

DEFINING A NEW INTERNET COMMUNICATION STRATEGY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PARDUBICE

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Abstract

A project on new Internet presentation and communication is being carried out at the University of Pardubice. The need of a new solution comes out from up-to-date requirements for communication within the increase of the University's competitive advantage in the national as well as international environment. The Internet is becoming a more and more important source of information, for some target groups of mutual communication it is often the only one. For this reason it is necessary to optimise the currently used technology and the contents of website presentation according to new trends. The starting point for the new solutions is the formation of a University communication Internet strategy, which will comprehend the main communication objectives. This strategy should contribute to better cooperation between the University and its partners. A communication Internet strategy can help the University achieve the main goals of its long-time programme. A Communication Internet Strategy (CIS) – the usage of the Internet in the University communication process – outlines how Internet communication can help improve mutual communication between the University and its partners. This article brings an overview of the main points of the CIS definition process and its meaning for the selection and implementation of a new solution.

1. Using the Internet as a tool in the application of a communication strategy at the University of Pardubice

The first part of the project “Development of All-University Information and Communication Technologies at the University of Pardubice” (a project of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports) was focused on the methodology (analysis and development) of a Content Management System (CMS). The main goal of this part of the project was to choose and test a suitable CMS with the aim to implement the selected system parallel with building a new overall structure of the Internet presentation of the University of Pardubice (UPa) with a focus on the installation of an intranet and an extranet. To select new technologies and succeed in their implementation, in the very beginning it was necessary to define the main goals and the ways to achieve them, i.e. a

strategy for the use of the Internet as a communication tool. The part of communication that is based on using web technologies has been named CIS (Communication Internet Strategy) for internal or working purposes. It is based on UPa's main communication goals or communication strategy and it is aimed to make the use of the Internet as an information and communication tool as effective as possible. Even though CIS is an independent part of communication, it must definitely be based on the overall university strategy, correspond with it and complete it appropriately. Therefore it is necessary to incorporate CIS in the overall university strategy, which can be generally summarized in the following points.

- 1 The University makes itself clearly distinguishable in relation to the public, external as well as internal, i.e. to all of its partners. It publicly declares what it wants to be for them, how it wishes to be perceived, what kind of image and reputation it wants to create in a long-term perspective.
- 2 The basic goals result from point 1, i.e. what the University must do to get the public perception it wishes. This means that it is possible to define the basic information and communication goals the University wants to achieve. They compose the foundations of an information and communication policy.
- 3 A strategy contains concrete ways – elaborate concrete goals and tasks to achieve them (including the way and means) – therefore it is important to have individual parts concretely elaborated – **who** the partners are, **what** the University wants to inform about, **why** the University wants to communicate with them, what **ways** (e.g. open communication) and what **means** (e.g. the intranet) it wants to use. The University must clearly declare the complex of what, how and why it wants to create its communication policy, including the means, methods and tools it wants to use and the goals it wants to achieve.
- 1 The basic CIS tool is UPa's Internet pages and intranet. The Internet pages include the main web presentation (the web) designed primarily for the general public, the extranet intended for

applicants and the intranet for the current students and employees.

- 2 The whole information and communication policy is based on and follows the University's strategy (long-term project and goals). It also needs to be understood as a **tool** for the achievement of long-term goals (the University's projects). For this reason it is always good to declare it publicly and to apply it in accordance with the individual goals. It is important to harmonize the other tools used for communication in the organization and to motivate all users for optimum utilization. As communication is an integral part of the university culture, this undoubtedly helps build it up and achieve the goals consistently and transparently.

2. Internet, intranet, extranet

These are the basic notions that need to be explained for the purpose of mutual understanding among all parties. In the context of the solution, it is necessary for all participants to have the same understanding of the notions in use. Therefore it was necessary to do a very brief clarification of terminology on the axis Internet – web – extranet – intranet and to accept it with regard to the needs of the project.

Internet – a worldwide network in which the individual Internet (web) presentations make up contents, being designed for the most general public with the aim to address, draw attention, inform.

A web presentation (web) is a concrete presentation focused on what the organization offers, to whom, how and why.

Intranet – the “private” network of an organization. It is based on Internet technologies and protocols, but independent of the Internet (the intranet pages are accessible from the internal network only, putting an intranet into service does not require access to the Internet – the possible ways of access are up to the organization). An intranet is primarily designed for an internal group of users (mostly employees). Typical intranet contents are the information that is necessary to ensure internal processes within the organization (rules, procedures, documents, forms, etc.) and personalized access to shared applications. The intranet is aimed to inform, communicate, to collaborate.

Extranet – the “private network” of an organization is based on Internet technologies and protocols within the Internet network and on access via a web Internet interface. It is designed for the partners that share various applications within their communication with the organization, therefore securing by means of personal access is necessary. The extranet is aimed to inform, communicate, to collaborate.

According to the common practice, but taking into consideration UPa's needs to incorporate the current active

students in the internal network, the individual parts of the Internet presentation are used as follows:

- the main Internet presentation, the web, designed for the public,
- the extranet for students-applicants to open access to applications for them,
- the intranet for the employees, i.e. the employee intranet,
- the intranet for the active students, i.e. the student intranet.

The above parts are a base for the contents of the pages (i.e. the main page cannot contain a link to a directive or information about interruption in water supplies, etc.)

All the four parts of the Internet presentation are based on a single concept and create a single application. A system of unified access to the internal network through a web interface is working already. This means that all users can get to UPa's web by the first step through a web interface. From there, transfer to the intranet or extranet pages is preset. This is how all the target groups access the main page through a web interface.

The contents and the links of all the three applications must be interconnected, must correspond in terms of contents as well as form and interconnectivity and must distinguish the basic levels in the contents (university, faculty, department or office). The contents must be based on concrete goals, either those of the university or the faculty, the department or the office.

The application as a whole must be optimised from the point of view of the contents as well as the form (SEO¹). The text on the home page must be subject to this optimisation.

Table 1 shows the main target groups, examples of the main communication goals and means of achievement. This table makes the axis for the definition of CIS.

¹ Search Engine Optimisation

Tab. 1. Division of target groups and examples of communication with use of Internet

Partner	Goal of communication policy	Means (Internet)	Measurability
Potential students – applicants (including foreign)	Arouse interest in study, win for study above all by giving information and creating a positive image – on the university as well faculty level, declaration of the study offered and conditions for the study with an emphasis on the strengths of the individual faculties (competitive advantage)	For example: information by means of printed materials, presentation at fairs and concrete events, Open Days, advertising, internet pages - web for information and possibility of contact, extranet for selected applications	Conversion: applicants/students enrolled
Current students	Building up positive relation towards university or faculty and spreading the university's good reputation (this is an important source of information for potential applicants), stimulation for study by declaring partnership – increasing the quality of the education provided and the graduates' success on the job market, satisfying the information needs for study, providing information about possibilities within study, building up loyalty and pride...	Intranet to satisfy information needs, PR and feedback	Feedback – survey, evaluation, (monitoring attitudes and opinions)
Employees	Building up positive employee–employer relation, forming desirable work attitudes (performance and behaviour), loyalty, spreading the university's good reputation, meeting information needs, cooperation, partnership...	Intranet to meet information needs, to ensure cooperation coordination, to create space for internal PR, to complete offer of services for employees (internal marketing), to create space for feedback	Feedback – survey, evaluation, (monitoring attitudes and opinions)
The public experts, partners – cooperating firms and other universities, media, graduates, possibly other partners.	Building up the desirable image and reputation. Spreading the good reputation, offering and accepting cooperation.	web	Monitoring the public's opinions and attitudes

When creating the contents of the Internet presentation, it is necessary to include also the university's obligation to release information directed to all the target groups, including the necessary versions in foreign languages.

3. An information or communication portal

When creating a strategy, it is also necessary to clarify the notions information and communication. It is very important for the realization team to agree on the opinion whether the Internet application should be a tool of information or communication. A tool of communication

implies mutual relations, mutual communication and cooperation. This implies creating a space for queries, discussions, feedback (evaluation), exchanging opinions (a chat). Our Internet pages are above all information-oriented. This is neither good, nor bad, it is a fact. However, communication is necessary for the declaration and fulfilment of partnership. This means that the intranet can be an electronic noticeboard or a tool of cooperation (an internal communication portal). It has been decided that the new Internet portal created at the end of the project must be a communication portal.

4. Work roles

Until now it has not been quite clear what the competences and responsibilities in the University web's contents are, mainly on the faculties and departments level. It is necessary to realize that the contents of each and every page of the whole web must be based on its goals. Those result from the strategic goals of the University and come to existence by their disintegration into concrete activities leading to the achievement of the goals. Therefore it is necessary to apply a systemic approach to the determination of the contents of the main pages of the Internet, extranet and intranet presentation within the framework of the main division university, faculty, office. The contents and the responsibilities will be a clear result of this. An example of the basic system, the determination of competences and responsibilities:

- strategic goals (long-term projects) – UPa management board,
- selecting the form, the contents and the tools – Chancellor's Office, individual departments,
- ensuring and optimising the tools - departments, information centre, offices.

In this connection, a logical step was the analysis of the current Internet presentation. It will generally help improve the information value of the new application. The analysis of the work roles was focused on evaluating the released information – items from the following points of view:

- who the target group is for the information, which leads to placing the information on the web, the extranet or the intranet,
- identification of the source of information – a department, an information system
- who is responsible for placing (the editor),
- who ensures cooperation in the communication of information (whom the person informs that the information is on the web and the like – or possibly setting up a document workflow),
- who supervises contents optimisation (setting up the rules, in case of web – optimising the contents on the main page – the concrete pieces of text).

When determining the responsibilities and competences, it is necessary to take into consideration the independence of the faculties and to create rules for the incorporation of the faculty pages and the office pages into a unified conception. At the moment, the faculties are following a unified form, but the departments are not.

5. The starting points for the implementation of CIS: the long-term project (strategy) of the University of Pardubice

The purpose of this article is not to describe UPa's long-term project, yet it is necessary to present the chief

message that clearly results from it and therefore it is a message intended for the individual target groups. It can be summarized into several points.

- The University is a meaningful and universal centre of an international character, offering traditional as well as new modern fields of study for successful performance in a broad scale of professions.
- The offer of education is based above all on the quality of the pedagogical process, scientific expertise and a good information background for the study.
- The students have access to interdisciplinary education across a variety of fields covering a big part of the national economy spectrum.
- The University perceives itself as an integral part of international processes in science and research.

The update of the long-term project has resulted in topical strategic goals to which the communication policy, and consequently CIS, should be subject. They concern mainly the following areas:

- the internationalisation of the University in relation to the long-term project,
- the quality and excellence of the academic activities,
- the priorities in the area of the quality and culture of the academic life.

The goals stated above determine a base for CIS's main contents, which consist of the information the University wants to provide as a base for communication with its partners. Being supposed to reflect the University's position and to create its overall image in the perception of the public (external as well as internal), this information can be principally divided into 4 basic areas with the following approximate percentage in the whole:

- education (45 %),
- science and research (35 %),
- international cooperation (10 %),
- University support services (10 %).

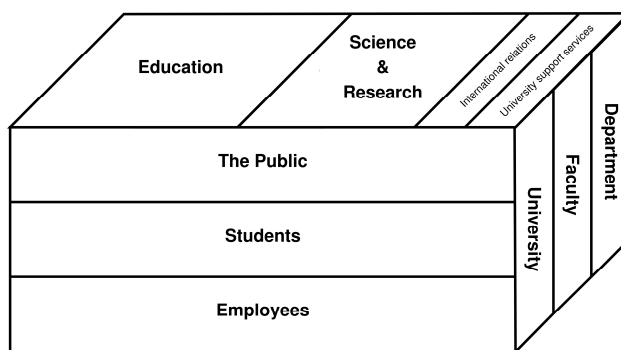


Fig. 1. Basic structure of Internet communication portal

The contents of Internet communication need to be adapted to the individual target groups, the basic contents structure and the individual functional levels of

communication. The resulting structure is illustrated in picture 1.

From the function point of view, the future applications have to meet certain requirements with regard to administration, primarily the following ones:

- for the purpose of contents creation, it is necessary to determine the levels of roles (rights),
- a basic contents template must be created on the faculties level, providing an adequate space to respect specific requirements. The same approach must be applied to the levels of offices, departments or possibly personal pages,
- the main information sources for contents creation must be defined,
- the responsibility for contents creation in the given structure (and consequently the user rights) must be determined unambiguously,
- the roles according to the levels of the basic strategy, the goals, the contents administration and the tool administration must be allocated unambiguously,
- the users-administrators must be sufficiently acquainted with the new application within pilot operation (internal workshops) and must be stimulated to follow the basic rules for administration operation (the supplier will ensure pilot operation).

6. Conclusion

The Communication Internet Strategy of the University Pardubice is a document of several pages, which is reflected in other pieces of work in connection with the selection of a new CMS. Parallel with the creation of this strategy and taking into consideration current up-to-date requirements and trends in ICT, the audit of the existing Internet presentation was being done by an external firm that co-operates in designing the individual Internet presentations in connection with the newly-implemented CMS, according to the University's possibilities and needs. The new solution should result mainly in the following benefits for the University:

- more attractive web presentation, more modern technologies,
- more intuitive and easier access to information for all of the target groups,
- simpler access to the information system in use,
- simpler administration (including editing).

When creating a strategy, it is necessary to realize that the Internet is a tool that can be extracted from the context of the information and communication policy as a whole in certain moments. The creation of CIS is only a part of all-university communication – the “communication policy” conception. The resulting communication portal will be only a tool. To be able to help meet the University's strategic goals, this tool has to be used appropriately. Its contents must display permanently up-to-date and relevant information and the communication it will mediate must

be mutual. For the successful implementation of the portal and its applications and for the effective use of the whole of their broad potential, the necessary preconditions must be created in the University's performance. Therefore, the implementation process must include also seminars and training for all levels of the internal users who must know how to work with the system and who should also be sufficiently motivated to use it.