

KPR Case Study

NFO Interactive

Speed Kills

Background

A division of a major consumer opinion research firm, NFO Interactive was a start-up in a rapidly maturing industry – Internet consumer surveys. NFO tracks the online buying habits and attitudes of households, selling custom and subscription research to companies in sectors like packaged goods, retail, financial services, and more.

Challenges and Opportunity

The organization had reached a point where its parent company started expecting real sales growth, so NFO's leadership had decided to step out of the shadow of large clients that commissioned NFO for surveys and claimed the publicity for themselves. That meant taking on the big-spending big names of consumer research, all of which had extensive ties to key members of the media.

Further, soaking up media attention on its own risked ruffling some feathers at the top of NFO's parent company, which itself enjoyed constant coverage of its research. NFO Interactive needed a media relations strategy that would allow it to stake out its own intellectual turf in the media without taking a competitive stance against its owner or its clients.

Strategy and Tactics

KPR pinpointed the key to unlocking NFO's media identity – taking advantage of the company's lightning quick response time on research questions. Traditional consumer surveys often take weeks or months. NFO's Internet research model allowed it to answer virtually any question a media member might ask in a period of hours rather than weeks. Such instant knowledge is catnip to deadline-crazed reporters.

We settled on an issue that always receives wide seasonal coverage – personal finance software for electronic tax filing. Designing the story to show the depth and precision of NFO's research in a tight timeframe, we targeted the top personal finance reporters in the traditional and digital media, everyone from New York Times columnists to widely read your-money bloggers.



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Results

To our delight, The New York Times had been considering a story on e-investing for the Sunday Business section. The reporter was immediately impressed with the sophistication and speed of NFO's research. He structured his entire story around his interaction with NFO focus group panelists in a special Internet chat room. The story, which appeared on the section's front page, recounted in detail NFO's capabilities. (The New York Times would return to NFO for research, putting the company in two more business section stories on back-to-back Mondays.)

Shortly after the Times splash, an Associated Press reporter, pressed on deadline, asked us to field questions for her via NFO. The resulting story explicitly stated that it was based on a "survey ...conducted for the AP by the Greenwich, Conn.-based Internet research firm NFO Interactive."

The combined impact of the Times and AP stories propelled NFO throughout the traditional and digital media, with dozens of stories citing their research over the next three months: AP (five stories), New York Times (three), Wall Street Journal (two), Reuters, Dow Jones, Business Week's ebiz, Advertising Age (four), eMarketer (three), Investor's Business Daily (two), Wired, Women's Wear Daily, CIO, Business 2.0, USA Today, Newsweek.com, and many more.

This well-calibrated, carefully timed publicity campaign drove a considerable increase in sales outside of NFO's corporate owner and mainstay clients. Moreover, at the last two conferences held by its parent company, NFO emerged as a key draw for reporters and attendees alike. Instead of chafing at NFO's public exposure, the controlling organization cheered on, as NFO became a surprisingly robust communications asset, enhancing the owner's brand in the process.