Powered by Microsoft, Brainshark takes sales enablement to the next level

BRAINSHARK
Power your content. Power your sales.™

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> Jim Ninivaggi,
> Senior Vice President,
> Business Development
> Brainshark

Driving growth through more effective sales people

Across companies, industries, and global markets there is a universal need: growth. Continually enhancing the knowledge, skills, and effectiveness of sales people and organizations is paramount to that growth.

Gone are the days when companies have the luxury of time-consuming sales training at corporate HQ for onboarding or ongoing purposes.

"Companies need to keep sales people in the field while simultaneously enhancing their knowledge and skills so they can have better, more productive conversations with clients" says Jim Ninivaggi, Senior Vice President of Business Development at Brainshark, and a 25-year sales veteran.

Brainshark: Global leader in sales enablement

Brainshark is a cloud-based sales training and readiness platform that helps sales people achieve mastery in the presentation of sales materials to clients, slashing the costs and resources needed for training and maximizing the effectiveness of sales engagements.

With half of the Fortune 100 as its clients, Brainshark is a clear worldwide leader in its space. But continuous innovation and improvement have kept it a leader for its 17 years in business, and poised the company for continued dominance.

Innovation and growth powered by Microsoft

It's an approach that's been shared with its close partner, Microsoft. "Brainshark has been a Microsoft shop since the beginning in 1999. The first lines of code for our solution were written using Microsoft technologies—developing in C and using .NET with SQL Server in the back end," says Michael Ferioli, VP of Engineering for Brainshark.

First push to the cloud—Video on Azure

Brainshark's core business had been breathing new life into sales training content—often PowerPoint presentations— creating richer, more compelling experiences that were more enjoyable and easier to retain. "We would align content to learning principles and add interactive questions, voice, video and more," according to Ninivaggi.

Microsoft

Rapidly growing video content put a strain on Brainshark's data center, maxing out finite storage and processing resources and adversely affecting end-user service.

Ferioli says, "We would routinely have large influxes of video, customers quickly uploading one video after another, often cyclically at the beginning of a quarter. We'd get absolutely slammed and couldn't scale, and get support calls about video conversions taking forever."

Since moving video to Azure, storage and processing constraints are no longer an issue and end-user viewing experience is improved through:

- Adaptive bitrate streaming, which dynamically adjusts video data delivery as bandwidth conditions change

- Azure Content Delivery Network, which makes content available physically closer to the end user for better performance

According to Ferioli, "By moving video to Azure we've virtually eliminated the management and cost of maintenance we used to incur. We actually spend less with Microsoft than we thought we would on an ongoing basis."

"Actually, I have not bought a piece of hardware in more than two years."

The holy grail: Completely immersive sales mastery with Azure and HoloLens

In Brainshark Labs a revolutionary new chapter is unfolding, again with Microsoft partnering closely on every front. Thanks to a focus on continuous innovation, the newest generation of Brainshark will put the solution far ahead.

Enhancing the industry-leading core Brainshark solution on Azure with Microsoft's newest developments in augmented reality, motion sensing, biometrics, artificial intelligence, machine learning, and analytics will transform how Brainshark's customers prepare their people for selling.

Pitch training simulation through augmented reality

Sales trainees can experience a simulated client engagement through Microsoft HoloLens complete with presentation capabilities and life-like avatars representing clients. In contrast to virtual reality technologies, HoloLens combines real spaces with virtual elements, letting trainees practice in places they're familiar with.

Artificial intelligence and machine learning for real-time interaction and feedback

Behavior of client avatars in the simulation environment is driven by the artificial intelligence algorithms (vision, speech, language, knowledge) and machine learning capabilities of Azure Cognitive Services. As trainees make their pitches, the avatars respond appropriately. For example, if a trainee lacks energy, avatars may act bored and start checking their mobile devices. Avatars may also raise unexpected objections, to test the trainee's preparedness to respond effectively.

Biometrics and motion sensing for added insights

Microsoft Band biometric feedback sensors and Xbox Kinect motion sensing technology complete the simulation experience. Subtle but important physical cues such as heart rate, skin temperature, body language, and facial expression can be sensed and tracked as real-time indicators of the trainee's comfort and confidence at specific points in their presentation.

Bringing it all together

Using a full suite of Microsoft technologies, the new Brainshark sales training solution provides a completely immersive simulation environment where sales people can practice and master their presentation performance before ever standing in front of a live client. Data captured from practice sessions can be fed into Microsoft analytics and used for optimizing pitch content and ongoing coaching from sales managers.

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Mutual benefit from close partnership

"Our partner relationship has been key," says Ferioli. "With other cloud providers it was like 'enter your credit card info and off you go.' With Microsoft it felt more like, 'We have this technology and we're going to help you get started,' while other solutions would have had us trying to figure it out by ourselves. When a company like Microsoft offers you expertise and resources, it's kind of a no-brainer."

Challenge

- Host, process, and stream massive numbers of video files without maxing out resources or diminishing end-user service.

- Innovate and jump ahead in the sales enablement space by creating the most effective sales training experience in the industry leveraging the latest technologies.

Results

- By moving video content to Azure, Brainshark saves manpower and money while offering a rich, high-performance video consumption experience.

- In partnership with Microsoft, Brainshark is creating a breakthrough, industry-leading immersive sales training simulation based on Microsoft augmented reality, biometric and motion sensing, AI, machine learning and analytics technology.

Snapshot

- Organization: Brainshark
- Industry: Sales Enablement
- Location: Waltham, MA
- Website: www.brainshark.com
- Customer since: 1999