

Google - Agony & Ecstasy

November 2005

Grapefruit 

What is... Google?!

Google is:

- a popular search engine
- a tool for finding resources on the World Wide Web
- a big company with a very large offer: GMail, Google Maps, Google Analytics, AdWords, AdSense, etc.



Why is Google important for me?

- It makes the information published by me available to more users
- More visitors
- More traffic
- More money...?

Google's Importance

In USA (unofficial statistics):

- **Google: 46,4%**
- Yahoo: 22,5%
- MSN: 12,6%
- AOL: 5,4%
- Others: 13,1%

Google's Importance

In Romania (unofficial statistics):

- **Google: 91%**
- Yahoo: 4%
- MSN: 1%
- Others: 4%

What do I have to do to appear in Google?

- Hire a professional
- Use Google's AdWords
- Do the SEO by yourself

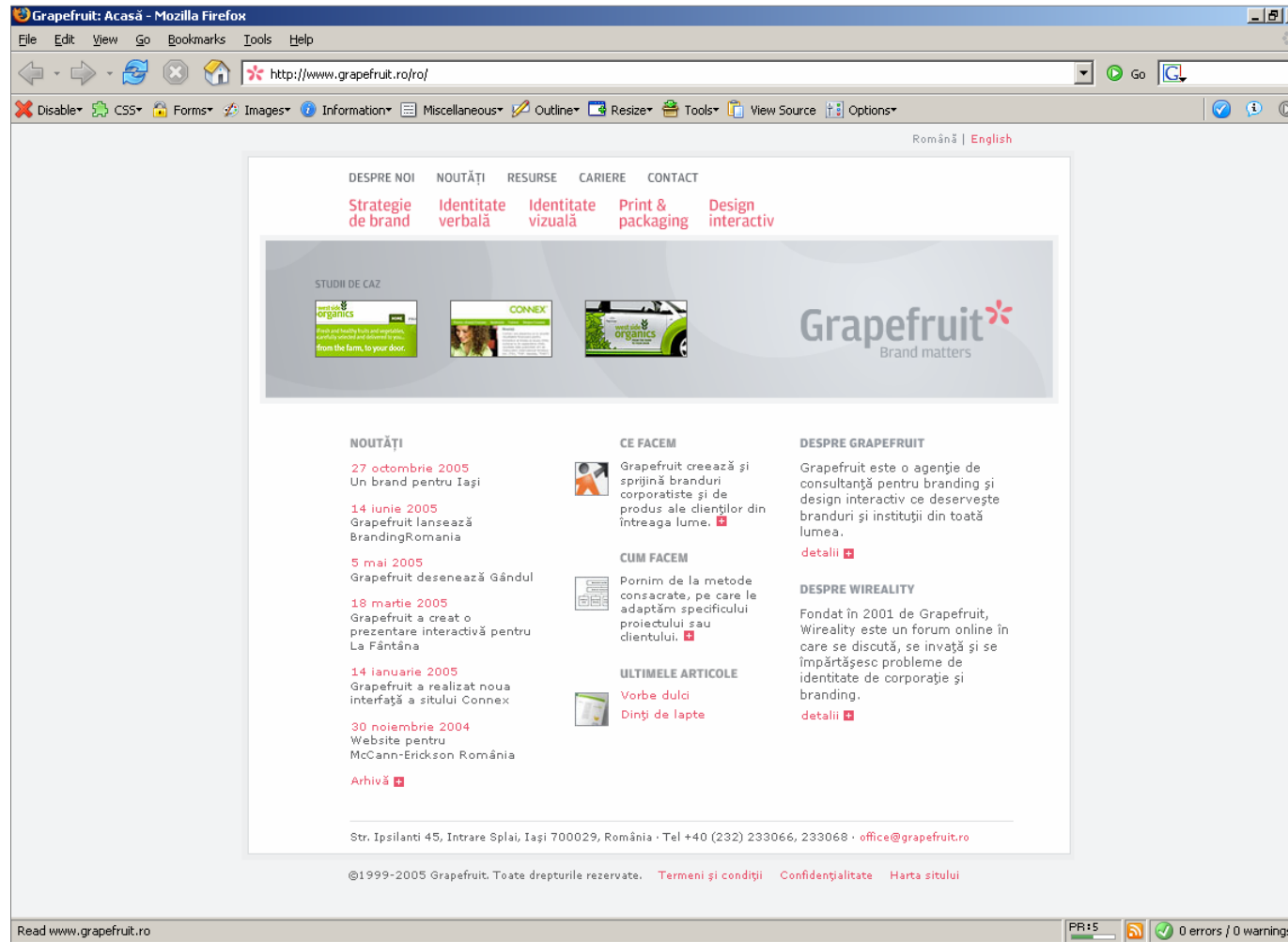
OK... I want to start the SEO process!

Hold down your horses!

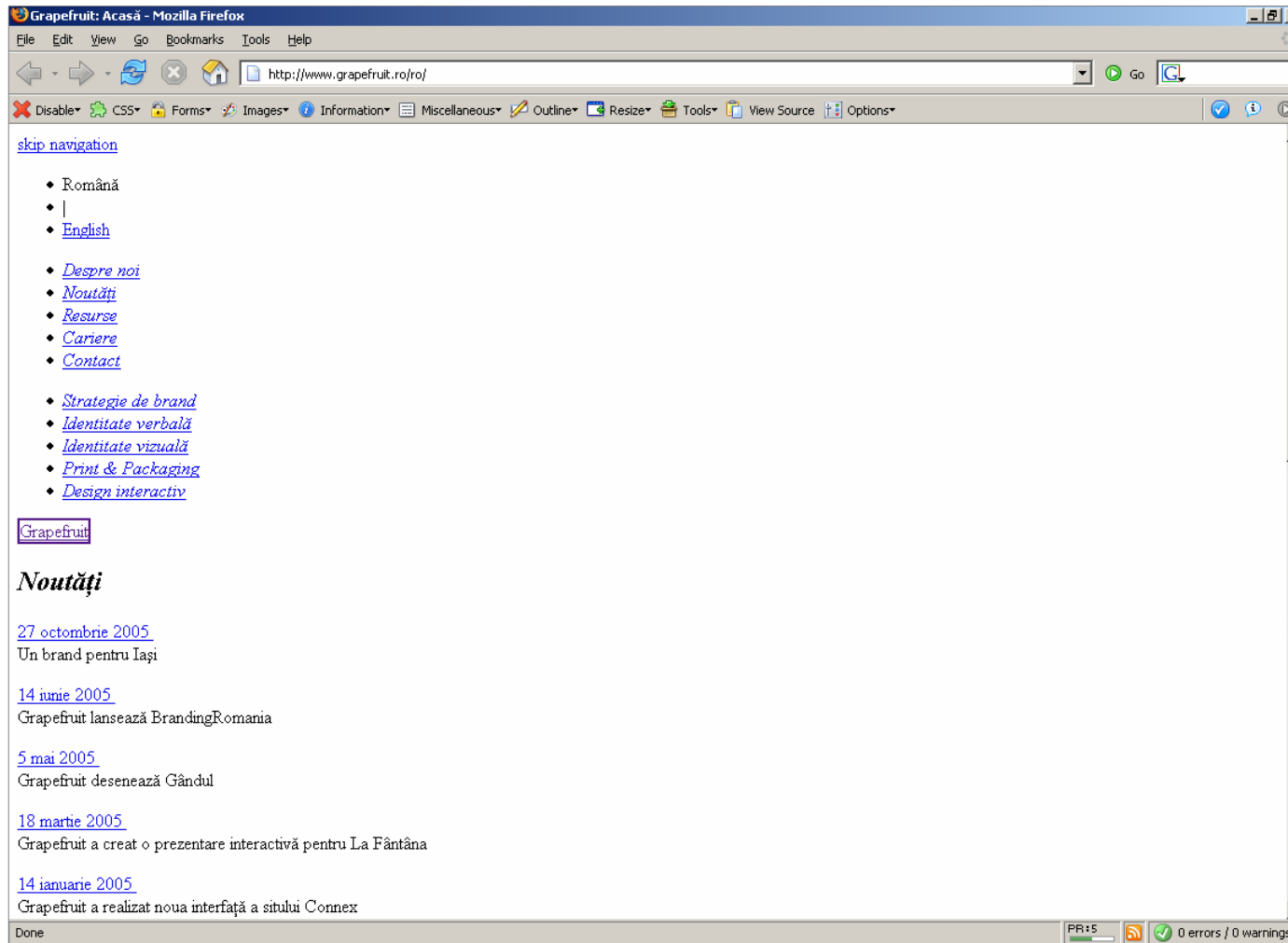
First of all, try to understand Google.

- Google acts like a **text browser** (remember Lynx?)
- He ignores JavaScript
- He is not always able to index the content from the Flash applications
- He ignores images
- He ignores CSS
- He ignores XML
- He ignores code comments
- He ignores pages that require registration, cookies or passwords
- He reads the text content from the PDF files
- He loves HTML/XHTML pages especially if the coding is done right and there is a lot of relevant text available for indexing

Your view:



Google's view:



The PageRank (myth or reality?)

PageRank is a function of Google that measures the quality of a website on a scale of 0 to 10.

- PageRank is page specific, not site specific. The PR of the pages on your site can (and probably will) vary from page to page. Actually, only the PageRank by itself will not help you to raise higher in the search engine results pages (SERPS).
- PR is just a “quality” mark. Nothing more.
- The PR algorithm will calculate your web page's PR based upon the *quantity* and *quality* of the links pointing to your page from other web pages, including your own pages as well as those belonging to other websites.
- The links which are used to calculate the PR are very valuable in the SEO process because they will make Google come more often on your website.
- Nobody was able to discover PR's formula and actually it is considered that the PR will disappear very soon.

OK... What do I have to do?

What steps should I consider for the SEO?

- Define the keywords
- Write the copy
- Do the coding (or tweak the existing one)
- Launch the website and “announce” Google
- Wait, wait, wait...

Define the keywords

- Use specific keywords related with your content
- Start with a small list of keywords and extend it only if it is necessary
- Do not obey the “1024 limit” in order to make the meta keywords tag accepted

Write the copy

- The copy is the most important aspect in SEO and also the most neglected one
- Make sure the keywords will appear in your copy, especially in the beginning
- Define the right titles, subtitles and paragraphs
- Do not exaggerate with italics and bolds
- Make sure you have at least 100 words on the page or Google might not consider the page valuable.
- Repeat the keywords at least 3 times in the content
- A good copywriter makes the difference

Do the coding

What are the most important pieces in the coding process?

- The TITLE tag
- The META DESCRIPTION tag
- The META KEYWORDS tag
- The ALT attribute
- The URLs
- The style of coding

Do the coding – The TITLE tag

An HTML Title describes the contents of your web page in one sentence. It's likely to appear in search engines' results and in bookmarks. It's also the first thing a search engine's spider sees on your page. Since your title will be seen by both readers and search engines, it's particularly important.

<title>November Web</title>

- Your title is the most important part of your page as far as search engines are concerned. Note that **every search engine supports the title tag to some extent.**
- The title tag must be the FIRST element inside the <head>
- It must be relevant for the content
- It should have around 60-90 characters
- It could include relevant keywords but do not exaggerate. Repeating one keyword more than twice or using all CAPS is considered SPAM.

Do the coding – The META DESCRIPTION tag

The meta description tag describes your site's content, giving search engines' spiders an accurate summary filled with multiple keywords.

```
<meta name="description" content="Web site of November <Web />
workshop on Web Technologies" />
```

- The description tag is the FIRST text content indexed by Google
- It must be relevant for the content because sometimes Google indexes only this small part if the coding on the page is too heavy
- It should have around 150 characters
- The meta description tag is hidden in the document's source, invisible to the reader. Some search engines, however, are able to incorporate the content of meta tags into their algorithms. No engines penalize sites that use meta tags properly, so it's recommended that you **always** include them.
- Do NOT use the same description tag for all the pages

Do the coding – The META KEYWORDS tag

A meta keyword tag lists all the keywords for which you would like search engines to rank your site. Although not all search engines support this tag, you should use it for the ones that do.

```
<meta name="keywords" content="Computer Science, university, academic, information, Romania, Iasi, research, publishing, hypermedia, workshop, education, design, electronic, programming, Linux, XML, conference, software" />
```

- The keywords list must be relevant for the content
- It should have a maximum number of 1024 characters
- The meta keywords tag is hidden in the document's source, invisible to the reader. Some search engines, however, are able to incorporate the content of meta tags into their algorithms. No engines penalize sites that use meta tags properly, so it's recommended that you always include them.
- If Google will not find the meta description tag or some text content on the page will use this tag as the ultimate resource
- Always use commas between the keywords
- Do NOT use a full phrase (like the meta description tag) because this is considered SPAM.

Do the coding – The ALT attribute

Always add the ALT attribute to your images to make sure search engines recognize all the content on your site. The ALT attribute filled with keywords can also be used to boost your keyword frequency and help you achieve better rankings.

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- The ALT attribute also make your site more accessible to visually impaired people using text readers. That's because text readers can't read images, but can detect text in as the ALT attribute . It should have a maximum number of 1024 characters
- Search engines don't penalize for using the ALT attribute or even for packing them with keywords. Still, to be safe you should adhere to the generally accepted rule of not repeating keywords more than 3-7 times.

Do the coding – The URLs

The URL name is the part of the URL that comes between "www" and ".com/.ro/etc." It's the name of a site.

- Recently, Google began to prioritize the use of keywords in a site's URL in his ranking formula.
- Look for a URL name containing keywords, for example <http://www.novemberweb.ro> 😊 (domain available)
- Try to avoid URLs with special characters in it
- Name files with keywords:
 - <http://www.novemberweb.ro/componenta-juriu.html>
 - <http://www.novemberweb.ro/concursuri-organizate.html>

Do the coding – The style

- Try to make the code minimal. The best solution would be a tableless coding because Google will have a good proportion between text content and the rest of the programming code.
- Do not use frames
- Avoid JavaScript for menu tabs rollover in order to increase the chances for Google to access the links behind the tabs. The rollover can be done via CSS.
- Avoid Flash. If the website is done exclusively on Flash, build also a HTML version.
- Make sure the code is valid and all the necessary elements are inserted in the code.
- Use h1, h2, h3 in order to mention the titles and their importance.
- Avoid large source comments.
- Use the paragraph tag and highlight the most important keywords (if necessary) with bold.
- Try to present the text content as high as possible in the code

Announce Google

- Launch the website and make sure all the pages are able to be accessed via a link.
- NEVER let Google index you if you do not have relevant content on your website. Use robots.txt to restrict Google's access to your website or to specific directories like /images, etc.
- Use <http://www.google.com/addurl> to add the website on Google's pending list.
- Add links in websites which are already indexed and Google will visit you very soon.
- Public Directories submission – the quickest way to create links to your website and increase the PR. Most of the submissions are free of charge.

And after all these are done, wait for the first visit...

Checking the status

- What pages are indexed?

Use the following search string in Google:

“site:www.novemberweb.ro”

You will obtain all the pages indexed from the specified URL.

- What links are pointing to me?

Use the following search string in Google:

“link:www.novemberweb.ro”

You will obtain most of the links with a PR of 3 or higher

- Use specific software to evaluate the status (recommended)

Spamming

Spamming (as related to search engines) is forcing unsolicited or unwanted web pages into a search engine's database.

- inappropriate site titles, descriptions and keywords;
- repetition of keywords
- same color text and background (invisible text)
- tiny text (non readable)
- submitting more than once in a 24 hour period
- mirror sites that point to different URLs
- identical or nearly identical pages

If you find a SPAM technique implemented on a website report it to Google. In most of the cases they will resolve the situation by banning the URL in their database.

The Agony: Google doesn't loves me ☹️

- The best quality for a SEO Editor is to have patience.
- Relax, it will take several weeks for your website to appear in Google's results!
- Google generally spiders only the homepage's description in the first visit
- Do not start to change things on your website if there are no SEO errors and you see some activity in the logs.
- Enjoy your regular life and check the logs every 3 days.

More Agony: Google still doesn't loves me ☹️

- First of all buy a pack of Saridon.
- If Google will not visit you in 30 days (assuming that you have some links pointing to your website) you might have a problem.
 - Make sure your hosting is OK
 - Check the important tags in your pages
 - Have you spammed? Remove all the SPAM techniques and wait for a long period between 60-90 days (and pray, because you could be banned)
- If Google will visit you in 30 days and index only the meta description from your Homepage, you're on the right path. More patience is required.
- Add more links to your website in order to increase the chances for a new visit.
- Do not ruin your life by checking the logs every 3 hours.

The Ecstasy: Google loves me 😊

After 3 months, the website is indexed and the results in the SERPS are beginning to show up.

- Do not open the champagne yet, you might be in the “Sandbox”. By “throwing the website in the Sandbox” we understand that Google has inserted your website in a probation period valid only for the new releases. Your website is pushed artificially on a higher position for some specific keywords in order to recommend the new content on the web .Gaining a high PR is inhibited during this period and after a short period you might start to loose rankings in your SERPS.
- Start to change things constantly in your pages. If Google will not see some activity he will not visit you often in the future.
- Wait and see what is happening in the next period.

The Ecstasy Reloaded: Google still loves me 😊

- Keep up the good work.
- Remember this: if it works, don't ruin it! Do not make important changes unless your content is requiring it.
- Extend the analysis process over your concurrence in order to make your results more specific.
- If you apply some small changes and you begin to loose ratings, undo the change.
- Add more links to your website.
- Do not get scared if your position will have fluctuations in the ratings.
- Check the logs constantly and make sure everything is OK on your website.

Last thoughts...

- The SEO process must be considered for every website before it will be published.
- A good **copy** built on **relevant keywords** after a short set of rules + a nice coding + a lot of incoming links is the key for success.
- Do not cheat. Never ever.
- Google is sometimes unpredictable, so do not let this affect you.
- If you have good results on Google, do not expect to have the same situation with the other search engines.

Thank you!