

IMPORTANCE OF ACCOUNTING WEBSITES IN INFORMING ON ACCOUNTING PRACTICE

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Abstract

An international financial dependence has resulted in a need for global and uniformed accounting standards (International Accounting Standards, IAC). However, an accounting information (financial statements) transparency, standards, opinions, research and practice should be available.

At the same time, an increased Internet traffic has resulted in the fact that the Websites became the fastest, cheapest, and most accessible way to information acquisition with regard to different accounting problems and solutions.

The author concentrates on the advantages and disadvantages of accounting Website application concerning the accounting practice and training environment.

The paper encompasses an analysis of different Website possibilities and their accompanying links as well as their strength and weaknesses.

Keywords: Websites, Internet, accounting, accounting practice

1. INTRODUCTION

The accountancy was always open to new technologies. E.g., the accountants were the first to use the computers—i.e., Electronic Data Processing (EDP)—to speed up the time to obtain the updated financial information (Walgenbach & al., 1987). A later Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) development has generated today's e-banking (Needles, 1995). Extending this openness, the accountants continued to use the Internet to exchange their findings, research, and developments.

The accounting Website visitors are usually the professionals—the accountants, auditors, and students. With regard to the Internet communication, the accounting Website visitors have a possibility to use the published accounting information in a mono- and bidirectional communication. A one-way communication implies only a Website search or a newsletter receipt containing accounting contents. A two-way communication includes an accounting Website visitors' e-correspondence or an online discussion (*Encarta*, 1998).

2. ACCOUNTING ON THE INTERNET

A growing International Accounting Standards (IAS) usage in global business has influenced an increased upload of accounting Websites because of an exchange of experience, opinions, and solutions.

A significant role in accountant information is assumed by accounting associations and organizations on a national or state level and accounting companies, mostly the "Big 5"¹ on a global level.

An accounting Website quality implies the following:

- Updated Websites;
- Relevance;

¹ The "Big 5" encompasses *Arthur-Andersen*, *Ernest & Young*, *KPMG*, *Price-Waterhouse-Coopers* and *Deloitte-Touche*.

- Accuracy;
- Professional information;
- Links to other financial institutions (national, state or federal level);
- Other financial information (e.g., stock market information).

One of frequent parts of any accountancy organization is an accounting magazine or journal, very important in accounting research and practice communication. A journal characteristic is to demonstrate the accountancy changes on the state level. The journals also assume a significant role in continuous accountant and student education, such as certificate preparation.

3. SELECTED WEBSITE ANALYSIS

While searching for the accounting Websites, each visitor is confronted with numerous accessible pages. Some of the basic Website quality analysis criteria are the following ones: first impression, Website structure, research (site/base), database quality, newsletters, quality and number of links, contacts and Website updates. Table 1 presents the selected Websites according to the abovementioned criteria,

An accounting Website characteristic is that the accountants depend on a reliable source on a timely manner (*Accounting*, 2000), so a failure not to be on a site up to the minute is sufficient for a loss of a great number of visitors.

4. CROATIAN ACCOUNTING WEBSITES

Unfortunately, Croatia does not have almost any accounting Website. A search of the .hr domain produces a find-out of 39² Websites. The sites are mostly the corporate ones, offering bookkeeping services or accounting software, being only a part of their work. However, there are two Websites that provide for some accountant-related information, www.rif.hr and www.rrifplus.hr.

² The status on September 1, 2002.

Table 1. An analysis of selected accounting Websites

Websites	First impression	Website structure	Research (site/base)	Database quality	Newsletters	Quality and number of links	Contacts	Updates	Comments
www.aicpa.org	++	+++	+++	+++	-	++	+++	+++	– for CPA examination – continuous education
http://accounting.rutgers.edu/raw/aaa/links/accsites.htm	+++	+++	++	++	-	+++	+++	+++	– based on accounting research – conferences
www.ifac.org	++	++	++	++	++	+++	++	+++	– international accounting site
www.electronicaccountant.com	++	+++	+++	+++	+++	+++	+++	+++	– - discussion
www.accountantsworld.com	++	+++	+++	++	++	+++	++	+++	– a well-organized non-commercial Website – stock market information
www.kpmg.com	++	++	++	++	+++	++	++	+++	– US and international accounting pages' offer – accounting research and solutions
www.ey.com	+++	+++	+++	+++	+++	+++	+++	+++	– US and international accounting pages – Industrial information

The notes in Table 1 are as follows: + poor, ++ good, +++ excellent, – no characteristic.

5. CONCLUSION

An international financial dependence has resulted in the usage of global and uniformed accounting standards (International Accounting Standards, IAS). However, an accounting information (financial statements) transparency, standards, opinions, research and practice are available on the Internet.

At the same time, an increased Internet traffic has resulted in the fact that the Websites became the fastest, cheapest, and most accessible way to information acquisition with regard to different accounting problems and solutions. According to a *Journal of Accountancy* research during 2000, almost 60% of accountants use the Internet daily, while 85% of them use it more than two days per week.

The accountants use the Internet often because the information available on the Web is highly rated for its timeliness, relevance, accuracy and source reputability (Accounting, 2000). Two advantages are also disadvantageous: almost all accounting Websites are in English, and most of the Websites are US-based, so they support the US tax system. On the other hand, the Croatian accountants have no sources on the Internet.

6. REFERENCES

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