



## Athletic Apparel Leader Implements **WebCrossing Neighbors** for Customer Retention and to Drive Online Sales

Enterprises are beginning to develop online communities to attract and retain consumers and drive online sales. Communities are increasingly becoming part of the customer service strategy for retention as well as to build brand loyalty. WebCrossing Neighbors, developed by online community leader Web Crossing Inc., is the 'best of class' social networking product available on the market today for businesses which can be integrated with their existing branded websites.

One of the market leaders in athletic apparel and equipment implemented WebCrossing Neighbors to promote a positive brand experience for consumers while gaining market knowledge and increasing sales. The goal was to provide a platform where community members could talk to each other as well as the vendor in a trusted and secure manner.

"We looked at a number of different vendors and WebCrossing Neighbors was the most flexible and agreeable to implement within our existing technical architecture – including integrating with flash," said Sara, IT department.

The solution had to be scalable to handle the anticipated volume of consumers. It also had to be seamlessly integrated into an existing branded web site. And finally, the solution needed to adhere to strict privacy policies regarding consumer information.

WebCrossing Neighbors was used to increase brand loyalty, build traffic, and capture valuable marketing information. The company started the project in August and within two months nearly 2000 members had joined the community. Members are participating in the community in a variety of ways including posting their own athletic accomplishments, sharing information about apparel, as a sounding board for injuries, and for team and training notes. Consumer community participants are even journaling about their own training.

"We were looking to use communities as a way of building brand loyalty but there is always a worry about potentially abusive postings," said Sara. "What we were pleasantly surprised by was the very focused nature of all communications."

Each member was provided with a rich profile within WebCrossing Neighbors so that he or she could exchange information in a trusted manner while protecting individual's privacy.

*Continued page 2...*



The community members have the ability to be as open or closed as they wish when they share profile information. For instance, a consumer can set up a community profile that allows their friends to view all of it while limiting the rest of the community to only the most basic information. Consumers are able to send messages to their networks within the community. Through the search functionality within the community, members find others with similar interests.

Prior to selecting WebCrossing Neighbors, the company identified and evaluated several alternatives before choosing the one that met the technical criteria and would deliver the most positive experience to their consumers. The company wanted new members to be welcomed into the community and educated as soon as they joined. Tools to help self policing including notifying the moderator were as important as a robust technology platform that could handle the influx of users. Easy administrative controls, integration with email, and scalability were also requirements.

"WebCrossing Neighbors was our solution of choice for creating a social networking online community because of its rich feature set, talented professional services and the architecture. The front end look and feel was delineated from the backend database which is not only good development practice, but lends itself well to integration with other front end systems," said Sara.

WebCrossing Neighbors is a private label, social networking service that provides personal spaces and builds integrated communities. The solution helps organizations that either already have or want to build online communities retain customers and grow their businesses. WebCrossing Neighbors promotes viral growth and allows end users to interact with others who have similar content and interests. Included are Internet essential tools for increasing member growth and activities including web logs, email, shared files, and photo albums.

Based on the WebCrossing Core engine, WebCrossing Neighbors is scalable to millions of users and unlimited data base sizes. Developed to be branded and customized, WebCrossing Neighbors offers flexibility in end user portal features and appearances. Web Crossing, Inc. was formed in 1986 and has been a leader with online communities for a decade.



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