

Eye on Advertising

A Custom Media Firm Finds Sweet Spot in Bitter Times



Iris Dorbian

Four years ago, King Fish Media, a custom media company based in Salem, Mass., was tasked by client BBVA Compass Bank (then just Compass Bank) to revamp the content and look for *Compass on Business*, a magazine published by Compass Bank that is disseminated within the Southwest. The goal was to target *Compass on Business* to a readership comprised of CEOs or senior-level executives of small to medium-size businesses while positioning the publication as a leading authority on business issues and economic forecasting.

King Fish accomplished this aim by doing an overhaul of the content and design, using *Fortune*, *Forbes* and *BusinessWeek* as an editorial/design model. Other elements got adjusted in the process, including the frequency and page count. In addition to running high-quality content, most of which was outsourced to writers and experts well versed in business matters, King Fish added extensions such as weekly podcasts, a companion Web site, polls and a *Compass on Business* RSS feed to increase the publication's scale and reach.

The initiative proved to be a resounding success. Not only did Compass Bank report a surge in the monthly visits to the *Compass on Business* Web site, but circulation grew as well, with the magazine expanding its presence to Houston, Dallas, Phoenix and Denver. It also won the

min's 2007 Integrated Marketing Award in the category of Custom Publication.

Since then, the bank has undergone a major change in its operations that have affected *Compass on Business*: In 2009, it was acquired by BBVA of Spain and the magazine was rebranded as *Blueprint*. Circulation has now grown to 38,000, with the editorial content being expanded to include features on retail banking and wealth management.

The success of *Blueprint* has impelled BBVA Compass to commission King Fish to create three internal communications vehicles for bank employees: a 52-page quarterly entitled *Adelante*; a 10-page digital magazine called *Together*, which welcomes newly acquired Guaranty Bank employees to BBVA Compass; and a four-page, biweekly magazine called *Everyday*, targeted for employees who interact with customers on a regular basis.

According to Gordon Plutsky, director of marketing and research for King Fish Media, a prime reason why this kind of client relationship has thrived, particularly at a time when the economy has doomed similar initiatives, is that BBVA Compass essentially controls the content, environment and selected targeted audience. In this vein, King Fish has created a "private media channel" for BBVA Compass.

"This is in contrast to renting a media channel—for example, running a newspaper or magazine ad or a TV spot," explains Plutsky. "In those cases, you are putting your sales message on another media platform versus owning the entire platform."

BBVA Compass, for its part, puts great value on the collaboration. "King Fish Media is the hub of the wheel," says Ed Bilek, SVP and director of external communications for BBVA Compass. "They pull the right people in to write, edit, design, print and fulfill the publication—all while keeping us on a timeline so we hit our publication date. We also work with them to address issues that our customers are facing and to feature clients and bankers throughout the magazine. [*Blueprint*] gives us an avenue to reach out to customers from across the bank, retail, corporate/commercial and wealth management [areas] and provide them information about BBVA Compass and our commitment to them."

Although he says BBVA Compass Bank does not measure *Blueprint's* direct impact on its revenue, they do prize it as a "valuable piece that our employees are proud to send to their customers and prospects and take on calls with them. When there are multiple requests for large volumes of a piece, we know that it's something that has been a successful tool."

For King Fish Media, a key challenge has been making sure the content remains relevant and important to the target audience, especially when it comes to the internal publications. To avoid crafting the wrong message, Plutsky says it's important to leverage research and conduct due diligence to make sure "you know what the information needs are and that the content has credibility."

—Iris Dorbian

min's
BEST OF THE WEB
AWARDS



CALL FOR ENTRIES

Entry Deadline: December 4, 2009

Recognizing Top Magazine Digital Campaigns, Sites & Talent

min's Best of the Web Awards is the industry's top honor in the digital space, recognizing outstanding Web sites and digital initiatives among consumer and b2b magazines. The Awards also salute the Digital Media People of the year along with the Hall of Fame. Let the competition begin and enter today!

Enter At: www.minonline.com/bow

Sponsorship Opportunities: Debbie Vodenos at 301-354-1695; dvodenos@accessintel.com
Entry Questions: Saun Sayamongkhun at 301-354-1610; ssayamongkhun@accessintel.com

16291