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A Network Based Intelligent Training System of Internet Marketing for SMEs

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Abstract

The Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs) are significantly important part in the national economy. But the employees and decision makers in SMEs are generally lacking of knowledge and skills, this means that the small enterprises have missed out many business opportunities, this is even more evident while implementing and utilising Internet for marketing. So it is necessary to provide the SMEs with knowledge training and decision-making support they needed in Internet marketing. This paper proposed a network based intelligent training system which aims to help SMEs to master knowledge and decision-making skills in using the Internet for marketing. This system contains four main functional modules: Self Evaluation Test (SET), Learning Module (LM), Case Retrieval System (CRS) and Feedback Module (FM). In view of the different knowledge and skill levels of Internet marketing in SMEs, this system provides two training models: theory training and case studies.

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1. Introduction

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) play an important role in the national economy. The Internet provides the SMEs with new opportunities to extend their business and occupy more market share. Although the Internet marketing has boomed in recent years, most companies have used it mainly for advertising or promoting corporate images. Not many companies have fully utilized the power of Internet marketing as a new channel for handling transactions on the Internet[1]. These are even more evident in domestic SMEs. There is an appreciation that SMEs need to be fully engaged in internet marketing, the question shifts to how

they should approach this opportunity[2]. Decision makers from the SMEs face many difficulties in Internet marketing, they consider that Internet marketing is just website construction, focused on computer technology rather than the strategies and objectives of the marketing, some else separated the Internet marketing from traditional marketing completely and adopted some inappropriate ways to promote the website. These difficulties all result from a lack of the knowledge and skills that are necessary to carry out Internet marketing in an enterprise. Therefore it is necessary to provide the employees and decision makers with updated knowledge and indispensable skills.

To meet with the demands of the domestic SMEs, an intelligent Internet training system which provides knowledge and skills of Internet marketing to SMEs has to be created. This system have four main functions: self evaluation test, case retrieval, online training and feedback. This paper analysed the architecture of this intelligent training system and described the system how to realize the main functions.

2. The training needs of Internet marketing in SMEs

Smaller enterprises tend to be younger enterprises that are more willing to take risks than their larger competitors[3]. At present most of the domestic SMEs have used or intend to use Internet for marketing. However, introducing Internet marketing into SMEs and combining both off-line and on-line marketing campaigns is not an easy process[4]. This process needs enough knowledge and new skills. The authors send a large number of questionnaires to the SMEs in Zhejiang Province, the answered questionnaires revealed that 5 main problems of Internet marketing existing in the SMEs as follows:

- SMEs are not equipped with inter-disciplinary talents who grasp both of the network technology and marketing management knowledge.
- Most of them do not have practical experience related Internet marketing and lack of comprehensive understanding on Internet marketing.
- They do not know how to develop and manage online customers.
- The function of the website is incomplete, the deficiency of the publicity and maintenance lead to low access amount.
- They have no experience of Internet marketing and that they may adopt Internet marketing in improper ways. The managers from the SMEs would like to learn successful experience from others by case based study.

3. The design model of the system's architecture

As a data-driven system, the intelligent training system of the Internet marketing is facing a huge amount of data processing and logic processing tasks. In order to maintain easily, the system use hierarchical structure to deal with the different logical units which divided into three layers according to the function: the data layer, logic layer and user interface layer[5]. The bottom of the system is the data layer which is data base for the system, including customer's information database, test questions database and cases database. The logic layer chooses the questions and cases from the underlying database for the users to make self-evaluation and learning. To utilise the case retrieval, online analytical processing, screening data and some other logic processing function, the logic layer analysing and processing the different data by visit the data warehouse, and then presented the results to the user interface. The user interface layer provide the users with the test and training contents in various ways according to the results which screened by the logic layer. The user interface layer implemented in a form of web, and they can access the system through the interface. Figure1 is the design model of the system architecture.

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