NETCONTINUUM

NetContinuum Knows Which Marketing Programs Are Most Effective

Website attacks. Stolen data. Identity theft. It's nearly impossible to read the news without seeing yet another headline about a web application security breach. These are the perils of today's information age—and the perils that NetContinuum and its line of web application firewalls are specifically designed to address.

When you're in the business of protecting and accelerating mission-critical applications, you'd better have a firm grasp of rapidly evolving market dynamics and ever-changing customer demands. Otherwise you'll quickly get left behind.

Listen and learn

NetContinuum, a leader in the web application security market, understands and executes that precept very well. Since the company's inception, its executives and leaders have emphasized the strategic role of Product Management—spending time listening to the market, meeting with customers, and, as a result, delivering products that are in high demand.

When Katie Lynn, Marketing Programs Manager at NetContinuum, attended the Pragmatic Marketing® Effective Marketing Programs™ course, she was enthused to discover that her company's market-driven approach was validated by industry best practices. "One of the first things I noticed in the class was that the core principles on which our company is based are directly aligned with what Pragmatic Marketing is teaching."

Nothing but the facts

Beyond that fundamental endorsement for listening to the market, the class gave Katie a powerful weapon in her ongoing battle to create visibility and leads for her company and its products—hard evidence about the success of her team's marketing efforts. Before the class, Katie had difficulty correlating closed sales to various marketing programs and messages.

"Our leads database contains everything from raw leads to all the people who are in conversation to the deals that have turned into a final sale," explains Katie. "It even tracks technical support events. It's a good system, but after taking the Pragmatic Marketing class, I realized there was something missing—the system wasn't set up to track leads all the way through to a sale. As a result, we couldn't show the company that our marketing programs were effective."

She adds, "I quickly learned the importance of a closed-loop system—and exactly what you can accomplish when you link every deal back to when a prospect first entered your system and the actual marketing effort that generated the lead."

Instant impact

Katie took everything she learned in the class back to her office and began executing on it the very next day. "Right out of the gate, I started doing all the things they taught us. I looked at sales over the past year, traced them back through the system, and connected them to various marketing programs. And I learned we are even more effective than I thought!"

Within a week, she had used the data to show her company's actual "sales funnel" and lead conversion ratios. "I set up our system to track all the leads and show me a view of

each campaign—the number of leads, contacts, etc.," explains Katie. "The system also shows the stages of our sales funnel and their corresponding numbers—all at a real-time glance. I never had a view like that before. At any time, I can see how well things are doing, and I can check each sale and make sure it connects back to the marketing effort."

She explains, "For the first time, we could see how long it was taking us to get through each stage of the cycle and what our percent of successful conversions are between each step. We also discovered we had good leads coming from partners."

Accelerating the sales cycle

By tracking the sales cycle—from the start of the lead to a closed deal—Katie quickly discovered that the length of the company's sales cycle had been steadily improving, and she could identify which marketing programs were helping. "We are getting better at selling our products, and we are very effective towards the end of our sales cycle," she says. "A few days after I took the class, I sent the sales funnel presentation to my boss, who immediately requested that I present the findings to the CEO and executives. It was a real boost of confidence for everybody on the team."

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In 2003, sales took an average of nine months to close. In early 2004, they took seven-and-a-half months to close. Toward the middle of 2004, the number decreased to six-and-a-half months. At the end of 2004 and early 2005, the average sale closed in three-and-a-half months. "From 2003 to 2005, we cut the sales cycle by nearly two thirds—from nine months to a little over three months. Beyond that, we recently closed our largest quarter ever for sales."

You have to measure to manage

Since the discipline of marketing first began, there have always been those who consider its practitioners to be the "mug and t-shirt people." That opinion is especially true in technology companies. For that reason, it's never been more important to have demonstrable evidence of the results marketing achieves and its impact on revenues.

"Everybody on the executive team got very excited about the presentation, because we now have hard evidence for what direction we should take our marketing efforts," she emphasizes. "We were able to validate that the marketing efforts we were making to move people through the pipeline were very effective. I connected all the dots and showed those programs that were effective all the way through—not just the ones that were effective in getting an initial meeting.

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"Based on that evidence I was then able to make recommendations for what marketing programs we should pursue," Katie continues. "It was so clear; there was no arguing with any of it because there was so much evidence from what I had gathered. As Pragmatic Marketing says, 'Use market facts—not opinions—to make the point.' We were able to weed out the programs that weren't effective, so we didn't expend more resources there. And we have legitimate proof of exactly what works for us."

She notes, "Now that we have solid numbers at our fingertips, we can make decisions based on fact versus speculation. The numbers gave legitimacy to all the marketing work we had been doing. And it gave us the confidence to move forward with our plans and ideas. Our CEO was able to show our Board of Directors real evidence that we are moving in the right direction, and that the things we are doing are working."

Beyond the "big checklist"

Katie says, "To actually connect all our marketing programs to the end result and be able to prove marketing's worth was a big deal for us. Before, I didn't have a concrete sense of what my contribution was to the company. As they said in class, Marketing typically just has that 'big checklist.' But at the end of the day, what did you really accomplish? Based on what I learned in the class, I was able to measure the consistent success of this department—rather than wondering if our efforts were actually going to be worth the investment."

She concludes, "This information has been a valuable thing to know for myself, as a professional. I want to feel like a contributor and I want to be able to demonstrate that I'm achieving more than is expected of me. And that is exactly what the Pragmatic Marketing class gave me."