

TOP LAYER'S IMN E-NEWSLETTER BUILDS CREDIBILITY, DRIVES LEADS

Worms, Trojans and Viruses, oh my! In 1997, the founders of Top Layer Networks saw danger everywhere they turned. Less than ten years later, the Westborough, Massachusetts-based provider of network intrusion prevention systems has become the global protector of critical financial, corporate, governmental and academic data.

Top Layer's intrusion prevention solutions guard corporate networks against cyber attacks while ensuring 24 X 7 business continuity to some of the world's most critical IT systems. Given the state of security in the world today, you would think that marketing such an important solution would be relatively easy. Not so. It's a very crowded and competitive industry. CIOs and IT managers are often skeptical of sales and marketing outreach. And they have such tight schedules that getting them on the phone for a five-minute sales conversation is difficult, if not impossible.

Educational Content Fosters Trust and Nurtures Relationships

This presented a challenge to Top Layer Marketing and Communications Manager Donna Rogers. Tasked with establishing an ongoing relationship marketing program, Rogers realized she needed an efficient (read: easy and inexpensive) way to cut through the clutter and reach prospects and customers all over the world. Moreover, she knew that conventional marketing can sometimes be dismissed by recipients who make decisions based on data and information. An e-newsletter seemed the ideal answer. Rogers knew if Top Layer could become an ongoing provider of content that educated and informed, then CIOs and IT Managers would read the e-newsletter, begin to recognize Top Layer as a leading authority on intrusion systems and be more open to a sales overture.

IMN Analytics Made the Difference

Rogers researched several e-communications companies and chose IMN. IMN's e-newsletter service offered the features you would expect in terms of content publishing and click-through monitoring, but it was the back-end analytics that clinched the deal. Specifically, Rogers was impressed by IMN's unique ability to provide reports that show which content and articles attract the most readership.

Each e-newsletter is a compilation of original content written by Rogers, and white papers and industry articles pulled in from the leading security publications. In addition to the educational content, she also includes product review results and other newsworthy Top Layer initiatives and upcoming



events. Often there is a survey as well as a case story. Embedded links in the content invite interested readers to visit relevant areas of the Top Layer web site. These links put the decision to cross the divide between informational content and marketing content in the hands of the readers. The e-newsletter, originally sent just two or three times a year, became so popular that it is now published on a regular, bi-monthly basis. The recipient base has grown to an impressive 30,000 customers, prospects and partners.

Ironically, what began as an educational and informational tool that rose above the cacophony of advertising and marketing is proving to be a powerful selling platform. “The analytics are worth their weight in gold,” Rogers observes. “Every time we publish, we get graphical reports ranking article viewership and interest levels. That alone is a valuable source of research. But over and above that, I can turn those reports into a good 200 to 400 solid leads that I pass on to Sales.” Rogers downloads a report of all readers who have clicked on any given article and then easily turns it into a sales “call sheet” for lead follow-up.

Rogers goes on to say that the Top Layer salesforce can’t waste time running unqualified leads to the ground. The leads generated by the e-newsletter are highly qualified because they come from readers who are genuinely interested in what Top Layer has to say and offer.

Informative Marketing™ in Action

The Top Layer case study continues to validate the IMN tagline: The more you use it, the smarter you get. The more Rogers understands what interests her readers, the more she can hone content to keep them engaged. That’s the foundation of Informative Marketing™, which IMN pioneered. She has begun to align the content to correspond with topical industry subjects and emerging technologies. For example, she knew from a recent IMN e-newsletter report that an article on Sarbanes-Oxley saw very high readership. Armed with this constituent insight, she immediately created marketing messaging around Top Layer’s Sarbanes-Oxley regulatory compliance capabilities.

Going forward, Rogers is excited about a new IMN product created exclusively for channel marketers. Total Channel Communications™ is a multi-tier, e-communications service that enables technology vendors to support their reseller channel with lead generation e-newsletter campaigns. Top Layer can author the articles and then resellers can add their own content and distribute the e-newsletter to their own customer list under their own masthead. The resellers would receive any resulting sales leads while Top Layer would benefit from the aggregate market intelligence gathered by the content readership analytics.

“In the beginning I just wanted something that I could publish myself and get out the door on a regular basis,” says Rogers. “But with IMN I got a lot more than that. It helps me learn about customer preferences and then use that learning to build relationships. I know it’s an e-newsletter, but there’s a lot more to it than that.”