es.Client Name Here.com). While this strategy will limit visibility of the non-primary country versions, it will consolidate inlink equity that is currently spread among several country sites.

English language subdomains	Other
http://au.Client Name Here.com/	French
http://ca.Client Name Here.com/	http://frca.Client Name Here.com/
http://dk.Client Name Here.com/	http://fr.Client Name Here.com/
http://fi.Client Name Here.com/	
http://hk.Client Name Here.com/	German
http://in.Client Name Here.com/	http://at.Client Name Here.com/
(the link to "middle east – english" in the translation drop-down goes to "portugal-english" instead)	http://ch.Client Name Here.com/
http://nl.Client Name Here.com/	http://de.Client Name Here.com/
http://no.Client Name Here.com/	
http://pl.Client Name Here.com/	Spanish
http://pt.Client Name Here.com/	http://esla.Client Name Here.com/
http://se.Client Name Here.com/	http://es.Client Name Here.com/
http://sg.Client Name Here.com/	
http://uk.Client Name Here.com/	
http://za.Client Name Here.com/	
http://www.Client Name Here.com/	

Modify AJAX-served data on the [www.Client Name Here.com](#) so that crawlers can see the hidden page content

One major areas for improvement is the site's use of AJAX presentation approaches, particularly on the home page. While AJAX does create a more dynamic experience for the user, it effectively hides content from search engine crawlers, since they generally do not execute JavaScript during their crawls.

The same type of experience can be created by placing all of the content on page at load and using JavaScript to show or hide divs based on user interaction. Since most of the content in question is text-based, it should not have a significant negative impact on performance of home page loads.¹

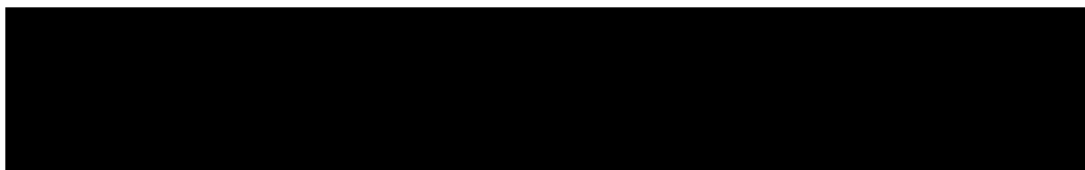
Move content onto the Client Name Here.com domain, especially press releases from the investor site

A lot of valuable content is hosted off of the Client Name Here domain. For example, press releases are typically hosted on cpwr.client.shareholder.com (e.g. <http://cpwr.client.shareholder.com/releasedetail.cfm?ReleaseID=450809>). While press releases are currently the most significant issue, the balkanization of content is a problem that occurs for a wide variety of content owned by Client Name Here. Simply put, if content is not on the Client Name Here domain, it will not count towards the visibility of the site.

We understand the value of having multiple technical platforms accomplish goals within the Client Name Here web asset space. One way to overcome these system boundaries is to use proxies to overcome technological issues or system boundaries and create a cohesive presentation to the world at large.

Create better meta descriptions

While meta description text doesn't contribute to search engine ranking, it does greatly influence click-through rates on search results pages. Currently, meta description tags are either non-existent or so terse that Google is simply ignoring them and selecting text from the body of the page content. For example, under the products section the Gomez page's description is simply "The Gomez Platform". In this case Google did an okay job of identifying relevant text, but this is not always the case, and regardless will occur without direct input from Client Name Here.



Our experience has shown us that copy that is more marketing-oriented in this tag can help capture traffic. While crafting specific messages for all pages on the Client Name Here site may be overkill, having more control over marketing message at the top two or three levels of hierarchy would be beneficial and ensure that the appropriate points are emphasized.

¹ Google has also recently developed a method for serving up AJAX-driven content, as described in its webmaster blog here:

<http://googlewebmastercentral.blogspot.com/2009/10/proposal-for-making-ajax-crawlable.html>

This approach is apparently "live" as of early March 2010, but the impact of the approach is still not well understood and is less reliable than simply loading the content and managing it in divs.

Action Steps:

- Create targeted meta description tags at the top 2 to 3 levels of page hierarchy on all Client Name Here sites. Agency Name Here will provide these for 25 pages in our page-level review, but this activity should be expanded to include additional pages.

Long-term SEO strategies

Domain Level Analysis

Client Name Here currently does business under a number of interrelated domains and subdomains online. The major domains and commentary on their is outlined below:

[www.Client Name Here.com](#)

Client Name Here's main site. This site suffers from too much content, in the case of international subdomains, and too little, in the case of press releases that reside on the investor.Client Name Here.com and offers.Client Name Here.com subdomains. Really the Client Name Here.com site should be at the heart of any SEO-focused content.

offers.Client Name Here.com

Marketing-driven site host by salesforce with registration walls in front of major content. Wholly inaccessible to search engine crawlers due to both the registration requirement and the explicit exclusion of their usage by robots.txt. This site represents an opportunity lost, as search results will never direct users to these pages, regardless of how valuable or applicable the content might be. Making this content visible should be a high priority.

investor.Client Name Here.com

While this site is targeted at investors, it is the single largest Client Name Here controlled source of press releases and general news about the company. It doesn't deploy any crawler control mechanisms and has a simple click through disclaimer that doesn't present any obstacle to search engine crawlers. While the materials it presents are valuable, a number of these resources would better serve Client Name Here's online presence if hosted under the main domain.

International domains and IP addresses

Client Name Here has systematically moved to a scheme whereby each international domain has its own subdomain. This strategy is less than ideal for a number of reasons. First and foremost, it moves Client Name Here's content out of the standard system for regional targeting on the internet. Google and other search engines have explicitly made their preferences known on this topic and while they will attempt to properly serve up subdomain content, the process for identifying and properly categorizing this content in the absence of an standardized system is one that invites errors and should be avoided. From [Google's Webmaster Central](#):

Use top-level domains: To help us serve the most appropriate version of a document, use top-level domains whenever possible to handle country-specific content. We're more likely to know that <http://www.example.de> contains Germany-focused content, for instance, than <http://www.example.com/de> or <http://de.example.com>.

It is worth noting that subdomain usage exposes Client Name Here to an increased risk of duplicate content penalties. Use of TLDs for region specific international content is significantly less risky in this respect.

Action Steps:

- Move back to a international strategy focused on country-specific domains.

Site Level Analysis

HTML coding practices

While there are a number of validation issues in the HTML used by Client Name Here, it is, on the whole, fairly clean. Its major short-fall is limited use of HTML structural elements to indicate relative importance of page content. It is important to remember that tags do more than style a page, they also provide information about the relative importance of different pieces of content, such as the difference between a H1 (a top level header) and an H3 (a sub-sub-header). Currently, Client Name Here uses div classes such as <div class='h3'> to duplicate this setup visually, but fails to record that structural information that helps crawlers more appropriately determine what a page is about.

Action Steps:

- Use a validator such validator.w3c.org to ensure that all HTML is correctly formed
- Deploy structural HTML to make content semantically parseable by search crawlers

URLs

With so many different subdomains, systems and regional issues, creating a systematic URL structure that communicates logical and meaningful hierarchy to the user is a difficult task. While Client Name Here has created descriptive URLs, they don't mirror the navigational hierarchy of the site and, in many cases, run explicitly counter to it. In the longer term, conducting a complete content inventory of the site and creating a more systematic approach to content organization, hierarchy and naming within the confines of Client Name Here's technological needs.

Page Titles

Titles are descriptive but seem to lack any definitive scheme. They range from "Hiperstation by Client Name Here" to "Client Name Here's File-AID" to "Services - Home", with the predominant theme being the "Product/Service preposition Client Name Here". Carrying this scheme through the whole site would be advisable and improve search results by providing clearer indications of page content in addition to emphasizing important keywords.

Action Steps:

- Extend Product/Service preposition Client Name Here title method across all pages.
- As part of URL overhaul, come up with a new page title scheme that more effectively communicates hierarchy and content focus.