



CASE STUDY

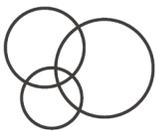
HOW CONTENT MARKETING SUPPORTED
ONE TECHNOLOGY FIRM'S RISE TO THE TOP



////// SUMMARY

It can be difficult to differentiate a business in a competitive software market, especially if competitors offer similar options. The temptation is to launch a marketing strategy that “shouts louder” than the other guy. Throw in a price increase and there is the definite potential for financial disaster. However, a content marketing strategy designed by Ben Stroup helped Church Community Builder increase sales, establish itself as an industry thought leader, and overcome a cost increase with little attrition.

////// BACKGROUND



CHURCH
COMMUNITY
BUILDER

Church Community Builder is a company that designs software to help church leaders more strategically and effectively connect members to the church, and then through managing those connections, help them mature in faith through coaching, mentoring, and building relationships. To date, Church Community Builder is serving 3,300-plus churches in 23 countries, has added nearly 1,000 new customers in 2013, and is considered an industry leader in its market category. The growth in customers and influence over the past four years has been exponential. But that wasn't always the case.

////// THE CHALLENGE

In 2008, Church Community Builder served roughly 700 churches - a respectable number, certainly, but hardly enough to sustain success in a competitive market. It was experiencing incremental growth at 280 churches a year, but needed to see that number jump if it was to differentiate itself from other options available to churches. The company was relatively unknown in the church world, even though it enjoyed a good reputation and a very loyal base of church partners.

The challenge for Church Community Builder's leaders was to increase and convert sales leads, grow the company to financial sustainability, and become a thought leader - all within a tight operating budget and a reluctance to spend money on a massive "awareness" campaign.

"We really believe in our vision of helping local church leaders," said Steve Caton, vice president of marketing. "We believe we have a great story to tell, but we knew we needed to get more strategic about how to communicate our uniqueness. That's when we connected with Ben Stroup."

THE (MARKETING) SOLUTION

Content marketing is taking the long view of marketing. The purpose of a content marketing strategy is to consistently communicate value to customers or potential customers by offering useful information that benefits those audiences. Basically, it is giving away knowledge for little or no charge. In the case of Church Community Builder, Ben Stroup designed a content marketing strategy that had "industry thought leader" as its destination.

The process began with Church Community Builder's vision to be an asset to the local church - and to see an impact on a larger scale by improving the assimilation of people across thousands of churches. Next, Church Community Builder needed to establish the mindset that a content strategy is ideally a the conversation starter. It is a reality in commerce today that customers want more from companies than just widgets. They want a trusted relationship built on product reliability, customer service, and the ability to add value beyond the product.

"Our content marketing strategy has totally increased the awareness that this is what we care about," said Caton. "That this is what we do and this is how it applies to your context."

A backbone to the content strategy has been case studies authored by Ben Stroup that document authentic challenges Church Community Builder clients face and the improvement achieved as a result of Church Community Builder implementation. Blog entries also provide a variety of industry-related information, coaching, and practical ideas to support church leaders in their task of strengthening individuals in their faith. The topics are intentional and designed to position Church Community Builder as the expert in the field of church processes and technology.

However, as Church Community Builder experienced growth, its leadership also recognized the need to increase the price of the service. It was more about survival than making money.

“In our market in the church management space there has been a significant amount of turnover,” Caton said. “We have just emerged as a stable player in the market. We felt the burden to be good stewards of our company so that we could be financially healthy to support churches. Ultimately it is the church that suffers when their vendor is no longer there to support their investment.

“But we did have a concern about how to communicate that without it falling on deaf ears. We didn’t want our customers to see it as taking advantage of the situation. We wanted to be transparent about it and for them to have an understanding for why we believe we needed to do it.”

Content marketing, as opposed to traditional marketing strategies, allowed Community Church Builder to engage its client base in conversation and avoid the 30-second sales pitch to try and convince clients this was good for them. Other companies have tried similar price increases and realized 5 percent to 10 percent attrition in clients. Community Church Builder has been engaging customers for 10 months regarding the increase and to date has seen less than 1 percent attrition directly attributed to the pricing increase.

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THE RESULTS

Church Community Builder's success has increased in each of the five years it's partnered with Ben Stroup. Caton believes the steady, consistent content marketing strategy has established a solid presence for Church Community Builder among its competitors and led to upward sales trends every year, with future projections looking promising.

"The content marketing strategy Ben created for us has been the conversation starter," Caton said. "I believe our customers understand why we are doing what we're doing and have been supportive. An added benefit has been lead generation that results in sales. As our presence has grown, it has made us easier to find. People can check out our body of content and see that we are experts in the implementation of technology and we are customer-service oriented.



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"Look, the bottom line is this: We started a content marketing strategy a few years ago and now we are seen as the experts in the church management space. Our competitors are now having to catch up, but we're already here. Content marketing is *the* marketing strategy now. If your business is not doing it then you will be left behind - especially if your competition is doing it."



CONCLUSION

Traditional marketing strategies are not as effective as they once were and are certainly not the exclusive - nor the most effective - way to build a brand identity and a loyal customer base. Content marketing strategies developed by Ben Stroup have proven to increase sales leads and conversions, deepen customer loyalty, and establish organizations as thought leaders in their respective industries.



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Church Community Builder's calling is to understand the processes that support every church leader, and to provide the best possible tool to support those processes. We call this a *better how*, and we exist to guide church leaders to that place. The Church Community Builder software platform is designed to help you and the other leaders in your church improve your ministry efforts and support it with the right processes. Church Community Builder also has a dedicated team of coaches who work with your church to find more effective ways of running their ministries. Contact Church Community Builder to learn how your church can find its *better how* today.