
PRESS RELEASE

Herts. Chamber of Commerce & Industry Case Study – Sigmer Technologies

Sigmer's management system improves HCCI's questionnaire processes

Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce & Industry

Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce & Industry (HCCI) is one of the country's leading chambers and is concerned with providing supportive and promotional services for the business community of Hertfordshire. HCCI's main objectives are: to establish a forum for the exchange of views and promotion of business; ensure international support is available; and to provide a representational voice for the county's business community.

The Requirement

A priority of HCCI is to ensure that it is kept abreast of all members' opinions, so that it is able to provide a continually high level of public service to the Hertfordshire district. Members of HCCI comprise of local businesses, and are often very important in the day-to-day running of the district, providing education, traffic, and transport services. In order to find out member opinion on district matters, HCCI carries out many surveys on all its members. But with over 1400 members, this was proving to be a time-consuming and expensive task that was using up valuable staff resources. The paper-based system in use had a response rate of only 5%, a statistic contributed to by the respondents being disinclined to take the time to fill in the questionnaires and then send them back to HCCI. The system was altogether too inefficient to enable HCCI to collect and analyse enough data to gain a satisfactory idea of member opinion. HCCI needed an electronic service that could solve all of these problems, allowing them to work more efficiently and provide a higher level of customer care.

The Solution – Sigmer Technologies' Boomerang

Sigmer was already a member of HCCI and in 2002 Tim Hutchings, Chief Executive of HCCI, approached them after hearing about Boomerang, Sigmer's web-based system for managing and analysing, in graphic format, the questionnaire responses. In a preliminary test Tim found that Boomerang enabled users to compile a survey quickly and easily. Boomerang automatically processes the data and presents it in a comprehensive format comprising of annotated pie charts and percentage ratios. This makes the information readily available to HCCI users within hours of receiving the answered questionnaires. Overall, Boomerang fulfilled all of Tim's requirements for an electronic system and then exceeded expectations by allowing a far greater number of surveys to be sent out than previously possible, with the added benefit of it being an inexpensive system.



The logo for "considered IT solutions" features the text in a lowercase, serif font, with "IT" in a larger, bold font. The background is a dark, textured purple.

T 0870 870 8735
Intl +44 1273 234663
F 0870 870 8738
E enquiries@sigmer.com
W www.sigmer.com

HEAD OFFICE:

Sigmer Technologies
The Sussex Innovation Centre
University of Sussex
Falmer, Brighton
East Sussex, BN1 9SB



The Product - Boomerang

Boomerang is a cost effective questionnaire management system that saves vast amounts of time and effort in all aspects of carrying out and answering a questionnaire. The implementation of Sigmer's Boomerang benefits both the creators and respondents of questionnaires significantly, compared with the use of a paper-based system.

The web-based system allows users to quickly and easily create real time questionnaires, utilising a variety of question/answer formats. Questionnaires can be created to have multiple choice answer formats, including yes/no answer options; single answer options; and/or a multiple answer option with free text answer format. The survey can be compiled and sent out to an email list within an hour, and the user can view instant feedback as Boomerang automatically collates the responses and develops it into statistical information. These statistics can then be exported to other programmes, including Microsoft Excel and PowerPoint, for further analysis and reporting activities. This automatic real-time data analysis and immediate response capacity saves hours of manual data transfer and analysis, enabling users to send out to as many recipients as necessary. Boomerang also allows companies to brand the questionnaires by importing their own logo.

As Boomerang utilises email format, it is much easier for respondents to reply to questionnaires and so they are more willing to answer a survey that takes up less of their time. There is no need to link elsewhere on the web or to download further information. This promotes a faster and higher response rate, resulting in more valuable feedback for the user, as well as saving time for all parties concerned.

HCCI's use of Boomerang

Decision makers at HCCI often have to make quick decisions based on member opinion and Boomerang helps HCCI to work to a short deadline. For example, if HCCI needs to find out quickly what members think of speed cameras, a survey can be sent out at 9.00am and a substantial number of responses (and the corresponding analysis) will be returned by 10.00am, allowing HCCI to consider people's opinions before making a decision at 11.00am. Without Boomerang, HCCI wouldn't be able to get such a fast response rate of current opinion, nor make the necessary decision based on actual member opinion.

Tim Hutchings said, "We can now do in hours what used to take weeks. Our response rates have improved dramatically and we are getting valuable information back within hours of asking the questions. Not only that, but we are now far more in touch with our members' opinions than ever before. Boomerang has opened up a wide range of new opportunities for us to find out about the business needs of our members and will therefore allow us to serve them more effectively."

Case example: Crime Survey – 10.9% response rate:

HCCI's position as promoter and supporter of local businesses is mirrored by other Chambers throughout England. Although all HCCI actions and decisions are made to benefit businesses in the Hertfordshire County, it is also part of the British Chamber of Commerce's (BCC) Chamber network.

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In a recent drive to call for greater action on the part of the Government to help protect small businesses against crime in the local community, the BCC network carried out a country-wide survey. For HCCI to contribute to this effort, and thus represent its members' needs directly to the Government, it sent out a Crime Survey in April 2004, using the Boomerang system. Instead of the entire process of sending out and assembling data taking several weeks, the use of Boomerang meant that HCCI started receiving analysed responses within 3 hours of sending the questionnaires out. The response rate to the Crime Survey was 10.9%, a great improvement on previous paper-based survey response rates. This questionnaire provided the UK anti-crime initiative with significant data from the Hertfordshire Chamber.

The Result

HCCI has seen a substantial improvement in survey processes since the implementation of Sigmer's questionnaire management system. The email format and automatic data analysis make the survey process far more efficient and effective than a paper-based system. The response rate to questionnaires has doubled, increasing to an average of about 10%, to the previous 5% response rate. The users of Boomerang at HCCI have been impressed by its time-saving capabilities in all aspects of survey creation, management and analysis. The nature of the Boomerang system has led to HCCI having immediate access to its members and their opinions, resulting in advanced levels of customer care. An additional outcome of this has been an improvement in the relationships HCCI has with local businesses – an issue of high importance to the Chamber. These factors, alongside the cost-effectiveness of Boomerang, have proven extremely beneficial to HCCI, which plans to continue using the web-based system for the foreseeable future.

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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