

Pink Cake Box ices social marketing

Pink Cake Box, at PinkCakeBox.com, seen in the nearby figure, bakes spectacular cakes, cupcakes, and cookies for special occasions such as weddings, bar and bat mitzvahs, birthdays, baby showers, and bridal showers. Its cakes have been featured in *Modern Bride*, *People*, *Elegant Bride*, *The Knot*, a Martha Stewart TV special, and two of TLC's Ultimate Cake-Off competitions. It recently won one of them with their Legoland Birthday cake. Pink Cake Box typically delivers within 100 miles of its Denville, New Jersey, storefront, but ships cookies nationally.

Founded by pastry chef Anne Heap in 2005, the company has ten employees plus interns, with revenues of more than \$700,000. (That's a lot of cake!) Though primarily a B2C company, it has B2B clients such as wedding halls, caterers, and party and wedding planners.

Chief information officer Jesse Heap says that Pink Cake Box debuted socially immediately after it opened, starting its blog, at <http://blog.pinkcakebox.com>, in 2005. "At the time, many competitors had relatively static sites that lacked the interaction and connection that social mediums like a blog could provide," he explains. He wanted "to encourage our users to interact with and share our content through their own, personal channels."

Plus, Heap notes, a blog can support syndication, using an RSS feed to repurpose content across multiple sites with minimal effort. "A single post on the blog will be repurposed into different sections on the Web site depending on its category and shared externally with other social media sites . . . to build brand recognition and drive traffic."

The blog, which remains the centerpiece of the Pink Cake Box social media strategy, now has more than 350,000 unique visitors a month; Internet-originated inquiries constitute the majority of orders.

Pink Cake Box has a vibrant social presence, as the list at the end of this sidebar shows. It also participates in other specialty social media sites such as Project Wedding (www.projectwedding.com), CookEatShare (<http://cookeatshare.com>), Foodbuzz (www.foodbuzz.com), BakeSpace (<http://bakespace.com>), and WeddingWire (www.weddingwire.com). "It does sound like a lot," but Heap insists that updating all these sites is easy with RSS syndication.

Given its limited resources as a small business, Pink Cake Box "participates actively in the top three external social media sites that generate the most qualified traffic, while we participate passively in others that allow us to republish our RSS feed. These 'other' social media sites typically fall into the food category, which complements our company's products. Currently, our top three sites are Facebook, YouTube, and WeddingWire. So, for these sites, we try to stay engaged and responsive to customers' questions and inquiries."

The marketing strategy is more sophisticated than sheer numbers, however. Heap focuses on sites such as WeddingWire, which targets brides, for lead generation, and others, such as YouTube, with its broader audience, for brand identity.

Heap uses social media strategically to help position Pink Cake Box in search engine rankings, which now include video, images, and social media. By developing a strong following on YouTube (as of April 2010, the branded Pink Cake Box channel had more than 1,350 subscribers and nearly 700,000 views), it has generated additional organic search engine rankings. "Ultimately," says Heap, "our goal is to channel traffic back to PinkCakeBox.com." For him, all these external sites are filling the funnel.

Pink Cake Box uses Google Analytics to track the number of visitors who submit online inquiries,

but doesn't yet track how many inquiries turn into orders. Although this approach doesn't track Web visitors who phone, it's close enough for tracking purposes. However, Heap notes, this approach doesn't always work. Because links cannot be displayed on individual YouTube pages, he uses YouTube Insight tool to confirm that the videos generate interest.

SEO is a major component of the Pink Cake Box marketing strategy. Heap actively monitors traffic and certain high-value keywords to maintain traffic growth on the terms that contribute most to revenue. "There is an interesting relationship between SEO, social media, and content," he observes.

As the company grew, it shifted from an initial approach of "The more traffic, the better." "We began focusing our content on products that lead to better order conversions," Heap explains. Rather than measure aggregate traffic, they studied traffic from their strategic focus areas. "Put simply, we examined which products generate most of our revenue and made sure our marketing strategy focused on those products." That meant featuring varieties of their best-selling products on the blog, ensuring that they targeted social media sites catering to people who like those products, and using Analytics to monitor keyword traffic. Heap is justifiably proud of the results. "We've successfully grown our total Web properties to nearly 500,000 unique visitors a month, and have experienced double-digit revenue growth since our start in 2005. We attribute a lot of this success to our digital marketing strategy."

Though Pink Cake Box staff members handle most social media tasks in-house, the blog and Web site receive an outside technical boost. The Web site, which runs off the WordPress.org blogging platform, is customized with unique features, such as the "most popular cakes of the day" based on user views (<http://blog.pinkcakebox.com/todays-popular-cakes>). Features such as those require more

programming and design knowledge than they have on staff. Heap estimates that the staff spends, on average, 10 to 15 hours a week on online marketing. Though it's hard to delineate how much effort qualifies as social media, the majority of their time is spent creating content for the blog. "Admittedly, our product lends itself well to social media. Our cakes are unique and inspire much conversation and excitement." Obviously, small businesses with less photogenic products may need a different strategy.

Pink Cake Box also uses pay-per-click ads and attends bridal shows and cake competitions, but hasn't needed standard press releases. "Our strategy of saturating the Internet with photos and videos of our products helped spark initial interest from CNN, Martha Stewart, and the Food Network. Since then, we've continued to build relationships with media contacts to open additional doors," Heap notes. They also send personalized e-mail newsletters to an "influencer" customer list when big news occurs.

Finally, the site does a lot of on-site cross-promotion to connect users to multiple social marketing experiences. In addition to standard calls to action for social sharing, the Share Pink Cake Box page shown in the nearby figure (<http://blog.pinkcakebox.com/share-pink-cake-box>) has two widgets that allow users to syndicate photos and videos of their cakes on their own blogs. The same page includes SweetTweet, a Twitter application that allows users to tweet virtual birthday cakes, and a cake delivery map displaying where Pink Cake Box has delivered.

Heap has found only one problem with sharing content so openly, but he's philosophical about it. "There are individuals who exploit that trust either by taking our photos — or copying our cakes and passing them off as their own without proper credit. We've come to accept this as the cost of the strategy we've taken for digital marketing. We could have taken the approach

(continued)

(continued)

of strictly controlling our content and not allowing users to share it. But that goes against the democratization of the Internet and the Web 2.0 movement. As the saying goes, a few bad apples do not (and should not) spoil the entire batch." (Watermarking photos with the company logo may be an unobtrusive means of discouraging this problem.)

"The biggest piece of advice I can give," says Heap, "is to focus on content. The best social media strategy in the world won't generate much interest if the content isn't compelling and worthwhile to the end user. Our company produces outrageous and unique cakes every week. That's the foundation. [It] drives our entire digital marketing strategy."

Pink Cake Box URLs

www.pinkcakebox.com	http://blog.pinkcakebox.com
www.blogcatalog.com/blogs/pink-cake-box.html	www.flickr.com/photos/pinkcakebox
www.youtube.com	twitter.com/pinkcakebox
www.facebook.com/pinkcakebox	www.weddingwire.com/biz/pink-cake-box-denville/1be8dde9d853b1d0.html
http://m.pinkcakebox.com (mobile blog version)	http://es.pinkcakebox.com (Spanish blog version)



Courtesy Pink Cake Box www.pinkcakebox.com