

Web Experience Excellence:

Driving Strategic Online Advantage & Advocacy: Are your customers your evangelists?

A 3-Part Series by Frost & Sullivan, the Growth Partnership Company



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Highlights and Key Take-Aways from the New York and London Executive Congresses — and a Sneak Peak at What's Next

Chairing Frost & Sullivan's Web Experience Excellence 2009 executive congresses in New York and London was a great pleasure and one of the most inspiring event experiences I have had this year.

More than anything else, it was the participants who created these great events. The high caliber of our participants in New York and London, and their eagerness to share ideas and experiences and their enthusiasm to learn from each other, created a fantastic community. We explored new ideas, challenged conventional thinking and came up with new perspectives on creating the kind of online experience that succeeds in developing customer and brand loyalty, advocacy and strategic advantage.

Kicking off in New York at the Hudson Hotel on September 22nd, an exciting roster of leading brands on the Web awaited the attendees. American Express OPEN Forum set a blistering example of the kind of dynamic and interactive community that is only possible with careful strategy and top-notch execution. Jason Rudman, Director of OPEN Forum's strategy and planning, outlined the evolution of this powerful interactive community and shared with us how it has consistently generated significant ROI, not only for American Express itself, through enhanced brand loyalty and efficient customer acquisition, but also for OPEN Forum's users.

The small business owners who make up the majority of OPEN Forum's user community are able to network with each other to generate new sales and establish partnerships, and it is this win-win scenario that is the secret to OPEN Forum's success. Jason's insights resonated with our participants — many of whom, like Jason, represent century-old companies with well-established brands — and we had a lively discussion about the role of strong brands in a social networking situation.

On October 6th at our London event, held at the plush private club, Altitude 360, Bob Rapp, Head of User Communities at Vodafone, similarly discussed how the use of social media at Vodafone has driven customer loyalty and generated an ever-increasing level of customer engagement. Bob also shared with us how Vodafone has worked hard to obtain the buy-in from its own organization, without which their success would not have materialized.

Success — how to define it, and how to measure it — was a question on most participants' minds, and the panel discussions devoted to metrics at both the New York and London events offered some very specific advice.

Barbara Pezzi, Director of Webmarketing and E-commerce at Fairmont Raffles Hotels, warned against focussing on metrics that are not useful in relation to a company's real objectives. She cautioned there is no such thing as a "one-size-fits-all" suite of

metrics, rather a company needs to first define the goals of its Web presence, and only then can it identify the metrics that will correctly measure how well it achieves those goals. Generic metrics do more damage than good, because they can divert attention away from maximising performance in areas that will actually generate business.

To Benjamin Braun, Head of Online Services at British Gas, maximizing performance means increasing the number of customers who use the company's Web-based self service facility. British Gas has discovered that customers who use self service are happier and more loyal than other customers. The provision of customer care through self service is, of course, highly cost efficient, so British Gas is yet another example of how the creation of a win-win situation becomes a key factor in the success of online initiatives.

Jan Rimmel, Vice President, Global Online Marketing Services at Hasbro Games & Toys, led the New York roundtable discussion on "Cross-Channel/Cross-Site Brand Consistency." She began by highlighting the fact that despite the varying lines of business and industries the participants belonged to, many were experiencing problems with this issue in much the same way. With Jan's moderation, the participants were invited to offer advice to each other on how to handle the internal corporate dynamics that often pit the online marketing department against the



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department handling traditional marketing. Through the discussion, it became evident that rather than cannibalizing the traditional marketing department with razor-sharp, metrics-produced customer insight, the key to success is to start from a collaborative approach.

One last but important theme that emerged from both events concerned the “digital native” generations and their mobile-centric lives. The mobile Web experience has become more essential than we could have ever imagined, and Aaron Kohn, Vice President of Corporate Strategy & Development at National Geographic Global Media, showed us how the success factors that enable a company to meet and exceed the expectations of its mobile Web users are distinct from those of the fixed Web users. We learned about National

Geographic’s no-nonsense approach to monetizing its interaction with its mobile users.

A SNEAK PEEK: WHAT’S NEXT FOR THE WEB EXPERIENCE EXCELLENCE COMMUNITY

The executive congresses have fostered a wealth of valuable information from a wide range of industry experts, and we will be uploading portions of the New York and London sessions to www.webexperience.frost.com/video.htm in the coming weeks.

Additionally, we’ve made plans to continue the conversation about customer advocacy & interactive strategy. We’re pleased to announce that the Web Experience Excellence Community will soon have an interactive, online forum to call home at <http://possibilities.opentext.com>. We’ve

designed this forum for you and your peers to interact, exchange ideas and discuss best practices, and have asked our strategic event partner, Open Text, to provide the technical expertise to host the Community. Get ready to jump in — an e-mail will be sent to announce the opening next week.

If you missed the New York and London events, please join us in San Francisco for the next instalment taking place on December 2, 2009, at the City Club, located in the heart of downtown San Francisco in the stunning old Stock Exchange Tower. We have another great Web Experience Excellence program lined up for you, including insights from YouTube, SAP, Microsoft, American Apparel, Kodak, Sprint, the Food Network/HGTV and many more! For more details, log on to: www.frost.com/webexpSF.