

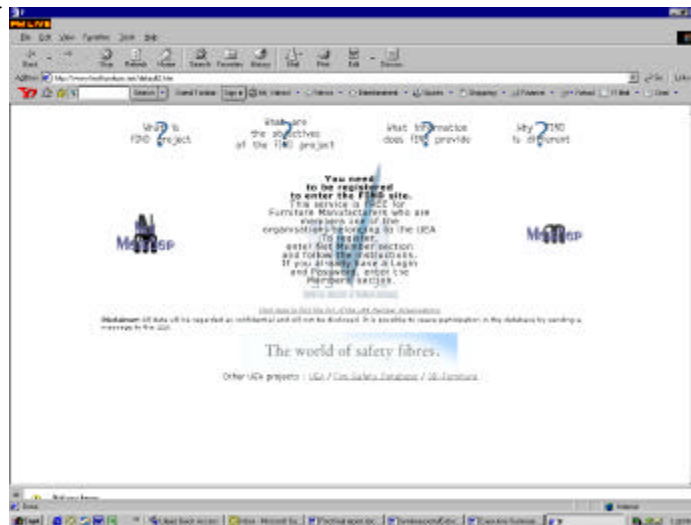
Executive Summary Edited Final Report

IS 98009 - FIND

Furniture Industry Networking Database

SHORT DESCRIPTION AND GRAPHIC/PICTURE

The FIND Project is an interactive and informative service for the European Furniture Sector. This system provides answers on subjects concerning business needs and opportunities, strategic planning for the companies and the impact of external social changes on the Furniture Industry.



Context

The European furniture industry is starting to be present on the Internet massively and EU furniture manufacturers are using the web for their business on a daily basis. Companies have already a web site and e-mail, or are planning to set up one. E-mail is considered as a substitutive of fax in the near future. To benefit completely of the

advantages offered by Information Society, companies need to set up an individual and precise Internet strategy.

The main challenge of the Find project was to monitor the improving presence of the furniture industry on the Internet and to allow manufacturers to work in a networked way at European level, as contacts are of vital importance for the industry.

Internet can generate inspected possibility. FIND has great potentiality of building transnational contact and let manufacturers know each other, in order to facilitate the creation of contacts and new business opportunities among EU furniture stakeholders

A second challenge of the Find project was to push manufacturers in using the Internet in more active and interactive

way. The FIND allows them to interact more effectively in contacting on-line suppliers and retailers, but also in sharing knowledge and economic information. This is why the FIND has been planned, on one hand to provide manufacturers with the first elements to pass from static to a dynamic presence on the Internet; on the other to create an on-line database, allowing fast and easy to manage e-mail and URL contacts. On a further step companies will have also to adapt their managing system to the Internet in order to administrate efficiently task as invoicing, logistics and exports. Find Project is an interactive and informative service for the European furniture sector. It should help visible and creative communication among all EU Furniture industry stakeholders. It answers the need to build up a strong on-line system with a wide European dimension.

Objectives

The Objectives of the

FIND Project are:
To create a platform for exchange of information and discussion among European Furniture Manufacturers in order to pursue mutually beneficial cooperation activities and thereby improve business efficiency.

To create a base upon which to begin electronic commerce activity and furthermore, to encourage Furniture Manufacturers to take advantage of technology in order to optimise their business.

To create a networking database that allows European Manufacturers to improve their competitive position and encourage them to form transnational partnerships in order to strengthen their position on the world market.

Process

Consensus among partners was built. The general agreement passed during the project proposal was consolidated among the partners. New input and critics were added (concerning general

expertise on IS in the furniture sector). The partners confirmed their will of shearing the data about companies. All existing databases at national level were collected. Different program, format and criteria were employed. All database have been reduced at a common standard to be integrated in the Find one. New criteria and specification have been designed. Manufacturers were informed and questionnaires have been sent out. All expertise, criteria, specifications and documents have been collected to be part of a technical document to be used as base of the technical development of the project. A concise Business plan has been also produced. The level of training of manufacturer has been identified as well as users requirements. It has been decided to simplify the graphics and to adopt mature technologies. A database, which will be the base of the Find site, has been developed. All databases at national level and the UEA database have been integrate in a unique one. This database in Access was planned to be

compatible with the Internet use. Special field have been created to participate in discussion forum and to input economic information. At this stage active data, with e-mail and URL were still very poor. At the same time, a suitable site was built. A desktop has been also designed. This tool, password protected, allows the site maintenance on-line as well as the validation of data entries. Most of the time has been dedicated to update and add new address on the database. Furniture catalogues, newspapers and direct mail has been employed to arrive to the critical mass of furniture stakeholders. Furniture manufacturers who were not in UEA or in the national database were added. All new data have been inputted manually. A server has been set up in France to host permanently the Find project. As the site is interactive special arrangements have been done for inscription on-line and for site maintenance. This task involved also DSN and name registration. All furniture manufacturers received their log in and password and started to

use the Find. The possibility that manufacturers have to update data themselves, reduce mistakes. Concerning the double entries they are very easily identifiable by the e-mail or URL. A press campaign has been organized. A general furniture industry strategy press release and a Find press release have been distributed to the furniture-specialized press. They are also on-line at www.ueanet.com/pressrel ease. National federation organized demonstration at national level. SMI published a business-card format CD with a demonstration of the Find. CBM published articles on their newsletter.

Results

In opening and validating the Find project account, most of the contact person names are the manager of the company or the owner, in case of SMEs. This is very useful as demonstrate the high interests of furniture executive on the Internet and on the Find project. It is now faster to contact the person who have the

decision making power in the companies. Furniture executive, as executives in other industrial sectors, give big importance to e-mail and react in a short time.

At the moment we have two successful examples: the Find e-mail system was employed to ask for letters of intention to take part in a project in India; in two days we received 22 positive answers. Previous attempt, using questionnaire and direct contacts were more expensive and were carrying lower results. It should be beard in mind that sending a message with Find is a matter of seconds.

A second successful example has been a massive e-mail to furniture manufacturers, inviting them to take part in www.3d-furniture.com

In a week time 50 furniture manufacturers react positively, and an individual account has been open for them in order to upload their e-catalogues on the Trevfur site.

All the UEA and national federations executives have a log in and password to access the

Find. They are using it to communicate and to reach their members. If they want they can now contact other EU manufacturers widening the European dimension of the furniture sector.

Impact and achievements

The broader impact on the EU furniture sector was the promotion of Information Society solutions.

The EU furniture industry benefit now of a cost effective and adaptable network. This allows searching companies by various criteria such as, company, size, and type of production, e-mail, URL and geographical location.

The Find allows beneficiaries to make contact by e-mail with all EU furniture stakeholders and to enhance communication between manufacturers in order to promote business, exchange of information and cooperation.

It is also a base upon which to begin electronic commerce activity and will encourage SMEs to

take advantage and employ facilities offered by the Information Society at European level.

Contact Details

Project Name:

FIND – Furniture Industry Networking Database

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