

CASE STUDY

ABSNet: Outsourced Marketing Director/Support

At a glance

- Kudos fulfilled the functions of Marketing Director and outsourced marketing department in support of specific business objectives.
- The rebranding and marketing of the company resulted in profitable sales turnover growth from £12m to £18m - in 10 months.
- Cisco and Hitachi both delivered *unsolicited* testimonials stating that as a direct result of this work ABSNet had the best marketing and demand generation engine in the country.
- ABSNet was subsequently successfully sold to Capita for £ 13.6m.

The Background

ABS Network Solutions Limited was a little known Cisco Network Infrastructure Reseller that had recently appointed a CEO with an ambitious business-transformation and value-release remit. His task was to develop the business into a marketable, scalable enterprise and to prepare it for sale. The new CEO identified weaknesses within the business and set about creating a management team that could quickly and effectively address these issues.

Several fundamental weaknesses made the business unattractive to potential suitors; the low profile, resulting from a lack of strategic marketing direction, meant that Cisco, its key supplier/partner, had little awareness of or respect for ABS, and expended virtually no energy in helping the company create success. The business was 'head-quartered' in shocking conditions within 4,000 ft² of Uckfield (East Sussex) Post Office. Staff and departments were jammed in and scattered over three floors on threadbare carpet and with no two desks the same in the entire building! Despite this, the business had a motivated and effective sales force, was profitable and generally well respected by its customers.

The Requirement

The new CEO had identified a lack of internal marketing expertise as a major weakness. There was an urgent need to conduct a root and branch review of the business and its presence, or lack of it, within the market – this needed to cover its interactions with all of its audiences including customers, trade partners, staff, and crucially, potential investors. There was a need to establish a clear and appropriate marketing strategy aimed at achieving the business objectives, together with the detailed marketing communications planning and implementation solutions needed to get results within a defined timescale. ABS needed an experienced Marketing Director and marketing department put in place that could hit the ground running and make an immediate impact.

The Solution

Having considered the option of employing the team required and having looked at the costs involved in doing so, the CEO chose to engage Kudos to take responsibility for all marketing functions. These needed to include everything from working closely with the management team in establishing a clear strategy and developing detailed communications plans, based on agreed budgets, to implementing the plans and delivering quantifiable results.

Marketing Planning: Once the strategic marketing review had been completed, a plan was produced which underpinned the rebranding and repositioning of the business and the production of all outward facing collateral such as website (www.absnet.co.uk), brochures, Data Sheets etc.

Rebranding: As part of the rebranding/repositioning activity, Kudos recommended that the trading identity for the business should become ABSNet. The new logo contains the words 'Unified Communications' within it to make it clear that the business focuses outside of the 'cables & boxes' world of 'network solutions' – its also links strongly with Cisco's positioning and marketing. The outline 'net' maintains the link with existing network customers, and the overlapping coloured spheres represent the interfacing of disparate networks and communications channels. Kudos involved management, staff, customers and Cisco in the marketing process and all bought heavily into the chosen positioning and branding solutions.



Partner Relationship Building: From its extensive channel marketing experience, Kudos recognised that an important part of marketing within the Corporate/Enterprise marketplace is the establishment of partner relationships to drive business, technological and sales awareness; and the 'identification' of shared vendor funds to drive integrated marketing activities. Kudos drove these initiatives which resulted in the creation of effective relationships, the capture of vendor funds and the implementation of integrated marketing activities with:

Cisco	CommVault	Hitachi Data Systems	Zycko
IronPort	Matrix Communications	Nokia	

Kudos facilitated a meeting between Cisco and ABS, to help Cisco understand the new regime and to start the creation of a truly effective partnership. This and subsequent meetings culminated in ABS winning Cisco 'Avant Garde' status – one of only eight preferred 'go-to' partners in the UK!

Multi-Platform Marketing – Demand Generation: With positioning established, logo introduced, website launched and the brand building effectively, it was then time to gear up a demand-generation engine - from scratch - as nothing like this had been done at ABSNet before. The integrated direct marketing activities (supported by 'soft' PR) – database, eBroadcast, real-time-monitored-web-microsites with supporting collateral and direct sales-team integration, training and mentoring, which Kudos designed, were monitored to establish accurate ROI statistics. After several successful campaigns with 'our' partners, Cisco and Hitachi both delivered *unsolicited* testimonials to Kudos stating that ABSNet 'now' had the best marketing and demand generation engine in the country

Company Expansion & Relocation: Having successfully rebranded the company, created an effective demand-generation engine to fuel expansion (the workforce had doubled), the business needed more space. Kudos was included in the team that identified and selected the building that ABSNet was to move into; 16,000sqft of glass fronted corporate-style office space in Crawley, right next to Gatwick Airport and the motorway. The building needed branding, meeting rooms suitably decorated and technology chosen for the presentation systems, this was achieved under Kudos direction and under considerable time pressure as the lease on Uckfield had not been renewed.

The Outcome

Sale to Capita:

Monday October 13, 07:06 AM

Capita buys ABS Network for £13.6m

*LONDON (ShareCast) - Outsource giant **Capita** Group has paid £13.6m, net of cash acquired, for IP based business networking solutions firm ABS Network Solutions. "The acquisition will add valuable new expertise and capacity to Capita IT Services' existing networks business"*

Capita identified the 'strong relationship with Cisco' - which Kudos facilitated and subsequently developed - as one of the main reasons for their acquisition. The perception of ABSNet as an Enterprise partner and its profitable growth cannot have hurt either!