

Zurich, November 13, 2008

Changing the way we will travel – the 2008 KPMG Tomorrow's Market Award

What is the most efficient way to travel for a given route: train, plane, bus, automobile? Routerank, winner of the 2008 KPMG Tomorrow's Market Award, allows you to combine all of the different methods of transportation, aiming to make choosing transportation simple, while letting you use criteria as varied as price, travel time and environmental impact.

Routerank was already one of the most promising new ideas. Now, the project is becoming a reality, with an initial, experimental online version that anyone can try out. It gives an idea of the new way in which we will be able to choose how we travel in the future. Thanks to a sophisticated system for searching data and combinatorial analysis conceived by Jochen Mundinger, previously a mathematician at the EPFL, Routerank displays the different options for travelling a particular route. The current beta version already includes travel by car, bus and train, with travel by air gradually being added and other modes of transportation soon to follow. Thus, at a glance you can compare schedules, estimated travel time and the amount of CO2 emitted.

The working versions will incorporate price comparisons, which are already possible from a technological point of view. We say “versions” in the plural because Routerank has already planned to adapt this tool for different user groups: one version will be for the general public, but there will also be one for professionals or organisations in line with their interests and their priorities.

Intended to be positioned as a service in Europe and then worldwide, Routerank has rapidly brought on board strong management in order to ensure the success of a development that promises to be an especially challenging one.

Link between innovation and tomorrow's markets

With its ambition, its qualities and its approach, the company is the ideal winner of the KPMG Tomorrow's Market Award. It is the very embodiment of what this prize strives for: creating a link between the innovations of today and the markets of tomorrow. Routerank will receive the award this Thursday, 13 November, on the Day of Innovation at the EPFL, along with a check for CHF 50,000 from KPMG. “We would like our involvement to go well beyond this, because more than promoting the utilisation of this online tool by all of our professionals, we are discussing integrating the software within KPMG Europe. We also hope to carry out a study that measures the positive impact of integrating this type of system in our business in terms of CO2 consumption and thus take a step toward the ambitious goals that we have set ourselves in this area. It is a promotional campaign that is particularly useful for the development of Routerank,

which will soon be having to deal with customers for the first time”, explains Stéphane Gard, Head of KPMG for French-speaking Switzerland.

Of course, Routerank still has to link together many databases order to gather all of the information necessary to accomplish its objective, but the initial beta version already demonstrates the tool’s considerable potential, not only in its principle, but also in its simplicity.

Strategy for promoting innovation

The story of how this new adventure, with all its great potential, came about is one example of the strategy adopted at the EPFL for promoting innovation. Jochen Mundiger, a researcher at the EPFL, received an Innogrant – a fellowship that allows an exceptionally motivated student or an employee with a big idea to begin an initial stage of exploration. These grants are given according to the key criteria of innovation, that is to say the quality of the idea and the commitment of the individual. The grants come from a fund which was put together with the support of the firm of private bankers, Lombard Odier Darier Hentsch & Cie. “The involvement of players like LODH and KPMG demonstrates the real impact of the interaction between academic institutions and private business that is making itself felt in the Lake Geneva region. In this way, we can help breathe new life into the economy, while also developing services that will be useful to all, not least in environment terms”, says Adrienne Corboud Fumagalli, Vice President for innovation and the transfer of technology at the EPFL.

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