



ON THE PLATFORM EPISODE: (PART 2) WHAT SMBs NEED: BRIDGING THE GAP

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

**Host: Jacqueline Morgan,
Growth Principal,
Accenture**
**Guest: Shannon Kinney,
Founder and Client
Success Officer, Dream
Local Digital**

Jacquelyn: Hello everyone, and welcome to On the Platform. This is Jacqueline Morgan and today we are diving deeper into what our platform clients can do to help SMBs leverage digital sales marketing and service tools. Joining us again my guest is Shannon Kinney, Founder and Client Success Officer of Dream Local Digital. A digital marketing agency serving SMBs throughout North America. Shannon, we closed out our last podcast with a discussion on the relevance of SMBs to the global economy and the different types and sizes of SMBs. Today let's jump right in and talk about what SMBs need. Our research tells us that most digitally advanced SMBs, those who are using three or more online software sales marketing and services tools are experiencing four times the revenue growth of their peer group. Yet 80 percent of SMBs overall are not taking advantage of digital tools. So what gives?

Shannon: I know, it's crazy, right? Here's what I see every day. We are working with thousands of SMBs throughout the U.S. and consistently they are overwhelmed with options. They don't necessarily understand how to evaluate tools and they are really seeking a trusted advisor. They recognize that now more than ever before that online is critical to their success, social media and search in particular, they definitely get that, and online marketing is incredibly challenging to do in a way that is going to drive return on investment with their small in-house team. The other piece that is confusing for them is there are thousands of tools that do different things and very few of them integrate with any other systems so they just don't understand where to start. Finally, there are dozens of sites and hundreds of companies trying to sell them some services, very rarely the whole gamut and they can't easily compare or understand options.

Jacqueline: Okay. So when I hear what you are saying it really sounds to me that being big, bold and noisy is just coming across as shouty and that more products are not the answer. When I listen to you talk about your experience working with SMBs it feels like platform companies really need to focus on consideration and respect for the SMB business context as the pillar of long-term value-added meaningful relationship. Give SMBs the help, the support,



the guidance and the coaching to translate what sales and marketing and service tools can actually do for them. Is that right?

Shannon: Yes, that is exactly right. It's that translation piece, the trust that really matters and building trust with SMBs, creating a partnership that translates into real results for them is what will actually build loyalty long-term. And you know marketing sales and service is complicated today. Successfully navigating the tool and workflow landscape for them can make or break a business, and companies that don't keep up with digital transformation could go out of business or be absorbed within the next few years and so these are big concerns that we can address with that type of service that you are describing. Thirty two percent of small businesses have a significant focus on digitally innovating. You know they are trying to... those that are in that focus space are seeing growth of more than 10 percent over last year. Roughly three-quarters of decisionmakers agree or strongly agree that digital tech is impacting their business or their industry. And finally, 30 percent say that they need to improve on their IT skills to make full use of the tools that they already have. So I think the more that you can pull things together and translate for them the more successful you will be.

Jacqueline: And you know it's ironic because on one hand SMBs report that when they do adopt a digital tool they either meet or exceed their goals. They experience results like increased sales revenue, decreased costs, improved productivity and improved market-share. But what we've also learned is that the success of the do-it-yourself tool implementation or DIY software is really a myth. Forty one percent of our SMB participants in our recent survey said that they abandoned their online software purchase once they started, and usually it's because, "I changed my mind about needing the product," or, "I feel misled about the cost." And the other thing that really came through in the survey results is that they report that the process, and this is the end to end, from

implementation of the software onboarding and actually using the software was just too complicated or confusing and they got frustrated. It just took too long.

Shannon: That does not surprise me at all. You know we are battling their knowledge, their comfort level, their attention span and understanding how they all work together. So you know really to keep it simple we have three recommendations for platform companies to make tools simple so that they can focus and understand exactly how it's going to impact their business, how it's going to improve their workflow and how all of the tools work together. So the three recommendations would be ensure that the tool and most importantly the messaging about and within the tool are tailored for SMB needs and workflows. They don't understand fun things that those of us in the tech sector will say or some of our acronyms or any of that. Like it needs to be very simple and straightforward and friendly in the user experience.

The second recommendation would be really show a clear path to return on investment for both time and money, because in many cases both of those two things are scarce for SMB owners. And so if they understand how it makes their life easier and there's a return on the investment they will become much more loyal to it. The final recommendation is to provide some education and guidance and support to jump onboarding and activation and deep engagement hurdles very early in the adoption process. Because if they are going to abandon it's going to happen really quickly, and then finally consistently help them achieve their digital transformation goals. Like little things that remind them that their use of the tool is helping them I think will be a big one.

Jacqueline: Honestly, it sounds like it should be easy doesn't it?

Shannon: Yes. It does. I've been doing this for more than ten years and it's a very gratifying



sector to be in when you have those moments where they realize that it's actually working.

Jacqueline: Do you have examples of where you've kind of seen this? Companies that are using and seeing success in how they are framing and positioning and launching their software capabilities?

Shannon: I'll use one example. I had a client that in the very beginning when we recommended several different tactics for them that involved using a few tools they didn't really understand the value of those tools for example, and I had to essentially find offline equivalence for what these tools did. And over the course of a few years of working together as more and more revenue started to come in and more and more happy customers started to come in he spent a lot more time listening to me and what we were recommending. And then we were able to take him from a very basic rope system to an advanced CRM that tracks profitability by project and lifetime value of a customer and is now a very central tool to their day to day workflow in which we feed in marketing information. You know in the beginning he just didn't see it and barely understood Google until then I could show him, "Oh these people are calling you. Isn't that great? And if you had a database where you tracked your sales we could match and I could tell you how many roofs I sold. Wouldn't that be great?" And over time they started understanding it and adopting it but it really starts with a trust and a defensiveness to spend because they don't understand what it is, although good messaging could help there. But that's definitely one example where I saw the sophistication level advance quickly with return on investment.

Jacqueline: Okay. So let's talk about the three recommendations, right. And I think that that's a great example actually of the premise that if only the relevant will remain in this crowded SMB marketplace one of the opportunities that we see

is to recognize the attention and the effort that your tool or your software expects from the users. And you need to demand that attention and effort only when it's useful to people, to the other people on other end of the tool or the software, not just useful to you the company. We talk about this in terms of living services which is really our fancy title for being personal and providing personalized services that adapt to the real-time context of what an SMB means. Because as they start and as they are growing and evolving and moving into new markets those needs change over time, and we see some of the best companies are rewiring their business to put humans, people at the center, not products. And they are really striving to continually remain relevant. And we are all very familiar with one of the leaders in this space, the Amazon really set the gold standard in terms of understanding the perpetual and evolving context of their customers. I know Zappos does this really well focused on delivering happiness, and interestingly not just to their customers but also to their employees and their vendors. I know you and I have talked about Square, Word Press, Slack. The list of successful, relevant and consistently customer-centric software providers in a sales marketing and service space is actually though quite small in comparison to the plethora of options that we have, that SMBs have. What's your second recommendation?

Shannon: Some of the tools you mentioned - Square, Word Press, G-suite, Mailchimp, constant contact they definitely have that customercentric point of view in a way that the SMBs understand them. You know the second thing is that they really expect to be heard and responded to wherever they are, and for you to have a relationship with the other businesses in their ecosystem. It's amazing to me that we have a whole team of people that talk to SMBs on a daily basis and they expect you to really know them and translate what you are doing for them. And it's not just a single point in time but across a lifetime of interactions. Like every



interaction matters. They don't just want you to help create a sales pipeline for example or help convert those customers. They also want to have you make them deeply engaged advocates for them, understanding that all stages in their traditional funnel matter and aligning your tools to support them so they can understand how that works together, and then you are really clearly drawing a line between how your tool continually improves their ROI which will increase usage, increase the likelihood that they are going to share data and that overall they will see it as a successful result.

Jacqueline: Right. You know, it's funny when I was listening to you I was thinking about that old missive, it's not what you say it's how you say it. When the number of interactions that you have with SMB market is minimal you've got to make each one count, and each one is not a touchpoint it's a trust point. So we really look at clients they want to match the language of their messaging to what that SMB customer is actually trying to achieve and then do it frequently. Not just once, not just when they subscribe or like or share or add, but make sure that you are providing continuous education, guidance, support, and I love your point about drawing that straight line from their act of sharing the data to how they are going to receive relevance in products and services in return. Like what's in it for me? I'm giving you this precious commodity, my data, what are you going to give me back in return? Consistently. So, recommendation number three.

Shannon: I think as we said it's providing education, guidance, and support particularly to jumpstart onboarding and activation and tackle any engagement hurdles early in the process so that they can achieve their digital transformation goals. Often what happens is they will late at night be thinking I need to solve this problem with a tool and they will get on their phone, they will look up a tool. Maybe they will download an app or figure something out and see a tool, and then they will get to work the next day and

realize they just don't have time to figure that out. So I think the more we can tackle that really early to help increase their comfort level and confidence, as well as illustrating ROI the better off we are.

Jacqueline: Listening to you I have that robo voice from the tube in London. It says 'please mind the gap.' And this time it's the gap between their expectation, particularly those late night expectations and all those fears and concerns seem to surface so the expectation versus the reality. And it seems to me that companies really need to start exploring the potential of new partnerships. So there's a great partnership between Google and MasterCard and how can you identify where you can pull forward from your own ecosystem of partners, capabilities to help serve SMBs as their growth and their journey evolves. You know it's interesting that again those top 20% of digital adopters, the ones that adopt three or more tools across the sales marketing and service dimensions they've already begun to expect brands to adapt to them in real-time but without any conscious request. And so this expectation of meeting them more than halfway and helping them to continually achieve the realities that they desire, and then keep it up - don't stop, don't stop helping me just because I bought your software, show me how it integrates to another capability maybe that I never even thought of. And make it easy for me to connect to tools that are designed to grow my business. Bring those tools to me. It requires companies to remain connected throughout life cycle of an SMB business. It's not just a one and done.

Shannon: That right. It's true what you say about the partnerships. And ones that you never expect, like I just was on a flight yesterday, a Jet Blue flight and Amazon, because I'm an Amazon Prime member I get my Wi-Fi and unique partnerships really do make a difference. And then you have ecosystem plays like Word Press which does an excellent job of bringing in several tools from other companies to integrate



within what they are doing so that someone can easily make sure their website is as relevant as possible. So I really agree and to prevent churn companies today have to be in it for the long-haul. they have to be prepared to continuously engage and listen for feedback, recognize where they are seeing signals coming from their user base and surface additional options and partners to support SMB growth. When this happens we see really deep engagement and advocacy across the board in terms of SMB engagement.

Jacqueline: Well thank you very much Shannon. I always enjoy speaking with you and benefitting from your experience, so thank you for joining us. And folks stay tuned for the next podcast in the SMB Matters series: On the Platform. We will dive deeper into how we are helping to solve some of these problems. We will be talking with Danielle Moffit, MD of our new Growth Performance Services capabilities. We hope you all enjoyed this episode. Please help us get the word out and be sure to subscribe, share, rate, and review our series. We would love to hear from you and hope you tune in again for the next episode of On the Platform.

[End of recording]

Copyright © 2019 Accenture
All rights reserved.

Accenture, its logo, and High
Performance Delivered are
trademarks of Accenture.