

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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Dynamic Online Customer Experience in Action: The National Instruments Case Study

National Instruments delivers an online user experience that drives strategic online advantage, which, in turn, delivers greater revenue and loyalty. At the Web Experience Excellence executive congress that recently took place in New York City, Christer Ljungdahl, National Instruments' director of Web and database marketing, discussed the seven essentials of effective Web marketing that is the foundation of National Instruments' Web excellence.

1. Develop a strategy and plan with measurable business goals.

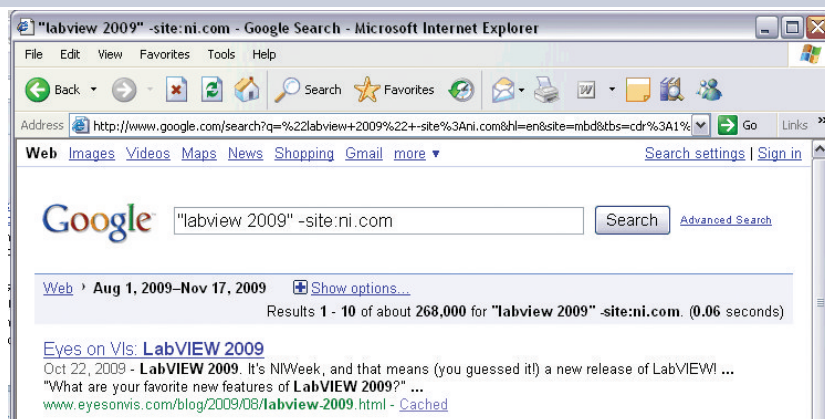
A company's strategy for Web experience must be clear and crisp. National Instruments' strategy focuses on delivering a specific user experience and the measurements associated with that — being able to measure how that impacts all their different objectives and quantifiably how that drives a return on those different initiatives. Call it cause and effect: National Instruments maps all its initiatives — the causes, and the objectives — the effects.

A strategy necessarily must be flexible: In 2007, National Instruments decided that they were no longer going to print a product catalog, which changes the role and responsibility of the Web to serve as the medium for both external and internal customers.

2. Use all available inbound marketing tools.

Get talked about: It's important to be

MEASURE IMPACT: 268,000 NON-NI MENTIONS SINCE AUGUST LAUNCH



referenced and discussed in context — whether it be a scenario in which a user talks about how they used LabVIEW, one of National Instruments' online initiatives, for a certain project, or whether someone blogs about how excited they are about the new release of LabVIEW 2009 because it's going to allow them to do things with their kids, like build LEGO robots.

The more mentions of LabVIEW — and there are hundreds of thousands of mentions online — the more often that LabVIEW turns up in searches, and people drive to LabVIEW, use LabVIEW and, if they have the right experience, they'll come back again in the future.

3. Content is still king ... users demand evolved content.

As discussed in the National Instruments session, if you make your online content compelling enough,

interesting enough and engaging enough, the content is going to generate comments and other content about that content.

Content also needs its own strategy. National Instruments looked at the user experience they wanted to create and collaborated with their product marketing team and other internal content providers to make sure that all involved understood the purpose of the different user experiences, and jointly they formally organized a content strategy around this purpose so that everyone involved understood what content they needed to provide.

The integration of user-contributed content is an important component of your content strategy: The approach National Instruments has taken on user-contributed content is that they are a member of the community, just like their

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customer is. National Instruments is not stopping anybody from participating in a discussion or from generating content for promoting something that they're passionate about. Additionally, product marketers now have the option to go out and create their own channel leveraging the community space, even if the product doesn't necessarily have a dedicated campaign elsewhere.

4. Be relevant to your audience.

Targeted, relevant content is essential. You have to get your visitors to content that they're very interested in within one or two clicks or you're going to lose them. The LabVIEW environment is categorized in a way that users can quickly get to the core capabilities they're looking for.

National Instruments directs users in different ways. They map the product to the target audience and they package the product to help target those segments. So if you're in an industrial space, National Instruments has a bundle of LabVIEW tools that targets that aspect.

National Instruments offered an interesting use case about their Mexico business: When Mexico was essentially shut down from the H1N1 outbreak, they quickly created a simple pop-up window that came up when a first time visitor landed on the Web site from Mexico. The letter was from the branch manager in Mexico explaining that the branch was affected by the outbreak but that the team was still dedicated to helping support them. This solution allowed National Instruments to quickly deploy their Mexico office to work remotely from home, leveraging chat and VOIP, and still service their customers.

5. As social media channels proliferate, a dedicated strategy becomes increasingly necessary.

According to James Latham, Senior Vice President of Strategic Marketing, OpenText, the moderator of the National Instruments interview,

BRANDED SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS ARE INTEGRATED INTO TRADITIONAL MARCOM ACTIVITIES



“Everyone has their favorite way to interact digitally in the social milieu, so, as an enterprise, you have to cover the whole spectrum to make sure to reach everyone. But these fragmented channels mean that you have to be thinking about all the different ways that people interact and create a common experience.”

6. Actionable analytics are the only kind of metrics.

It's important to have analytics available to track progress, predict results and show return on investment. Even if you're only tracking four or five key analytics, it's better than none. And in fact, it's probably better than having 50 to 60 measurements, which is simply too much information. There are a preponderance of Web statistics that are flowing every microsecond — having too many metrics is just as thwarting as having too few. What's key is to settle on the right ones that show this return on investment and align with corporate objectives.

Additionally, there's a big difference between data metrics reports and Web analytics. Analytics is really something where you need people with a very good skill set to understand how to interpret data. It's a big challenge, and often

companies make big mistakes by not leveraging people with the appropriate skills to aggregate and decipher what the data means. Often they miss the bigger picture and use the metrics to immediately start making decisions based on only snapshots of information.

7. Leverage your investment.

Content is very expensive to create, and it's even more expensive to maintain, which is why it's important to take the content and leverage it on the Web in different ways. Just as media companies syndicate cartoons and video and movies, syndicating your own content in different ways, even in a B2B context, is worth it.

Whether it is editorial content, user-generated content or bits that you're getting from your partners — set up policies for pushing the content out in different forms, in different bandwidths, so that you're really taking advantage of that asset. Content itself is a valuable thing and just becomes more valuable. Being able to publish or change that content once and push those changes across global sites saves enormous time and resources and ensure brand and message consistency.