

Social Marketing Strategy Reduces Costs and Delivers Measurable ROI



Acquia Drupal Drives Immediate Results for JackBe

Getting Social: Moving Industries and Engaging Customers

Social marketing eschews the traditional one-to-many broadcast commercial model in favor of less formal, more personal interactions with a product or company. Technology has transformed marketers' ability to run lower cost, targeted marketing campaigns with measurable return on investment. The result is a new category of marketing – social marketing.

Enterprise software vendor, JackBe (www.jackbe.com), offers an example of this new strategy in action. JackBe sells 'enterprise mashup' software to developers, enabling them to use web services to connect internal and external data to create new, loosely coupled or "mashed up" applications. Because this is a new approach in software development, part of JackBe's marketing agenda is to educate developers about mashups - what they are, how to build them, and what applications are a good fit for this approach.

Chris Warner, JackBe's Vice President of Marketing, adopted a social approach to his education strategy with a 'Mashup Developer Community'. This community targets the developers who will use JackBe's software to build their own mashups. "The community is not about JackBe, it's about mashups in general," said Chris. "More importantly, the community is all about the members themselves - they can connect with one another, share ideas, experiences and even best practices in this innovative area of software development, and ultimately help move the enterprise mashup industry toward maturity."

Social Marketing

Social marketing is conversational - focused on facilitating interactions that directly build relationships with customers. Social marketing converts passive spectators into active members and contributors, and transforms static websites into dynamic online communities.

Powering Social Marketing with Open Source Software

When Chris began researching which technology to use to build his community website, he considered a number of options including traditional proprietary software, software-as-a-service (SAAS) and open source products such as Drupal. Because JackBe is a small, venture-backed startup company, Chris's project budget was finite and he needed to get the most out of his dollar. He also needed to move fast, with less than 2 months to deliver a member-ready community.

After researching numerous open source and commercial options, Chris elected to build his website on Acquia Drupal (<http://www.acquia.com>), the commercially supported Drupal distribution from Acquia. Acquia provides commercial support for the open source Drupal social publishing system. This option was the most cost effective as the software is GPL licensed and available to organizations like JackBe at no cost. His primary project cost was to hire Drupal development shop Trellon (<http://trellon.com/>) to design and build his site on Acquia Drupal.

"I continue to be amazed at how little this project cost and how quickly I got to production," said Chris. "I spent 25% percent of what a comparable proprietary solution would cost and I was able to implement all of my desired functionality in a very short period of time. If we had worked with a traditional software vendor, this project could easily have cost six figures for just the software alone."



An Engaged Community with Measurable Results

Better Marketing Conversations

JackBe's developer community is a destination for software developers to converse with each other and technical experts from JackBe. The members share questions and answers, share code samples, research mashup solutions and provide guidance on how best to build and deploy mashup applications. The Drupal-powered community is far exceeding JackBe's goals.

From the Mashup Developer Community launch date, JackBe experienced a sustained increase in traffic across all JackBe website properties. According to Chris, "We had 1,000 members join the community in the first few months and we now have over 2,000 members, resulting in an almost immediate 30% incremental increase to our overall web traffic. We could temporarily buy this type of traffic increase, but we could not get this type of sustainable, loyal traffic without Acquia Drupal."

More importantly, visitors became active members of the community. For example, one community user was considering using mashup technologies at his place of business. The JackBe community provided the member general information on mashups and specific information about JackBe's products. Not only did he benefit from presentations and videos available on the community site, but the community member felt comfortable enough to contact directly JackBe for additional information. Equipped with these Social resources, the member successfully pitched a mashup strategy to his manager.

Social marketing is about creating opportunities for more frequent, informal interactions between a company and its customers. The rapid adoption of JackBe's community by the public and JackBe's own employees demonstrates this practice in action.

Scalable Sales Support

Since its launch, the community has resulted in additional leads to JackBe's marketing database. More importantly, the community's influence on closed sales deals is trending towards 100% - almost every single lead that results in a sale is visiting the community and taking advantage of it as a resource. Potential customers have an account team and assigned sales resources. With social marketing, prospects gain an additional resource - a community of advocates that complement traditional sales models. As prospects visit the community, they benefit from peer driven answers to their questions and learn by doing. Acquia Drupal has enabled a *scalable* way for JackBe's buying audience to find high-quality answers to their questions without inflating the demands on traditional sales teams.

Tangible Market Research and Reach

JackBe's marketing and product development groups use their Acquia Drupal-driven community as a valuable first-hand market research tool. Unlike the generalized, high-level, high-cost analysis provided by statistical research and analyst reports, the Drupal-powered community offers immediate, tangible and in-depth data.

Measurement of Success with Acquia Drupal

- 30% increase in overall web traffic
- Delivered 90% of desired functionality in 2 weeks
- Platform development required only 56 lines of custom code
- Over 2000 new community members in 6 months
- 25% the cost of proprietary solutions
- Community influence on sales pipeline close to 100%

Best Practices

- **The agenda should be broader than your products**
Make your community an educational resource on a general topic to have genuine appeal to a wide audience.
- **Don't underestimate your membership**
You cannot predict who your best contributors will be – everyone should have the opportunity help sell and market your company, even your own employees.
- **Help people help themselves**
When visitors can learn by doing they will likely become members. Self-discovery and learning will keep them coming back.
- **Don't pay to reinvent the wheel**
Open source social marketing technology extends the reach of your marketing budget while using innovative tools for building better relationships with your customers.

Forum questions, blog posts, community polls, and other user-generated content on the site provide concrete market research directly from the people who are using them. According to Chris, "No market research of any other kind will give me the kind of feedback we are receiving from our community members. We've had community members give us real-time bug and enhancement suggestions, share with us their sample code and best practices, and we've even had some participate in our beta programs."

In addition, JackBe's community has quickly resulted in high organic search engine rankings in dozens of niche search terms and phrases. Acquia's Drupal software makes this easy by rendering every blog, forum thread, and content page in a search engine-friendly manner. The resulting click-through traffic is highly focused and very likely to be engaged by the content on JackBe's community.

Lessons Learned

JackBe's Developer Community website has proven successful because it delivers tangible educational and informational value to visitors and members, helping them share and communicate with JackBe and each other about enterprise mashups. The community itself is a valuable marketing and sales tool for JackBe, helping the sales team qualify prospects, handle objections, and close deals faster. Acquia Drupal, and the Acquia Network Subscription have cost-effectively enabled these solutions.

Every marketer's first priority is to make the most effective use of their marketing dollars. And working with a commercial open source vendor like Acquia ensures that you have access to the professional support and technical expertise necessary to ensure the technology underpinning your social marketing efforts exceeds your business requirements.

About Acquia

Acquia is a commercial open source software company. We provide a valuable set of software and network services for the popular Drupal open source social publishing system. At Acquia, we maximize the potential of Drupal-powered solutions through our annual subscriptions for software and services. For more information about how Acquia can transform your community driven web investments, contact Acquia Sales at sales@acquia.com, 888-9-ACQUIA or +1-978-296-5250.