



“With LinkedIn, we can communicate with a network of SMB influencers, and we can develop creative ways to keep them engaged and provide SMB advice as a trusted business partner.”

Sam Wilson, Commercial Marketing Manager, HP
Personal Systems Group UK and Ireland

HP Personal Systems Group UK Case Study

Improving brand perceptions with LinkedIn groups

Challenge

- Change SMBs' perception of company
- Raise awareness of HP's services for SMBs
- Create community of advocates
- Increase SMB recommendations of HP products

Reaching out to SMBs

The laptop and desktop business unit of HP's operations in the United Kingdom – known as HP Personal Systems Group (HP PSG) – was eager to strengthen relationships with customers from the small and medium-sized business (SMB) market, and raise awareness of HP products for these businesses. To heighten its profile with this audience, HP PSG, in partnership with Microsoft and Intel, had to position itself as a trusted SMB partner that was receptive to their business needs.

However, SMBs still perceived HP as an IT hardware vendor serving large corporations, not as an advisor to smaller businesses. “Our advertising message is ‘HP listens to your business,’ but that was not the perception held by SMBs,” explains Sam Wilson, commercial marketing manager for HP PSG in the United Kingdom and Ireland. “We realised that we needed to reach out to this community in a way that was more interactive, with opportunity for a two-way conversation.”

HP has a huge repository of valuable information for the SMB market: HP Business Answers (www.hp.com/uk/businessanswers), a website filled with product guides and technology and business advice. However, this store of data wasn't a community of like-minded business owners sharing feedback with HP: visitors could ask private questions and receive answers, or be guided through an interactive solutions advisor. “It wasn't a place where businesses could connect with each other,” Wilson says.

Groups for customer engagement

The logical answer to the perception problem was to take the Business Answers concept and offer greater opportunity for engagement. "We wanted to build relationships with this key segment while positioning HP as a thought leader," says Wilson. "We knew such community-building would positively affect the perception of HP amongst SMBs."

HP partnered with LinkedIn to develop a solution. LinkedIn suggested a group, which would allow for the sharing and conversations that did not exist on the Business Answers website. LinkedIn groups bring organisations and brands together with highly targeted audiences based on geography, title, company and association affiliations, and more.

"With LinkedIn, we can build and communicate with a network of influencers, and we can develop creative ways to keep them interested and engaged in the group, such as discussions, polls, and videos," Wilson says. "It's a non-invasive way to reach our desired audience – they don't view the group as a place where they are being heavily marketed to, which is exactly what we wanted to steer away from."

Active participation by group members

With LinkedIn's guidance, HP PSG launched the HP Business Answers group (www.linkedin.com/groups/HP-BusinessAnswers-3692681), in association with Microsoft and Intel, in January 2011. HP drove traffic to the group with LinkedIn display ads and InMails, as well as Twitter posts. The group includes ongoing discussions, links to HP Business Answers videos on YouTube and content from the Business Answers website, polls, podcasts, and visits from industry experts who field answers from group members.

The group helps drive traffic to HP PSG's other online marketing channels such as YouTube, Twitter, and the Business Answers blog, but most importantly, it has created a place for SMBs to connect with peers.

Since its launch, the group has grown to more than 5,500 members. Nearly a third of members have contributed multiple comments on various discussions, and almost three-quarters make repeat visits to the group. A recent study of group members found that they are twice as likely to rate HP as excellent in listening to its customers, and members of the group

are 20% more likely than non-members to recommend HP products to their SMB colleagues.

"That's exactly the positive shift in perception we sought when we created the LinkedIn group," Wilson says. "Online engagement helps us improve brand loyalty. It's also allowed us to respond directly to SMBs' needs with content that is topical and relevant."

HP PSG works closely with the LinkedIn account team to manage the group and develop new ideas for adding content and increasing membership. "They're key members of our marketing team, continuously participating in discussions about improving the group," Wilson says. "With LinkedIn's assistance, we plan to grow the group and keep members engaged with up-to-date, expert advice."

Solution

- Launch HP Business Answers LinkedIn group
- Talk directly to customers and solicit feedback
- Ignite discussions with guest experts and value-added content
- Drive traffic to social media channels

Why LinkedIn?

- Highly engaged, professional audience
- Flexible tools for promoting interactivity and discussion
- Groups create communities of influencers
- Precise targeting by job title and industry
- Support from marketing solutions team helps groups grow

Results

- Group members twice as likely to rate HP as excellent at listening to customers
- Members are 20% more likely to recommend HP
- High levels of engagement in discussions with 75% of members repeatedly visiting group
- Greater traffic across social media assets

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