

Bezier

Digital media agency embraces cloud to help retail customers drive sales

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About Bezier

Bezier is a digital marketing company; representing over 60 brands and retailers and with a forecasted turnover of £105 million for 2011. Founded 30 years ago it provides end-to-end services for the retail and advertising industries, from idea to implementation and from design to delivery. Creating the concept of 'Attraction Marketing', Bezier evolves campaign ideas from in-depth customer understanding. Marketing campaigns are designed to convert customer insight into hard sales globally, using print advertising, multi-channel creative and digital displays.

As digital marketing has become the prominent driver in the industry, Bezier now not only provides the traditional creative expertise with eye catching point of purchase displays, direct marketing campaigns and packaging, but now offers mobile services, email marketing and e-commerce. The new services aim to influence shopper behaviour and stimulate sales for customers. Bezier is creating a pioneering new business where advertising and retail fulfilment become a virtual design and manufacturing facility dependent on reliable, secure and scalable IT.

Connecting the customer

Chris Airey, CIO of Bezier manages a 50 strong IT department across 6 locations in the UK & Ireland. Each location has its own specific expertise, for example a creative hub in London and manufacturing and print capabilities in Poole and Wakefield. Many acquisitions over the history of the company have meant that information was disjointed and almost inaccessible from location to location, but the problem stretched beyond the internal and on to the customer.

When Airey took over as CIO at the end of 2010, Bezier was relying on legacy systems to manage internal email, hosting and storage solutions. This required constant housekeeping and unnecessary cost. This was not in line with Airey's vision of the future. At that time over nine different IT suppliers were being used and a local IT manager ran the IT for each site. This was not just an IT problem within the company but rather an issue that required a cultural shift in order to drive positive change.

Airey wanted to find a partner to help unify Bezier's internal IT and communications and make the customer interaction a simple and easy experience.

"Star was willing to grow and evolve with us and they proved that flexibility was within their team's DNA at all levels of engagement."

Chris Airey, CIO, Bezier

Centralising IT

Airey's vision was to centralise the expertise held in each location by connecting them through a private cloud platform. To improve customer service he wanted to create a single point of entry which would direct a customer to the relevant office locations. The customer no longer has to manage each process in their marketing campaign by dealing with each Bezier office as a separate entity, now they deal with Bezier as a single company.

As each office location had their own areas of expertise, Airey concluded that if Bezier's IT was delivered via the cloud each specialism of every department could be accessed 24/7 by customers. Airey also believed that managing out-dated legacy systems was not a fulfilling role for his IT managers. Instead resources would be better spent on planning for the future. The end result was a digital and media bank accessible by all, from any location and at any time.

"Previously each office location had its own servers to manage email and this was using more resource than we could afford. Space and storage was also vital: as a media and advertising company, graphics play a huge role every day. One 3D point of purchase display unit can take up to 60Gb of storage space and so a scalable IT platform is critical to us." The company and customer would now be connected over the Cloud.

"Bezier's strategy is to digitize our offering, streamlining processes and reducing the complexity of service delivery by providing one click access to our campaigns for our customers"

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The future explained

After reviewing all of Bezier's existing suppliers as well as looking at new ones Airey chose Star to help him transform the company's operations. "Star was willing to grow and evolve with us and they proved that flexibility was within their team's DNA at all levels of engagement. We were looking for ideas so that we could understand what the possibilities were in order to make our own decisions, rather than be dictated to. As a partnership we want a company that will grow and learn with us and that is able to deliver fit-for-purpose services not only now but into the future." As a result Bezier can now 'load balance' computing resources to react to sudden peaks and troughs in activity creating agility where there were roadblocks in the past.

By centralising IT with a private cloud service from Star, Bezier has already reduced the number of servers used by 50% and cut infrastructure salary costs by 60% giving the company back the budget and resources it needs to execute the strategy. "With Star on board there is service on tap, we have been able to tear up old contracts and put more appropriate agreements in place. They have listened to us and care about the outcomes we are trying to achieve and are important stakeholders in our success. I have been encouraged by their approach and pleased that at no point did I feel that we were being held hostage by the decisions of the past," said Airey.

Software - The new marketing solution

Airey's remit is to help Bezier transform from being a marketing agency to software as a service (SaaS) provider, differentiating the company significantly from its competitors. However, Airey is clear that he doesn't want the delivery of the strategy to be dependent on their ability to make huge capital investments in a cloud computing infrastructure. By partnering with a provider like Star, Airey now has access to the cloud platform he needs to enable and deliver Bezier's services to their customers.

The result is 'Bezier Connect', which is designed to give customers total visibility of their marketing activities around the globe, with reporting, email, point of sale ordering, campaign management, store profiling and digital asset management, all of which will reduce lead times and streamline processes. Now, a Bezier customer using an iPad or mobile phone will be offered access to Bezier Connect from any location and at any time of the day, reducing the time needed to run marketing campaigns from idea to execution and increasing sales for the customer.

Airey concludes, "For Bezier the plan to move to a digital agency was an easy decision but the internal change needed to shift our traditional thinking and ways of working has been significant. If we had to try and achieve this on our own without an enablement partner like Star we would have struggled. We are most definitely fitter and leaner but the value that we can now deliver to our customers far exceeds anything we could have done before."

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