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Intro

During the Teaching and Development workshop in August 2003 in Launde Abbey, a subgroup was formed to discuss CCI's presence on the internet. That resulted in several proposals by Caroline Moira, Richard Mills and John Talbut. See the *Co-Co Internet Presence Sub-Group* on the CoCoInfo web site. I always need several nights sleep to grasp the implications. So I did. This article is the outcome.

I generally like the idea of an improved (or enhanced?) presence of the CCI on the internet. I took that as the starting point of my thinking. But what is the point of having an improved Internet presence for CCI in the first place?

1. What are the Core Objectives of an Improved Internet presence for the CCI?

It seems that an *increase in the number of people attending CCI fundamentals* is the ultimate objective of improving the Internet presence of CCI. This is what I derived from the discussions so far.

But what about *ex-co-counsellors* who would like to take up co-counselling again? Or increasing interest for workshops for *existing co-counsellors*? It seems to me that the sort of publicity needed would be quite different for the various groups.

2. Understanding Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)

People generally find web sites through search engines such as Google or Yahoo. If we want people to find local CCI fundamentals quickly, the relevant CoCo web site(s) need to be ranked highly, on the first page of **Search Engine Return Pages** (SERP).

Therefore our first priority should be to find out how we can make search engines rank the CoCo web sites high on their Search Engine Return Pages. Achieving this is called **Search Engine Optimisation**

(SEO). This is a collection of techniques webmasters can use to improve their site's SERP position.

The flipside of not achieving SEO is that we end up with the most beautiful web site(s) that nobody visits, let alone feels stimulated by to do the fundamentals, re-join co-counselling or attend workshops.

The first challenge in SEO is creating a **web site content** that satisfies both the site visitors and the search engines. A site that is really satisfying for its visitors might not even being noticed by a search engine. On the other hand, a site that is optimised for search engines might come across as dry and uninteresting to its visitors. It is usually a good idea first to create an engaging experience for visitors, next tweak the page's content so that search engines can find it easily.

The second challenge in SEO is having as many **relevant web sites** as possible **linking** to our coco web site. When a page on web site A links to a page on web site B then page A is suggesting that page B is a worthwhile page to visit. Web pages secure the highest ranking in a search result by having the most 'votes'.

Having said that, not all links have the same value. Search engines use the links to your web site page to assess how relevant and worthwhile that page is. The more 'authoritative' the referring web site is in the 'eyes' of the search engines, the more valuable the link is for your web site's ranking. On the other hand, links from sites with irrelevant content can actually lower the ranking on the search engine result pages.

3. Question: One 'simple portal' for the UK (England/Scotland?) or a web of co-operating CoCo Web sites with or without a 'simple' portal?

Question 1 What is meant by 'simple'?

1. One, only one, visually attractive page with, as sole content, links to other coco web sites? A page with such limited content is not likely to work well with search engines.
2. A less 'simple' web site containing short articles and videos selling co-counselling and stimulating people to go to other local coco web sites where they can book for fundamentals. A web site like this will more likely end up higher in the search engines' results.

Question 2 One portal for UK, or two: England and Scotland?

for some years there has already been a portal for Scotland: www.cocoscotland.co.uk . Among Scottish co-counsellors there seems to be quite a strong wish for Scottish independence …

Question 3 Who makes the final decisions about this 'simple' portal?

The simpler the web site, the less this decision making process is a problem. The more information and the more complex the simple portal will be, the more disagreements are likely to

arise. On CoCoList you might have noticed disagreements about the visual design of some of the coco web sites, about their contents, e.g. what should be written about what goes on the front page, about young people and co-counselling, about sexual attractions within the network. So, who will make the final decisions?

Question 4: Is one 'simple' portal sufficient for the various target groups? Or do we need to have several web sites in order to stay attractive for each of these groups?

To put the question slightly differently: if we try and target the 'general' public as a whole can we be sure that we reach special groups (young people, prisoners, black people, intellectuals, immigrants etc.) as well? Or do we need a variety of coco web sites each with their own content? If so, what minimal content needs to be shared?

Whatever the answer to that 'simple portal' might be, there always will be several co-counselling web sites: general ones such as CoCoInfo or CCI-UK and others with more specific remits: for instance, sites specifically related to co-counselling teachers with their special target groups. We need these coco sites as 'authoritative' and Search engine optimised as possible in order to get high ranks on the Search Engine Result Pages for the 'simple portal' and the web sites themselves as well.

Question 5: On what topics/aspects do the various coco web sites need to collaborate in order to achieve a high internet presence for both themselves and a 'simple' portal?

To answer this question we really need to get our **marketing strategy** right: what information do people need to feel enticed to do the fundamentals, re-join co-counselling and attend workshops?

Question 6: How can we create effective co-operation among the various coco web site creators and their stakeholders?

Getting these people involved and/or consulted in the marketing research could be a good start, as that will contribute to a more focused and shared understanding of the purpose of co-operation.

Once we have a clear marketing strategy we can co-operate in implementing this across the various coco web sites. Co-operation among coco web site creators would work better if there were a common focus.

4. Priority 1: Get good Marketing research organised.

As we have seen before, in order to get high ranks on the Search Engine Result Pages a web site needs to have a 'web' of 'authoritative' web sites linking to it each other. To achieve this we needto have answers to the following questions:

Marketing Question 1: What content (text/visuals) do CoCo web sites need to inspire visitors to do the CCI fundamentals, re-join co-counselling or attend CCI workshops?

In my terms[1]: What should the content of a coco site need to include that increases its *perceived relevance in the eyes of its visitors*?

This is the core question. Without having a clear answer we risk all our other attempts turning into a waste of effort.

Marketing Question 2: Can we use a common content (text/visuals) for the various target groups? Or do we need to differentiate content in order to stay attractive for the various target groups? If so, do we need to differentiate between web sites as well?

To put the question slightly differently again: What minimal content needs to be shared among the various web sites? What content can be different but still supports the general coco-authority of the web sites?

Proposal 1: Get funding organised for Marketing research as soon as possible

I think this kind of marketing research needs to have the highest priority because it will be the basis of the decision making processes around enhancing the presence of CCI on the internet. As far as I know we do not have marketing expertise within CCI. That is why we need to get funding for this organised.

5. Priority 2: Optimise the various CoCo web sites so that they synergistically increase each other's rankings in the Search Engines

The findings of the Marketing and SEO research will provide us with the information about what each individual web site can contribute to CCI's presence on the internet

SEO Question 1: What are the SEO 'keywords' we need to attract people to the various CoCo web sites? Do the keyword requirements in turn require an adaptation of the content of the sites?

Can these keywords be the same for all CCI sites? For all groups (new, ex- and existing co-counsellors)? Do they need to be differentiated depending on what a specific, local teacher has on offer? If so, how?

What SEO keyword policy or guidelines do we need to have to ensure that coco web sites referring and linking to each other actually achieve higher rankings for each of the sites?

SEO Question 2: What can be done to increase each coco site's 'authority'?

Search Engines make assessments of a site's authority. The higher this perceived authority is in the 'eyes' of the search engines, the higher the value is of the links this site refers to.

Proposal 2: Get funding organised for Search Engine Optimisation

Once we have the results of the Marketing research, we need to get expertise in for getting our SEO organised. For this we need to get funding organised as well.

6. Priority 3: Decide what content (text/visuals) do CoCo web sites need to present a more or less common CCI face to the general public

Even though the findings for SEO and marketing are not available yet, some progress with this priority can be made. Develop guidelines for a shared presentation so that CCI sites can be recognisably seen to be related to the same CCI network.

Co-operation Question 1: A common logo?

Agreement: Everybody seems to agree that a professionally developed CCI logo on all CCI web sites would be a great step forward.

Co-operation Question 2: A more or less shared Visual Design?

Elements that can be thought of are:
Shared 1. page layout (regions, picture areas, text areas), 2. fonts and Backgrounds, 3. colour schemes

Co-operation Question 3: Common Links and Events pages

In order to avoid a situation where each web site needs to individually update its links and event pages it is important to have one central place where people can do that, so that all other places are automatically updated. This would help in maintaining consistent, accurate and up to date links.

CoCoInfo provides this service already with the http://co-counselling.info/en/wiki/co-counselling-sites-worldwide page. This page can easily be updated by any co-counsellor registered with CoCoInfo. Other coco web sites can link to or embed this page in their site. Doing this saves them from having to update this Links page, as this automatically happens as soon this page is updated at CoCoInfo. The same can be done with the calendar and other coco events.

Conclusion

I believe that getting the order of priorities right (Marketing Research first, next SEO and last but not least creating a shared CCI face among coco web sites) will increase the internet presence of CCI in a positive way and will benefit CCI co-counselling in a big way.

So far my five euro cents to the conversation about improving or enhancing the CCI's internet presence. My own priority and contributions lies in the development of CoCoInfo over several years. It would be great if my efforts could be integrated into and underpinned by a well-researched Marketing and SEO strategy. This will create a synergistic effect.

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[1] See my article 'A new way of getting more people involved in Co-Counselling Activities'
http://co-counselling.info/en/article/new-way-getting-more-people-involved-co-counselling-activities

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