

HOW BIG IS YOUR LOAD AND WHAT ARE YOU TAKING?

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By Peter Driscoll

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Peter Driscoll of European Transport Brokers (www.etbrokers-removals.com) takes you through some of the trials and tribulations associated with moving to Europe and explains away some of the mystery associated with moving to France.

Last time we left off with the quote. Nothing could be simpler could it? After all, how hard can it be to tell me what it will cost to move my worldly goods from here to there?

Contrary to general belief, removal companies are not the money grabbing organisations they are sometimes made out to be, well not all of them! The rate that you will be quoted, in general terms, is arrived at after a number of factors are taken into consideration. The load size, the distance to be travelled, the type of furniture, the number of men required for the job. To be able to give you a quote that will not vary, you then have to be able to provide the removal company with as much detail as possible, and here an inventory is essential. In many instances a visit by the removal company to the house is proposed and can be beneficial. It is not however, compulsory, as after years of experience the remover will know, after talking to you, roughly how much you have to move, and a full inventory will make this even easier.

You have no idea at all how much space your household contents will take up on a van and until now, no idea, as to how the companies prepare their quotes. BUT you do have a sneaking suspicion that when you tell the company that you think you have 35m³ that it is going to cost you more than if you tell them you only have 31m³. Above all RESIST this temptation.

Firstly, in reality the extra 4m³ of load should not significantly change the price, after all the lorry is going to its destination anyway and the only additional cost will be the extra hours needed to load and unload. Secondly, if on the day of the move the removal company announce that there is more than declared then you WILL be asked to pay more. When your belongings are already on the van and you have to move, you are not in a very good bargaining position! Thirdly, if the company has been told that the load is "X" and in fact it is "X" plus 5m³ there is a good possibility that something will have to be left behind, simply because there is not enough room on the van!

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Not two months ago a client of ours (who had refused to give a clear inventory), was waiting in Montpellier for the removal van to take him back to Shropshire. He had stated quite clearly that his load was "No more than 15m³", and had paid a reasonable sum of £650 for the move. On the day, the removal company arrived with a Van capable of carrying 35m³, upon which they had already loaded 15m³ from another Client . Our Montpellier Client had over 28m³ of furniture!!!. The result, a second trip for another van. The client's belongings were left in a leaky garage for ten days and the client had to pay an additional £700 to another company to have the final load shipped back! It does happen, which is why the INVENTORY is so important.

An inventory achieves three important things. Firstly it allows the removal company to know exactly what is to be taken (especially if you note the size of each item). Remember here to include such items

as Pianos (that may need three men to move them), Snooker tables and items such as Sit on Lawn Mowers and other fragile, bulky, heavy or strange objects. (We have had to get quotes for Boats, cars, and 48 Fragile Garden Gnomes who were going to Spain). Secondly in the event of an insurance claim you can PROVE that the removal company had the items concerned! Thirdly it helps you on unpacking to see where each numbered box should go in the new house. Using a simple spread sheet will make this even easier, and of course you can then use the same sheet to when sorting out your home contents insurance. The inventory itself should be detailed, but not to extremes, one of our customers diligently reported 487 pieces of "Leggo"! Mind you as an exercise in keeping "Little Tommy" amused, it must rank as one of the best "keep them quiet" ploys yet)!!!

The inventory also allows you to re-assess just what you don't need to take with you. There is after all very little point in transferring from one attic store, boxes of items that have not seen the light of day in years, to sit in another attic store. Now is the time to have that clear out that you always wanted. One of our client's loads constantly changed from an initial 34m³ to 26m³ and then back to 32m³ and was eventually finalised at 28m³. The reason was Mr "X" was finally persuaded to abandon most of the "Home Gym" that had been purchased in 1996 and never used!

It is however, not only load and the distance that can affect your quote. Please remember to let any remover know of any problems at either end that could affect delivery or pick up. If you are moving to or from a flat PLEASE indicate how many flights of stairs have to be negotiated. I recently had a call from a very irate (and out of breath) remover complaining that although the flat was a first floor one, the client had "forgotten" to say that there were six flights of stairs to get to the first floor!!! You guessed it, the price went up and the last thing any one wants is a debate about prices on the day of the move. Please also consider things such as narrow roads (or even "no roads") at either end. Some large lorries do not act like 4X4s!! It is also as well to check if there any overhanging trees that could prevent lorries passing underneath, although there is one company that we use, that always carries a chain saw with them...just in case!

Peter Driscoll of European Transport Brokers (www.etbrokers-removals.com) has moved many times in his life and has many tips to offer on how to make the move go smoothly

Does Your Web Site Need A Tune Up?

By Bill Daugherty

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Your web site may contain flaws or glitches that are driving your visitors away! Such a thought is enough to give the most laid back webmaster a migraine. How can you uncover and fix any problem areas that may be lurking in the dark recesses of your site? Relax gentle readers, there is a simple answer.

All you have to do is follow a few basic guidelines that all web sites should adhere to and you can be assured that your site is in tip-top shape. It's not unlike giving your automobile a little tuneup.

1 – Slow Loading Pages

Nothing drives a visitor away faster than having to wait around for a web page to load. Most experts will tell you that 8 seconds is the maximum load time for your pages, and anything slower needs some attention. But, this doesn't take into account the visitor's modem speed. Here are the results from a load time check I had conducted recently on the first page of one of my sites.

This diagnostic checks how fast your page loads up under 6 common modem speeds.

Connect Rate Connect Time

14.4K 10.12 seconds
28.8K 6.05 seconds
33.6K 5.34 seconds
56K 4.41 seconds
ISDN 128K 2.04 seconds
T1 1.44Mbps 1.00 seconds

LOAD TIME CHECK.....EXCELLENT

I have included these results so you can see the difference in load time for various modem speeds and use it as a guide instead of the 8 second benchmark you are often given. Please note that the page tested has very few graphics. A page with more graphics will load slower, but may still load in an acceptable time.

Slow load time is usually caused by either too many graphics or by graphics that are too "fat." You can have those "fat" graphics optimized by an experienced HTML programmer. If your problem is too many graphics, you need to eliminate a few.

2 – Typos and Spelling

Typos and misspelled words can severely undermine an otherwise great site. Check and recheck every page for these errors.

3 – Navigation

Broken or missing links are all too common on many sites I visit. So, double-check all your links and make sure they are functioning properly. Those 404 messages are a big-time turnoff, plus it means part of your site is inaccessible.

If you have a lot of links on a page, arrange them in neat rows with uniform spacing between each.

It is critical to have all links clearly identified.

4 – Design

Your color choices are a matter of personal taste. But try to avoid using too many colors. This can give your site a carnival-like effect that leaves your visitors tired and dizzy. As

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a general rule you shouldn't use more than four colors.

Too many different fonts on a page can also have a negative effect on your design. When I look at a page that somehow just doesn't look quite right, but I can't put my finger on the problem, it usually turns out to be the font(s).

Animation is great, but too much movement is distracting.

Don't load your pages with too many banners. One or two at the top or bottom should be the limit.

This concludes your web site's tune up. These guidelines are by no means an exhaustive list of all the problems and errors that can plague a web site. But, it is an effective checklist of the more common flaws, and it will serve to greatly improve the performance of any web site.

Bill Daugherty is editor and publisher of the marketing and advertising ezine "E-Power Marketing." Visit his site and subscribe at: <http://www.freeadsgalore.com> Visit Bill's latest project at: <http://www.instantez.com> To contact Bill mailto: bill@epower.zzn.com

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