



# THE MARKETING SOLUTION

Melbourne company Impact Data is achieving 100 per cent year-on-year growth by providing eye-catching and effective marketing solutions for the likes of Nike, Fosters and the AFL. Claire Buckis reports.

WE have all tossed catalogues straight from the mailbox into the recycling bin and deleted spam emails and phone messages. But advertising doesn't have to be annoying for the punter and ineffective for the business if you're able to target the right people. Melbourne-based company Impact Data has developed software that allows businesses to interact directly with key customers using newer technologies like SMS and email. And it's achieving phenomenal success as a result.

"Impact provides data-driven marketing solutions and new media communications," says co-founder and executive director Brett Hogarth. "So you might register on a website to get snow reports delivered daily by SMS and email. If there's a special alert, like 10cm of fresh snow on Mt Buller, you can get that delivered to your mobile phone." That's just what happened when Impact Data paired up with the Mt Buller snowfield. Impact provided the technology so that people interested in snow reports, accommodation or winter sports could sign up on Mt Buller's website to receive SMS and email alerts in whatever field they chose. "The value to the person who signs up is that they only get information they're interested in," Hogarth explains.

The software, called Smart-interactive, allows businesses to keep a customer database so they can send information to the people most interested in it. "A lot of small businesses weren't collecting information on their customers," says Hogarth.

Impact Data took a targeted approach to its own customers by creating special software for the hospitality industry called Smart-venue, Smart-restaurant, Smart-golf and Smart-vineyard. "We built the software from the ground up so we can modify it if we need to. The industry-specific software is working really well. People working in restaurants like knowing they're working with a tool designed specifically for them." The company also developed Smart-shift, an interactive rostering system, taking into account which days staff are able to work and how busy the shift is likely to be. Then the software sends a copy of the shift times to each staff member by SMS.

Impact clients include Fosters, Nike, Billabong, Medibank Private and several AFL clubs. They also sell the software to small and medium businesses. "One of the things that's been really good for us is the cost-effective nature of what we do," says Hogarth. "At the outset a friend of mine was running a surf shop and his demographic was 12 to 21-year-old girls. So he set up with us for a start-up cost of \$1000 and then \$100 per month with free email and wholesale SMS rates. It's much cheaper than some other forms of advertising." The company monitors how well the software works for the client. "In a case of a hotel we've seen go from 50 per cent to 250 per cent revenue increases in a

matter of months by using our services," he says. "By targeting your marketing and doing a very cost-effective communication you can have a very high return on investment."

The company was established eight years ago by Hogarth's friends, brothers Kurt and Lachlan Opray, as well as Matthew Fitzgerald. Their backgrounds in business, marketing and technology were complemented by the appointment of finance whiz Tim Stroh, now the managing director. "I knew Kurt - we spent a bit of time surfing together," says Hogarth. "It's been really good working with people who know each other because the level of trust is really high." Back in 2000, it was initially difficult to convince some businesses about the value of SMS and email marketing. "We started from scratch and that's an obvious challenge," says Hogarth. "But then we had 100 per cent growth year on year in the first four years and that was also a challenge, revenue growth means getting staff in the current labour market." The company was acquired by ASX-listed Facilitate Digital last year and now employs around 60 staff in offices in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane.

Next year the company plans to roll out in the UK. "When we did our market research in the UK the reaction there was that nobody had ever seen anything like us," Hogarth says. "That was odd because we thought they were a more mature market. In terms of data-driven marketing it seems to be more high-end at a corporate level. But we think we're going to take off there by staying grass-roots and just offering cost-effective solutions." [wcm](#)

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