

Memorandum

To: Ryan .J. McGill
From: Veronica Vilar and Lawrence M. Czulewicz
Date: 2/19/14
Re: RJ Cigar Search Engine Optimization Strategy

Preliminary analysis of your web presence, namely the strategies and assets currently in place, along with information gained from our recent interview has led us to make the following recommendations. Please look over the suggestions outlined below at your earliest convenience. We look forward to meeting with you to discuss any potential amendments to our plan and how you would like to proceed.

First and foremost, we believe the RJ Cigar Company's site should be rebuilt and re-launched. We also suggest using tools as Google Analytics and Google Adwords to gain a better understanding of what attracts customers and potential customers to your site. As it stands now the site is minimal and provides very limited information for a potential customer. Since the RJ Cigar Company is currently using social media with some moderate success we believe the revamp should focus on utilizing these mediums to their fullest. As you stated in the interview, there are questions as to the legality of advertising in traditional media, and it is a niche market. The internet and social media provide an excellent platform for reaching a market with particular tastes and interests.

We also believe you should stay connected. Your company is active on twitter and you are actually "the guy" that hand rolls the cigars. That sort of connection can be very valuable in a niche market such as yours. A blog style site can help reinforce that connection as well as provide an evolving space that merits revisiting. It will also allow ongoing opportunities to refine your search engine optimization efforts with each post.

We also recommend you move ahead with your plan to add an online store. However, we feel it should not be the landing page. It should be easy to navigate to and easy to use. Your strength is your social connection and we definitely want to play to that strength.



Search Engine Optimization Proposal

RJ Cigar Company

Veronica Vilar & Lawrence Czulewicz

[SEO and Analytics situation analysis on RJ Cigar Company, under the supervision of Jorie Scholnik and the University of Florida MAMC- Web Design and Online Communication graduate program.]

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I. Introduction and Overview

Our client is Ryan J. McGill owner and operator of the RJ Cigar Company. The company manufactures and sells hand rolled cigars in the Saint Petersburg Beach area, and has aspirations of moving into online commerce as well as becoming a wholesale tobacco leaf supplier. RJ Cigar Company currently has a modest website with little to no SEO figuring into its construction. In addition to their web presence the company enjoys a healthy following in social media. Mr. McGill appears to be a very hands-on proprietor, hand rolling his product himself as well as managing social media interactions. Given that cigar-smokers are a niche market consumer access to the proprietor could potentially be a huge asset.

It is our objective to assist Mr. McGill in further defining his target market and determining what methods are best suited to reaching them. We believe that this will be best accomplished through a complete website redesign and re-launch. The redesign should utilize SEO and analytics to aid in its construction to ensure that his company's presence is maximized in searches. We are also recommending that Mr. McGill play to his current strengths and continue to use social media as a means of promotion. In a market that tends to be a sub-culture, connection and feeling a part of something is very important. We believe a blog-like website will allow consumers to feel a personal connection and provide a place worth revisiting as opposed to an impersonal e-commerce site.

This is a research project conducted by graduate students from the University of Florida MAMC- Web Design and Online Communication program. It is to be noted that this proposal will be used as a portfolio piece and there is no monetary compensation for participating on this project.

II. Company Information

Background:

RJ Cigar Company opened on Saint Petersburg Beach, Florida on May 16, 2011. Canadian born Ryan McGill, a retired Canadian Football League

player from Guilford, Ontario that decided to venture into the cigar manufacturing industry, owns the company. Personal savings and revenue solely fund the company. The unique aspect of his business is that he rolls all the cigars, creates the blends of tobacco (filler and wrapper combinations), as well as, runs the shop.

Mr. McGill built accounts in 2011 with Leaf Only and its subsidiary Whole Leaf. This tobacco company is a tobacco whole leaf seller and they also sell their own brand of cigars, which Ryan rolls for them; a total of 850 cigars were shipped. Additionally, Ryan built accounts with Crossroads Cigars in Lafayette, Indiana an independent cigar retailer; a total of 26 boxes (520 cigars) were shipped, and with the Humidors of Westmont in Westmont, Illinois an independent cigar retailer that has two locations in the Westmont area; a total of 2500 cigars were shipped.

As a small business owner, Mr. McGill has limited resources to expand without investors. His brand has built a loyal following by locals and seasonal travelers. His Cigars were also featured on *Carfellas* a series on the Velocity Channel in 2011.

Societal Role:

RJ Cigar Company's mission statement is to offer quality hand rolled organic cigars, and be a profitable endeavor. Currently, RJ Cigar Company is seeking investors and cigar rollers to expand the company locally in the Tampa Bay area and eventually internationally. Mr. McGill plans also include updating his company site and to become a tobacco leaf whole seller. Ryan does not want to open another shop, because he would have to purchase another manufacturing license, which costs 20,000 U.S dollars, and opening another shop would entail paying higher tobacco taxes. Instead he wants to focus on expanding his business through accounts and online.

III. Target Public

Demographic:

Ryan describes his demographic as 40-60 year-old White men, who are upper middle, usually college educated from all nationalities. Cigar

smokers tend to fall under this category, since the tobacco leaf became a common trade crop (Altman, 2009).

Psychographic:

Cigars are a cultural staple amongst "Cultured Gentlemen, and especially in Cuban culture (Altman, 2009). Pop culture has always featured Cigar smoking as a celebratory event. Mark Twain was quoted saying, "If I cannot smoke in heaven, then I shall not go." Arnold Schwarzenegger, Rush Limbaugh, Lil Wayne, Bill Clinton, and Seinfeld are all fans of Cigar culture and smoking (Altman, 2009).

Consumer Trends:

RJ Cigar's best selling Cigar is the medium and mild Connecticut shade Robusto. An average sale usually consists of a couple cigars with a total cost between 20-30 U.S dollars per customer. RJ Cigar Company has the fastest growing online following on Twitter in the Cigar business. A lack of an online store is affecting Search Engine Optimization for the Companies site.

IV. Competition

RJ Cigar Company has little competition in its current market, because all the cigar businesses in the area have closed their doors due to high manufacturing and tobacco taxes.

Search Results:

Search engine	Ranking	Keywords
Google	Second	cigar saint pete beach
Google	Ninth	cigar saint pete

Bing	Ninth	cigar saint pete
Bing	First	cigar saint pete beach
Yahoo	Eighth	cigar saint pete
Yahoo	First	cigar saint pete beach
Manta	Third	RJ Cigar

V. Critique of Website

The current website is basic and bare. We suggest to re-design the website by integrating a blog page and e-commerce. We also suggest to integrate alt attributes and SEO best practices when coding the website. Another suggestion is to begin utilizing tools like Google Adwords and Google Analytics or comparable software to better understand consumer trends and increase ranking in search engines. In order to reach the best results, a customer survey may be a good tool to understand the consumer's interest. The site needs to integrate a contact form page and social media icons. Another suggestion that could be included is a twitter bar that when a customer wants to instantly express their experience with RJ Cigar Company.

In order to meet objectives and stay competitive in the market, these changes should be implemented in a timely manner. It is essential to keep the identity of RJ Cigar Company, while keeping consumers in mind. The first step should include learning how to use site analytic software and weighing the options whether using Google Adwords will be a good investment. After viewing the statistics, re-design and re-launch of the website should occur. Remember that these are suggestions and RJ Cigar Company is not obligated to implement them.

VI. General Marketing Strategy

RJ Cigar Company depends on social media, word of mouth, and a Gulf beaches resort pamphlet called The Easy Guide for marketing. The company has a unique positioning in the local market, because it offers customers' authentic hand rolled in shop Cuban style organic cigars in a market that is dominated by known label cigars that are rolled overseas. RJ Cigar Company also offers customers the option to create personal blends and cigar sizes that can be shipped globally if the customer pays the import tax for their country of residence. This allows customers to pick the type of tobacco leaves used for the filler, binder, and wrapper of the cigar further personalizing their order. RJ Cigar Company is a young business that has had moderate success in a short period of time, with substantial room to grow. It is important to play off of these unique services in order to attract customers and increase brand awareness.

Mr. McGill tried Living Social but the company was not interested if he did not offer a cigar rolling class with an accredited teacher. He also signed up to be a Cigar Aficionado magazine distributor, but has not received further notification. Ryan has ambitious marketing goals, and is willing to make changes to his business in order to achieve them.

VII. SEO/Analytics

RJ Cigar Company has a moderate following on many social media sites. Currently the company uses Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, cigar dojo, circle, g+, and cigar shop locator. RJ Cigar Company as of February 18, 2014 has 4,333 followers. Mr. McGill has limited knowledge of website analytic tools. This is the first time he has enlisted the help of professionals to look over his website and search engine optimization. Mr. McGill's goals are to increase his ranking on different search engines and integrate better SEO and Marketing practices throughout his company.

VIII. SWOT Analyses

Strengths- There is little competition currently and the company has a growing social media presence.

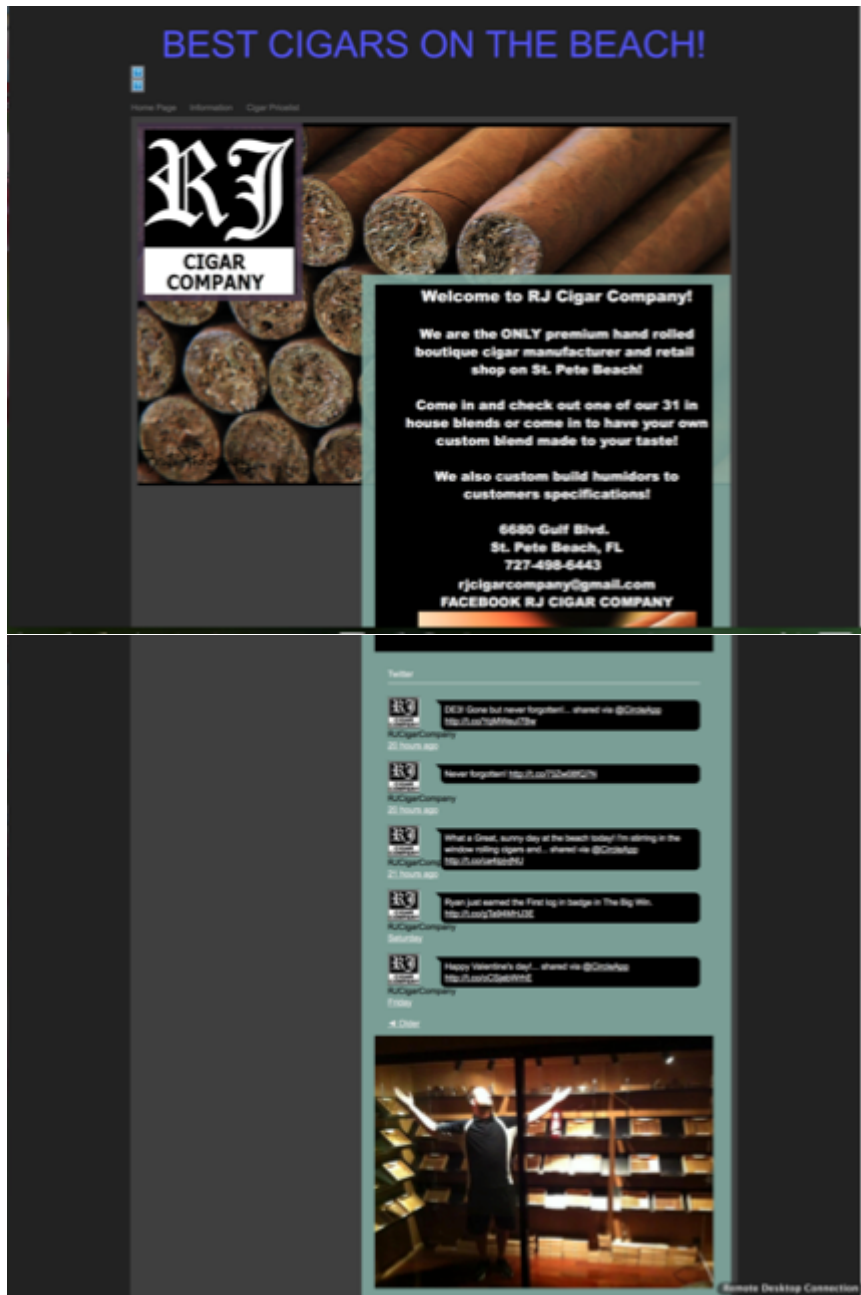
Weaknesses- Mr. McGill has limited knowledge of SEO and Analytics website tools. He also has not integrated SEO best practices in his current website.

Opportunities- There is endless opportunities to grow in the current market. If the suggestions in this proposal are applied, both the website and the company will reach more customers and gain a stronger ranking in the market.

Threats- currently the biggest threat to RJ Cigar Company is increasing licensing costs and tobacco taxes in the industry. This is hurting opportunities to expand manufacturing. A much less significant threat is labeled Cigar brands due to their popularity with novice cigar smokers.

IX. Appendices

Company Website:



Search Engine Results:

Google cigers on saint pete beach

About 184,000 results (0.41 seconds)

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Google+ page

The Ciger Republic
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4.5 5 Google reviews

Norman's Liquor Beer & Wine
www.normansliquor.com
3.4 4 Google reviews


One Love Tobacco & Gifts
www.onelovetobaccoandgifts.com
1 Google review - Google+ page

Tobacco
www.tobacco.com
Google+ page

See results for cigars on saint pete beach on a map

The Ciger Republic - Treasure Island - Reviews of The ... - TripAdvisor
www.tripadvisor.com ... Things to Do in Treasure Island ... TOP Attractions ...
Rating 5 - 13 reviews
The Ciger Republic, Treasure Island: See 13 reviews, articles, and 1 photo of The Ciger Republic on TripAdvisor ... Owner description: Cigars Ciger Lounge in Treasure Island and St. Pete area offer ... Thunderbolt Beach Resort.

Central Cigars & Ciger Bar - Downtown St. Petersburg - Saint ... - Yelp
www.yelp.com - Shopping - Tobacco Shops - "Tobacco Shops" ...



Map for cigars on saint pete beach

Central Cigars & Ciger Bar - Downtown St. Petersburg - Saint ... - Yelp
www.yelp.com - Shopping - Tobacco Shops - "Tobacco Shops" ...
Rating 4 - 8 reviews - Price range: \$\$
8 Reviews of Central Cigars & Ciger Bar "Great place to stop in and have a drink. I'm not a cigar smoker but can definitely appreciate all they have to offer for ..."

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Ciger & Tobacco Stores in Saint Petersburg, FL - AOL Yellow Pages
yellowpages.aol.com/cigers-and-tobacco/saint-petersburg
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Central Cigars - St. Petersburg - Reviews of Central ... - TripAdvisor
www.tripadvisor.com ... Things to Do in St. Petersburg ... TOP Attractions ...
Rating 4 - 4 reviews
Central Cigars, St. Petersburg: See 4 reviews, articles, and 1 photo of Central Cigars, ranked No. 11 on TripAdvisor among 18 attractions in St. Petersburg.

ciger shops in Saint Petersburg, FL - Yellowpages.com
www.yellowpages.com - Saint Petersburg, FL - Yellowpages.com
Results 1 - 20 of 108 - 108 listings of Ciger, Cigarettes & Tobacco Dealers in Saint ...
1 3208 Central Ave, Saint Petersburg, FL 33710 (727) 327-4608
2 2605 Dr Martin Luther King Jr St N, Saint Petersburg, FL (727) 429-2762

4th Street Cigars & Martin Bar Events & Information - St. Petersburg
events.theciger.com - St. Petersburg Venues - "The Lounge"
4th Street Cigars & Martin Bar, St. Petersburg, FL: Get Reviews, Ratings, Photos, Directions and more with The Lounge.

RJ Ciger Company - Saint Pete Beach, FL - Shopping & Retail
https://www.facebook.com/rjcigercompany/158114541850617
RJ Ciger Company, Saint Pete Beach, FL, 33706 - 27 www.here. Shopping! Retail.

House of Pipes & Cigars - St. Petersburg FL - Pipe Tobacco Shop
pipetobacco.com - "Pipes"
Sep 3, 2009 - 3,065 based on 26 votes. The median rating is 5. Discussion 0 comments. Address: 2605 Dr Martin Luther King Jr St. Petersburg, Florida ...

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See all 6 results for cigar beach near St. Petersburg

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Cigar in Saint Petersburg, Florida with Reviews & Ratings...
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 110 listings of Cigar, Cigarette & Tobacco Dealers in Saint Petersburg on Y!Map. Find

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Acts

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 4* Luxury hotel in St. Pete Beach. Official hotel rate from \$180

St. Petersburg Packages
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 8025 Strand Pkwy Rd Apt 403, St. Pete Beach - (727) 363-8153
 Directions Details
- R J Cigar Company**
 8880 Gulf Blvd, St. Pete Beach - (727) 329-8880
 Directions Details
- One Love Tobacco and Gifts - Bing Local**
 7718 Gulf Blvd, St. Pete Beach - (727) 365-4444
 Directions Details
- Little Quarter House of Cigars**
 7820 Gulf Blvd, St. Pete Beach - (727) 393-4000
 Directions Details
- St. Pete Cigar**
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Bibliography

Altman, A. (2009, January 02). *A brief history of the cigar*.
Retrieved from
<http://content.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1869320,00.html>

McGill, R. (2011, May 16). Rj cigar company [Twitter message].
Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/RJCigarCompany>