



Making Websites Pay Off

By Paula Bernier, Executive Editor, TMC | December 04, 2014

Startup AnswerDash recently moved out of beta with a solution that aims to drive sales, lower customer support costs, and deliver analytics related to organizations' websites. It does that by making answers to website visitors' questions more easily accessible, and enables those websites to improve over time by capturing the questions visitors have asked in the past and presenting them with the answers where they need them on the site.

The company, which comes out of the University of Washington Information School, today also announced that the U.S. Green Building Council is leveraging AnswerDash.

"With the help of AnswerDash, customers visiting the USGBC site will find answers at the ready, ensuring that all of their questions about energy efficient and socially responsible building are answered quickly and easily," says AnswerDash CEO Jake Wobbrock. "Results thus far show that nearly all site visitors get helpful answers, stay on the site longer, and view more pages with AnswerDash. In fact, about six times as many visitors get help from AnswerDash than conventional solutions like FAQs, knowledgebases, or live chat, and AnswerDash works alongside these solutions to make them even better."

As we all know, when a person is trying to do something on a website – such as complete a purchase, fill out a form, make a payment, or whatever else – and he or she runs into a roadblock, it is often difficult to find the needed guidance to answer the question at hand and complete the task. Rather than sending website visitors off on a wild goose chase to find answers by, for example, reading a FAQ page, or inputting a question in the site's search box, and then requiring them to scroll through and read results in hopes of an answer, AnswerDash provides an easily visible tab website visitors can click on to reveal answers that are relevant to a particular part of a website when they mouse over it. That way, visitors don't have to leave the page to find the answer they're looking for. Clients that integrate AnswerDash into their websites can opt to include rich media, such as images or videos, as well as text, in their answers.

A small number of questions tend to comprise a large number of questions people ask, says Wobbrock, referring to the 80/20 rule, so most can self serve. If website visitors don't find what they are looking for on an AnswerDash-enabled site, however, the cloud-based service lets them initiate a live chat, send an e-mail, or make a phone call for further information.

As noted earlier, AnswerDash allows clients to easily add questions that have been asked by website visitors over time and the answers to those questions. And when they do, visitors can see those questions and answers so they don't necessarily have to repeat duplicate questions themselves, which is an especially nice feature if you're on a mobile device.

Organizations can see incoming questions, add or tweak answers, and view website statics – such as where website visitors are clicking, usage of different tabs, customer support savings realized, and more – via the AnswerDash dashboard.

And integrating AnswerDash with existing websites is easy, says Wobbrock, explaining it only entails inserting a line of JavaScript to the top of each page, and seeding the platform with a few questions and

answers (and customer questions will help populate it further over time). A wizard guides users through the process. The whole thing can be launched in 20 minutes, says Wobbrock, adding that because AnswerDash is hosted on AWS, no on-site installation is required.

Various companies are working on a number of fronts to make visitors' website experiences more pleasant, and to enable businesses to make the most of their experiences with customers both on their websites and beyond.

In yet another example on this front, a company called OptifiNow recently integrated its sales optimization platform with Cisco's business phone system. As a result, OptifiNow President John McGee explains, sales reps can reach out to consumers within seconds of their submitting a website request for more information on a particular product or service. That's important, he said, given studies show that the first company to contact a consumer about a stated need has an almost 70 percent higher chance of closing the deal than do those that reach out to the consumer at a later time.

Many users of the OptifiNow sales optimization platform, which includes both CRM and lead management functionality, are already users of Cisco phone systems, McGee said, so it made perfect sense to do this integration. He adds OptifiNow already has integration with phone solutions from a variety of companies, also including 8x8, Asterisk, Avaya, Five9, Vocalocity, and Vonage.

As a result, he explains, as the OptifiNow platform routes leads and related information to sales reps or teams, the phone system can begin dialing the customers.