



BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS SILVER WINNER *Business on Main, by Sprint*

Business Opportunity

The wireless category is among the most competitive in all of consumer and business to business marketing, with advertising spending totaling over \$4.5 billion annuallyⁱ. This category is also one of the most responsive to advertising, with branding and differentiation being crucial to success.

Today, Sprint is the #3 in the telecom category and is outspent 3:1 by competitors like AT&T and Verizonⁱⁱ. Sprint enjoys a highly differentiating and profitable advantage that positions it well for the future with the development of a 4G (fourth generation) network that is rolling out at least one year ahead of competitive offerings. Delivering wireless data is at the core of Sprint's mission and central to the growth of the telecom category. Unfortunately, Sprint as a brand has had little meaning to consumers due to on-going shifts in positioning and had fallen out of consumers' consideration set. Sprint had to penetrate new audiences as a way to grow business and increase revenue.

The small business market is an important one for wireless solutions providers. Based on all carriers, Sprint had the lowest consideration within this group when it actually had the most solutions to provide them. Sprint realized that small business is a category in which they could significantly increase consideration and offered an opportunity to present their highly differentiating array of solutions.

Business Objectives

Led by an opportunity to increase awareness and improve perception of Sprint as a company who understands small businesses, Sprint sought to develop a communication strategy specifically targeting Small Business Owners (SBOs) (company size 1-99). Through the program Sprint would be able to advise SBOs on critical business issues while maintaining a balance of offering brand solutions and providing utility.

Sprint's goal was to create a community for small business owners to exchange ideas, gain actionable knowledge from business experts, promote their businesses and, most importantly, help them adapt, grow, and succeed.

Initial benchmarks:

Increased brand health measures

- Aided Brand Awareness
- Unaided Brand Awareness
- Purchase Consideration

Create engagement within online community

- Unique visitors – 5 million/year

- Session time – 2-4 minutes average/user
- Strong video usage

Research Behind the Story

The mission of developing a new platform and community for SBOs that would serve to inform, engage and present Sprint in a positive light would require a multitude of rich and relevant insights. The primary research objective was to understand both the opportunity and the needs of the SBOs as well as what content would be most relevant and engaging for them. Going a bit deeper, we needed to understand where SBOs currently go for information and advice; what are their major needs; how are they using media, particularly digital media; where SBOs are online and how they use the web; what they think of existing small business sites and where improvements can be made; and what features would be most useful to them.ⁱⁱⁱ

To gather these insights about the SBOs, a customized, holistic research approach was devised which included traditional desk research, ethnographies, one-on-one interviews and tailored online surveys.

The initial desk research identified the lack of attention given to the SBO market, particularly in the area of web communities. Further research including online surveys about web behavior uncovered insights which educated us on their online tendencies, their needs from a business site, and their desire for interaction with fellow business owners. Twelve one-on-one interviews were then conducted to capture specific insights into the mindset of the small business owner. Interviewees were split 7-5 male to female and were also selected across a range of different business verticals (retail, professional services etc) to ascertain differences and commonalities. To garner the richest responses possible, interviews were conducted informally, without the aid of a general script (although the interviewers were well versed in how to guide the conversations to maximize output). All interviews were filmed for internal use. Ethnographies were conducted at each respondent's place of business for deeper understanding of the day to day issues and needs small business owners face. Also during the interviews initial ideas and concepts were tested for feedback.

Our combined expansive research led us to the following overall insights^{iv}:

- Personal community is at the heart of SBOs lives
- Outside of their personal community, there are three main places from where they draw information: industry publications, local print and the web
- SBOs are drawn to interaction with fellow business owners and are inspired when exchanging ideas with experts
- SBOs have many ongoing issues for which they need help and support
- SBOs have a constant desire for information
- Different types of SBOs have different needs, from content to who they connect with – sites specific to SBOs should have content for each type of business owner
- SBOs are practical; they're constantly faced with problems and want help solving them – any content must clearly show what practical benefit it brings, and then deliver that benefit
- Google is a main thoroughfare but is frustrating to use – search terms don't match up with content provided
- Other online destinations: MSN The Wall Street Journal, CNN, LinkedIn, Wikipedia, Craig's List, Monster, Zoom Info, Daily Candy, City Search
- None of the SBOs were getting a high level of value with social networks

- Current business sites have a lot of generic, useless material
- Time-wasting is more acutely felt by the group – successful business sites have to be easy to access and have everything in one place
- SBOs are drawn to interaction with fellow business owners and are inspired when exchanging ideas with experts
- All fascinated and excited about potential of the unique destination
- They are willing to invest the time to fill out a profile in exchange for relevant service
- Being linked to other SBOs in a community is very attractive
- The site could be a powerful resource if it is a closed community of SBOs who can share and draw on each other's common issues

The Solution/Big Idea

Through all this rich research a common thread connecting SBOs was discovered: their businesses are driven by the lessons they've learned from their peers and other experts. These insights all pointed to a huge opportunity to engage SBOs by offering them an online meeting place that provides information and allows them to connect with an audience facing similar challenges.

The final solution: BusinessOnMain.com.com, a community of ideas, connected by Sprint: a unique branded online destination focused exclusively on the needs of small business owners, built on a foundation of content, community and tools. Its primary objective: to serve as an objective credible source of business content that provides a platform from which Sprint can integrate campaign promotions and product in a contextually relevant manner.

BusinessOnMain.com.com offers visitors a variety of relevant and engaging content as well as serving as a rich small business community offering the opportunity to post questions and receive real-time answers from other business owners in the community as well as access to industry experts who provide personalized answers to any business problem. The site features a wealth of articles written by expert sources from leading business sites. There is a bank of tools and resources offering practical ways to improve business. A community element not only allows business owners to set up a profile for themselves or their company, but also enables them to set up groups based on industry or locality to further network with other business owners.

The site also features original video series' that provide small business owners with a unique opportunity to gain actionable knowledge and advice from business leaders that can be immediately applied to their business – "Cool Runnings" and "Business Fantasy Camp."

"Cool Runnings" chronicles the big ideas and trends shaping small business and the innovative companies and people that embody success in the business world. Featured companies are more than just balance-sheet success stories – the series focuses on fun work environments that have a buzz that makes them special.

In each episode of "Business Fantasy Camp," a small business owner spends time shadowing a mentor who offers on-the-fly training, tips and advice on how to tackle each business owner's specific business challenge. The fantasy mentor is someone who is a leader in their field, has celebrity cache and who may not seem the obvious choice. Mentors include Burl Cain, the Warden of Angola State Prison; skateboard legend Tony Hawk; and Broadway producer Jeffrey Seller.

In every section of BusinessOnMain.com, users can comment, share, post questions, provide advice, submit challenges, and vote or participate in the video series', making the site a truly interactive experience.

The mobile version of BusinessOnMain.com has been optimized for nearly all smartphones. The mobile site drives enhanced productivity for SBOs by offering on-the-go access to expert advice on small business topics. Users can read articles on their mobile devices or use the audio option to plug in while behind the wheel. They also have the capability to view all the episodes of the two original video series. Applications offered also allow SBOs to use their mobile phone to dictate and record notes, letters or To Dos, then convert into written format to share with clients or staff.

Based on an additional analysis of competitive websites, BusinessOnMain.com.com is the first to deliver on diverse small business solution-based needs. Sprint has casually integrated itself into the content of the site, giving careful consideration not to overwhelm the user with a sales message. By offering valuable content to the audience, Sprint provides comfort while further generating awareness for their small business solutions.

Proof of Business Results

Increased brand health measures:

Purchase intent for Sprint among SBOs has significantly increased, rising 59.3 percent at 3+ visits. Additionally, unaided brand awareness has risen 87.1 percent at 3+ visits. We've also seen an 86.7 percent increase among SBOs for the positive sentiment "Sprint is a business partner on which their company can rely."^v

Create engagement within online community:

- Unique visitors – goal of 5 million/year
 - Since its launch in March 2009, the site has delivered more than 4 million unique users to date and is well on its way to doubling that number within the first year^{vi}
- Session time – goal of 2-4 minutes average/user
 - Unique and repeat users are spending nearly 1.7x and 5.1x time, respectively, on the site per user as compared to the MSN BEET benchmark^{vii}
- Strong video usage
 - Video usage, a core engagement metric, continues to remain strong, increasing Sprint's brand perception among Small Business Owners by 45 percent^{viii}
 - Users are completing videos on an average rate of 45%; the Sprint videos mostly driving these results with 92% completion rates^{ix}
- Proof of engagement
 - Community sharing metric continue to increase over time as users are finding value in the site. To-date there have been nearly 42,000 clicks to share videos, articles and questions with others^x
 - Over 2,000 registered members, 500 of which are active in over 150 discussions within the community since registration was enables less than 3 months ago

ⁱ TNS Ad Spend Data, 2008

ⁱⁱ Sprint Data, 2008

ⁱⁱⁱ Agency research, Nov/Dec 2008

^{iv} Agency research, Nov/Dec 2008

^v Nielsen IAG Brand Effectiveness Research

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- ^{vi} MSN/Comscore Metrics
 - ^{vii} MSN/Comscore Metrics
 - ^{viii} Nielsen IAG Brand Effectiveness Research
 - ^{ix} MSN/Atlas data
 - ^x MSN/Atlas data