

THE GROUP OF ANALYSTS

Temel Kahyaoglu, Chief Analyst TGOA, in conversation with

Dr Bernhard Gründer

CEO of socoto, on target-group-specific communication strategies



Dr Bernhard Gründer has a doctorate in mathematics and has been a Managing Partner at socoto Marketing Management Systems since 2000. One of his focuses is to optimally tailor advertising spending investment to the required target group in increasingly complex advertising markets. As the co-owner of an innovative software company, he focuses on long-term, sustainable solutions that optimally boost the brand and allow all sales partners to sensibly participate in diverse current and future forms of advertising.

The digital age is enabling companies to spread their marketing messages to their target audiences with unparalleled diversity, in unparalleled volume and – above all – at unparalleled speed. Not only marketing departments, but also local sales partners in particular, are – due to the vast number of communication channels – currently faced with the huge challenge of deploying their advertising spending in an even more target-group-oriented manner and finding optimum communication strategies for their local target group.

Dr Gründer, what will networked, implementable advertising for companies with lots of local sales partners look like in the future?

For local sales partners, being able to disseminate consistent advertising messages via numerous channels is becoming increasingly important. This demands complex, time-consuming management that I believe will – in the worst-case scenario – lead to individuals giving up due to the sheer volume of advertising media. To approach this topic with intelligent solutions is the great challenge facing the Marketing Management Systems of the future.

How are you addressing this complex topic?

We are taking on these challenges in many ways. Firstly, we are creating a high level of transparency throughout the entire marketing workflow. The basis for this is the intelligent networking of all marketing players using a single platform – from the marketing departments, national and international sales partners all the way through to every last fulfilment partner. Here, it is important to ensure that all parties involved have current and fast access to the relevant contents.

A further module is strategic and operational marketing planning. The basis is group-wide planning into which all the activities of decentralised sales partners are embedded. Planning the sales partner activities is a process during which the protagonists are able to express, accept, reject or adapt recommendations. And budgets are also drafted in parallel to planning – both those budgets made available by the company management and those budgets that local players want to invest in the planned activities. All this is an ongoing process that allows up-to-the-minute adjustments and the optimisation of campaigns during the active process. This is definitively bringing the age of Excel-based planning to an end.

How do Marketing Management Systems support local sales partners in actually implementing local advertising activities?

Our customers initially ensure that – within the context of their annual planning – the relevant advertising media is available for the corresponding period. Ideally, the Marketing Management System will provide marketing departments with a whole range of communication modules. This is where a preselection of the relevant communication channels – which are aimed at the relevant target group – takes place. Here, I would like to use an example from the automobile industry, a true pioneer when it comes to using Marketing Management Systems. Different communication channels are required for the launch of a compact car targeted at young singles than are – let's say – for a family car.

If a dealer is interested in a campaign, they have immediate access to an overview of all usable means of communication – from ads and Facebook ads all the way through to the PoS TV commercial. The system recognises who is accessing the advertising media and fully-automatically fills these with all the relevant sales partner information – in the case of a newsletter, for instance, with the photo and signature of the sender and further account-specific assets. In line with the CI guidelines, the sales partner can then make adjustments to the contents. If they wish to book additional advertising media for the campaign, offerings from advertising media already customised is forwarded for further target-group-relevant advertising media and is available there for immediate implementation. If, for example, a dealer has saved a vehicle financing ad for a new car, they can also directly utilise the offer for the brochure, the mailshot, the Website and for PoS TV. »

Individual advertising media – so, what now?

In the ideal case – as in the case of socoto – you will be able to provide any advertising medium without media interruptions: booking an ad and the distribution and delivery control of digital forms of advertising or printing and retrieving print media or PoS materials.

An alternative to direct customisation and implementation of advertising media by the sales partner is either intelligent participation management that fully-automatically triggers individual brochure distribution including target-group-specific media planning and forwarding of the relevant information to other company departments – such as purchasing or sales, for example – or highly-customised PoS management that enables the bundling, customisation and delivery of PoS materials dependent on campaign participation and on-site circumstances.

How do your customers support local sales partners with target-group-relevant advertising bookings?

Firstly, all sales partners have access to the current media data within the system – whether while booking an ad or while activating an online banner. Sales partners can either select from a broad range of media data according to specific criteria, or marketing departments can carry out target-group-relevant preselection using the socoto media planner, which is automatically fed into the corresponding accounts. Here, the salient advantage lies in the fact that the target group is – after one-off definition of, and linking to, the sales partners’ catchment areas – fed into the media planning, and the analysis for the individual sales partners is carried out as an automated process. Whether you have 30 or 3,000 sales partners no longer plays a role. But technology can of course not replace everything. This tool is designed for experienced media planners.

What selection tools are sales partners able to utilise even without extensive media knowledge?

We have developed intelligent maps for each and every booking. If a sales partner books an ad, they automatically have the distribution regions for the selected publications displayed on a map. They immediately see whether they have forgotten any regions or where there are overlaps. A very effective way of optimally investing budgets.

How do planning and implementation come together?

All implementation is embedded in the planning. Advertising material templates are automatically attributed to a planning element and therefore a budget and – in the case of subsidies – also an advertising cost subsidy element. At every step, sales partners can see which budget the campaign is attributed to, what their current budget status is and whether they can expect a subsidy. And once the advertising has been placed, an invoice element is automatically generated and a release workflow triggered. HQ can conduct an audit after invoices or sample copies for the element have been uploaded.

Where is the journey heading?

Communication without scattering losses and the utilisation of the ideal touchpoints with the right content along the customer journey are the long-term objectives in the digital age. Local sales partners in particular will in future profit from focussing on relevant and targeted communication, moving away from the undifferentiated approach. Here, we are already using achievements in analysing large data volumes to identify market potentials and to make these available to many local sales partners for the purpose of optimising local communication – including competitor locations or the visualisation of market potentials in local maps, for example.

Where is the benefit for management?

Marketing Management Systems offer the highest level of up-to-the-minute accurate information and transparency. Reporting – such as overviews on the campaign status and the utilisation of system contents – guarantee those respon-

sible for the regions that they have access to all possibilities of up-to-the-minute campaign management: from budget adjustments all the way through to activating regional marketing players. Our dashboards create – one level higher – overarching analyses on the exploitation of budgets, the implementation of plans and the linking to additional information such as the sales figures for the previous year and the current fiscal year or even sector-relevant data such as the number of new registrations in the automobile industry, for example.

What do you see as your personal challenges over the next few years?

With my background in maths and my inquisitiveness with regards to logical correlations, one of my core objectives is to collate data and marketing in collaboration with our customers to create a successful symbiosis within the context of achieving corporate goals and to generate sustainable benefits here. And it is not only marketing departments that will benefit from these possibilities; the challenge lies in the practical and target-relevant utilisation within the context of successful marketing – from the HQ all the way through to the sales partners on-site.

VENDOR

socoto is a globally-active provider of Marketing Management Systems for the integrated implementation of national and international marketing activities. For more than 15 years now, the company has been offering its customers Web-based IT and service solutions for efficiently networking their campaigns with numerous decentralised players. The solutions manage complex workflows and ensure flexible deployment scenarios – from planning and budgeting all the way through to the intelligent support of diverse, cross-media advertising activities for regional sales partners.

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