Reinventing Field and Partner Marketing in a Digital-First World with Dori White

Introduction

[0:12] Jessica Ly: Welcome to Tech It Up with Jessica Ly. I'm here with Dori White, who is Head of Field and Partner Marketing at ePlus.

Hi, Dori.

[0:20] Dori White: Hi. Nice to be with you, Jessica.

Jessica: So glad you can join the show. I know that it's a challenging time for marketing, especially for those who used to do a lot of onsite events and conferences and now have to shift completely to a digital platform.

You've been doing something phenomenal at ePlus that I thought would be very helpful for marketers to hear—some of the best practices and tips that you can share, and how you managed to still do that engagement with prospects and clients during this shelter-in-place.

[0:55] Dori: So, it has been a very challenging time for the field and partner marketing team. We've been working on very creative ways with our partners. We've really come together in a way that we never have before.

We've been able to reach out to our customers and our prospects. What's still top of mind is making sure that they are okay, and also what we are going to do going forward from a marketing perspective, as well as the responsibility of still driving business and creating pipeline for sales.

So, all of those factors are coming together in a very challenging way.

[1:35] Jessica: I think people are trying to find a platform that will enable them to handle the scale of attendance now, right? They may not be used to the massive amount of people they have to attract all at once on a webinar or conference event.

I know there are a lot of technologies out there. Maybe you can share some of the

features and possibilities that you can have with these modern tools.

Section 1: Moving Live Events to Digital Webinars

[1:58] Dori: A lot of our live events have been moved to webinars. That is one way that we are engaging with existing customers as well as prospects, and communicating internally as well.

So, we have been using a specific platform. When we did our research and looked at what we were looking for in a platform, it was something that could handle a large-scale audience.

The one that we use also allows us to do other things that engage with the customer while they're watching the webinar. There could be live streaming, there could be demos that are shown while they're on WebEx or while they're on the webinar.

In addition to that, we attach different content to these webinars. It could be white papers, videos, and links or URLs to different web pages. There are other resources that we can include with the webinar as they're watching, and they can download other assets to follow up.

So, those are things that we've been looking for. We've seen about a 60% increase in our audience on this platform since we've all been working from home.

Section 2: Webinar Engagement, Lead Qualification & Sales Follow-Up

[3:17] Jessica: Wow, that's great. 60% is a huge number. Are you able to do interactive feedback or surveying with them while they're in the webinar?

[3:30] Dori: Yes, we can. They're called polling questions, and they're a great tool for us to use.

We learn about the customer. We learn about who's on our site and who's watching while they're there, and we collect some great information from that.

So, we do some polling questions, and then at the end, usually we will have a contest. If you've listened and you've answered all the questions, you are eligible for something else.

And since we've been doing this on such a large scale, we've also retained a telemarketing company for follow-up, so that when it's time to hand over these leads, they are more of a sales-qualified lead at that point that can turn over to our sales team.

[4:11] Jessica: Okay. Yeah, let's talk about that because it's a journey, right? You're building awareness, attracting them to the event, helping them to better understand and guiding them through this process. Then the next step would be down the funnel, handing it over to inside sales.

Your inside sales team is actually part of the marketing team, right? It's not part of the sales team, or is it?

[4:37] Dori: Well, we do have an inside sales group that is part of the sales team. Our telemarketing company is really a branch of our inside marketing team.

[4:49] Jessica: I see. So, you've got the webinar, then you're bringing them to the telemarketers. The marketers then qualify them and hand them over to the inside sales team.

Dori: Correct.

[5:01] Jessica: Okay. What other best practices or tips can you share in terms of the telemarketers working with you and sales, inside sales? What are they doing that's effective?

[5:12] Dori: Well, they're actually watching the webinar, so they have the content and they're familiar with what they're calling about.

We obviously chose a partner that is very involved in it, and they know our business. They're professionals. They know how to call and how to engage people.

They're following up for us on the webinars. We have some digital campaigns that are running, and they're following up on those as well.

And it's just a meaningful conversation right away. As soon as that webinar is over, we can start with that and show the customer that we've paid attention: "Thank you for listening. Thank you for being a part of it. We appreciate it, and we're here to help."

Section 3: Measuring Webinar Performance & Customer Engagement

[5:54] Jessica: So, you're seeing a 60% interest in engagement—are you saying that 60% of attendees are that interested in talking with the telemarketers?

[5:56] Dori: No, that's a high percentage. The 60% is our audience growth on the platform. That has happened since April 8th.

So, that's how many professionals are going onto various platforms looking for content. That's a large number, yes.

[6:30] Jessica: That's huge. And what conversion rates are you seeing in conversations after the webinar?

[6:35] Dori: We would be happy with a 5% to 10% conversion. We would be very happy with that.

The platform that we chose also provides some fantastic analytics for us. We know that compared to our peers, we have a higher retention rate. People are staying on our webinars longer than our peers, so our content resonates, and they are

actually returning from multiple webinars.

[7:08] Jessica: That's good insight there. Sounds like you've got something that's working really well.

So, let's talk about the overall demand out there. I'm hearing a lot of companies are putting budgets on hold. They're putting hiring on hold. What are you hearing from folks attending your webinars?

Section 4: Marketing Through Market Disruption

[7:26] Dori: So, in the IT industry as a whole, we operate on disruption, and we know how to react to that.

I think that from an IT industry perspective, you're seeing that people need these services. It's work from home, so our cloud business, our security business, our collaboration, our managed services, finance—all have maybe shifted a little bit from what we originally anticipated.

Now, with work from home, it's all necessary, and we are definitely continuing to do business.

[8:06] Jessica: Very good. I'm glad to hear that. I think a lot of folks need to still somehow make that shift. They haven't done it 100%, and then with this situation, they're accelerating that shift to making sure everything is accessible for a mobile workforce.

[8:24] Dori: Yes, and those are also the topics that are important right now. If we're not focusing on what is important in the situation that we are currently dealing with, people are maybe putting that on hold.

But we have meetings daily to discuss what it's going to look like in the future. We are prepared for the future, whatever that might be, and how, when we start to gradually come out of this, that workload is going to look like for our customers and how we're going to be there to help them manage that and succeed in the next environment.

Section 5: Women in Technology & Career Growth

[9:02] Jessica: I want to ask about your leadership. You've been in tech and in the reseller managed services space, and at ePlus. I know it's a very big bar, and so I wanted to get your take on being a woman in tech in this area, where I think it's a lot of men in the IT field. What career tips would you like to share with the female professionals out there?

[9:27] Dori: So, we do a program called GRIT—Girls Reimagining Technology. It is focused on middle school girls, really around cybersecurity, and it's a terrific program.

These girls start off very quiet and shy, and in the end, they're creating videos. And just think, now that they're not in school—this was a school program—these girls are now turning to video.

We're keeping in touch with them and continuing the program all virtually, so it's wonderful.

You need the support. You need all the women behind you to encourage you, make you feel confident, and support you. That is invaluable in succeeding.

And there's plenty of men that attend these Women in Technology events as well. They support the women, but the friendship and the support really allows you to achieve what you're looking to accomplish.

It's probably the best relationships that I have formed over my career.

[10:44] Jessica: That's good. GRIT, right? That's easy to remember.

[10:48] Dori: GRIT. Yes, you can find it on the ePlus website.

[10:51] Jessica: Okay, wonderful.

Section 6: Differentiating in a Digital Webinar Environment

[10:54] Jessica: I want to ask you about the challenges that you face now. I know that the online webinar has been very successful, but what challenges do you face, and what are you looking forward to overcoming?

[11:07] Dori: The challenge is making it different. So, now that we know, and believe it or not, you have the same challenge when it was live events, whether it be a workshop.

A lot of our competitors work with the same partners. Our customers have choices. So, why ePlus?

It's that partnership that we offer, the thought leadership, and the fact that we care about our customers and do what is right for them.

So, I would say the challenges are still there. Now it's a little bit different in how we differentiate ourselves in a webinar environment.

They have choices of which workshop they would have attended live and what webinar they want to attend online. So, how is our content going to separate us from our competitors?

[12:02] Jessica: Excellent. Is there anything else in marketing that you're doing that you would suggest people do or don't do?

Section 7: Turning Campaigns into Digital Experiences

[12:10] Dori: So, the funny thing is, we had some ideas for campaigns that were going to be live. When we discussed them

before this happened, we said, “you know what? Maybe it would be better money spent to do this digitally and do something interactive and engaging for our customers, so that they have a place to go to.”

We could even tie that to sales and create a sales competition around some of our campaigns.

So, we were kind of fortunate with some of the things that we had originally planned and where our budget. Dollars were being spent, that we did shift them digitally to begin with.

So, we have some very new and exciting campaigns that are going to launch next month that, coincidentally, was good timing for what is happening.

[13:07] Jessica: Great. Well, I look forward to seeing what you're going to launch next month.

[13:11] Dori: Yeah, me too.

[13:15] Jessica: Thanks for being on the show, Dori. It's been fantastic to hear the best practices that you're sharing with us for online webinars in particular. I think a lot of people are going to appreciate hearing that.

[13:24] Dori: Good. Well, thank you so much for having me.

[13:26] Jessica: And now you have it; Take It Up with Jessica Ly. Dori White from ePlus.

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