
PRESS RELEASE

BSkyB Case Study – Sigmer Technologies Solutions April 2004

The Requirement

Sky has always understood the importance of staff communication. As Sky channels are retailed by cable companies in addition to Sky, such as NTL and Telewest, they wanted to ensure that the 6,000+ staff in these call centres had the same motivation towards, and knowledge of, Sky channels and programmes as the staff in its own contact centres. Therefore, in November 2000, Sky decided to create a 'learn to earn' incentive system for cable call centres, to increase retention and sales of Sky channels.

The Focus Scheme

Sky introduced a 24 hour access incentive scheme called 'Focus', awarding points to call centre staff that perform well in areas such as product knowledge, as well as campaign based sales activity. This incentive scheme differs from other call centres because it rewards staff for learning accomplishments and knowledge levels of the products, rather than solely for sales achievements. Focus includes programming and product communications, training events and a tailored incentive scheme.

The scheme works on a points system, whereby staff receive points for each achievement. For instance, every call centre employee receives a monthly Channel Guide in hard copy. The guide includes programming highlights for Sky's channels, as well as the latest product information, which changes on a regular basis. Every issue includes a tear-out competition to test readers on the content of the guide. Should an employee answer all the questions correctly, he/she receives points credited to them. Staff are also rewarded points for workshop attendance, demonstrating a willingness to learn more about the channels. In addition, Sky rewards on a personal level by awarding points to members on their birthdays.

Once an employee has saved a certain amount of points, they are redeemed via a dedicated website – www.skyfocus.co.uk. Points are then exchanged for gifts, such as Marks & Spencer gift vouchers. Gifts are allocated varying numbers of points to reflect their value.

The IT Challenge

The challenge with a scheme of this size was the creation of a lot of paperwork that was proving difficult for the existing database to manage. Therefore, in November 2001, Sky turned to its IT Supplier, Sigmer Technologies, with the concept of developing a database and a website dedicated to the Focus scheme.



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"We had already witnessed Sigmer's strengths in database development technology through previous projects they had carried out for us indirectly through another IT supplier," said Louise Young, Head of Marketing Communications, Sky Commercial Group. "Their unique combination of in-depth technical knowledge and understanding of our wider business needs, led us to trust that Sigmer was capable of fulfilling the requirements of the project and more."

Throughout 2002, Sigmer Technologies worked closely with Sky to develop a comprehensive database that would manage the entire Focus scheme, including every member transaction. The database needed to be carefully structured in order to handle a large and constant flow of paperwork generated by the scheme. The database also had to be scalable to handle the fast accumulation of data, which had quadrupled since the start of the scheme.

In November 2002, following two successful years in the cable call centres, Sky wanted roll out the same scheme within its own contact centres. Sky's contact centres are all based in Scotland and now include over 5,000 Sky Focus members. The database and website for these contact centres were completed by the end of January 2003 and went live on 1st February 2003.

How the System Works

Sky worked with Sigmer Technologies to design the website as an interactive way of communicating programming information and campaigns, so it introduced ways of communicating the benefits of earning the points to staff, with an underlying understanding of human behavioural and motivational traits, developed by Sky in conjunction with its offline marketing agency.

Every member of staff is given a unique password to enter the website, so that they can view information about the points they have earned. They can also edit their personal details, as well as view and tag the products they are able to buy with their current points value. Team leaders are given access to additional tools in order to manage their team, such as a page where they can add or delete team member details.

Sigmer Technologies has developed a number of website functions, including:

Focus Points – This section allows staff to view the history and number of Focus Points they have been awarded and points they have redeemed.

Rewards Brochure – This allows members not only to redeem their rewards from the site, but also lets them create a product 'wish list'. This automatically alerts them via an online message when their point totals are nearing target for individual items on their wish list. This part of the scheme further encourages members to reach their targets more quickly.

Rewards Claimed – A personal history of all awards claimed since Focus started.

Bulletin Board - Used within Sky's own contact centres, this allows staff to send and receive messages to their team leader or to the Focus team, where e-mail is not available. It archives the user's messages and provides a search function, much like Microsoft Outlook.

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Team Members – This section is for the team leader to keep account of its members. Team leaders can edit the list to add and delete members as and when they join or leave the team.

Personal Details – This function simply means that staff can change any of their personal details at any time. Any changes made to this section are automatically updated in the Team Members section, to keep the team leader updated.

Managing the System

Sigmer manage the entire programme for Sky, employing its own team of people to handle the task of inputting every voucher that is awarded into the new database. Sigmer also manages the customer service for the scheme, accepting any queries that are made by the people taking part in Focus, over 11,000 active members in total. Members can contact Sigmer via email, requesting personal progress reports, or other information.

Sigmer regularly updates the website with news about the latest competitions and has a section on every page of the site where users can learn and take part in the current competitions. Sigmer has designed the database and website to integrate with the overall scheme, by receiving and digitalising all the paper-based information from Sky, including all points awarded and the monthly Channel Guide.

The way Sigmer has configured the database also means that separate incentive campaigns can run in each department without staff getting confused about which scheme they are taking part in. Different membership codes that are typed in to enter the site mean that members are categorised so that sections of the website can look different to different groups of members. For instance, if a member of the sales department logs onto the website, they will not be able to see content regarding a competition to win a prize that is only open to customer services staff. This prevents confusion and allows department campaigns to be managed separately.

Successes

“The Focus Scheme couldn’t exist without Sigmer,” Louise Young continues. “The database and website integrate very well and allow us to easily assess the performance of every member of staff at any time. Sigmer is always quick to respond under pressure to any requests from our team and often deliver before the deadline. Another benefit of the website that I hadn’t envisaged was how quick and easy it is to communicate last-minute updates to multiple Focus members. Before the site, we had to contact people by phone or post with new product information, which wasted a lot of man hours.”

Sky has been able to measure the impact of the system developed by Sigmer Technologies through individual campaigns that are carried out on a regular basis within the incentive scheme, which show a positive impact on revenue, and by research into individual motivation and attitudes towards Sky channels.

Future Plans

Sky aims to maintain a dynamic look and feel to the website, and plans redesigning the website on a regular basis, as well as implementing Scribe - Sigmer’s new web-based content management system. This will enable the marketing department that runs Focus to take control of the website’s content without having to learn any new technologies.

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Scribe will also enable the new website to conform to W3 (Worldwide Web Consortium) standards, meaning it will comply with the 1995 Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). This is very important, as from October 1st 2004, British operators and manufacturers must legally make "reasonable adjustments" to the physical features of their premises and machines to overcome any barriers that disabled people may face.

As Focus is proving a great success with phone staff, Sky hopes to roll out the scheme to reach other departments within its contact centres, such as the training department. This group needs to understand the intricate details of the Focus scheme in order to train new staff as soon as they arrive. Sky is looking into extending the scheme to installers, which will require significant enhancements to the current system, due to the mobile nature of installation work. Sky are turning to Sigmer Technologies to provide a solution.

As more departments embrace the scheme's success, this will lead to more bespoke incentives being run at different times of the year. In order to make sure every department is satisfied with the way the scheme runs, Sky is carrying out research with members of staff, asking for their permission to record them using the site and also discussing the scheme with them. Sky and Sigmer will then analyse common areas of where the site can be tailored to meet individual departments' requirements.

About Sigmer Technologies

Sigmer Technologies was founded in 1999 and is based at the Sussex Innovation Centre. The company's carefully balanced team of specialist programmers, designers and consultants has attracted a number of high profile clients, including: British Sky Broadcasting; The International Save the Children Alliance; Memorex; Apex Car Rental; and History.uk.com. By combining traditional computer technology with advanced cutting edge innovation, Sigmer provides a full range of programming, web design and Internet and IT based services individually tailored to meet clients' needs. More information about the company can be found at www.sigmer.com.

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