Build it and they will come: how IS Decisions moves beyond social media to create an invested user base

Serving Windows IT professionals worldwide

IS Decisions is a lean but fast-growing company specializing in infrastructure and security management for Microsoft Windows. Their flagship product, UserLock, has over 1 million licenses in use. High-profile clients such as the FBI, United Nations, and international banks and universities use their products. With over 3,000 customers worldwide, IS Decisions recognizes the value of a user community for understanding their wants and needs.

Getting beyond “hello” with social media

IS Decisions has a knack for knowing what Windows IT professionals value. They prioritize ease-of-use and customer service, as well as curate a Scoop.it business channel for the IT pro. The company is also active on social media. “We try to create a strong presence in order to exchange with savvy IT pros worldwide,” commented founder François Amigorena.

But when it came to creating a true user community, they found that social media alone wasn’t enough. Social media was starting conversations, getting IS Decisions in front of their target customers. But Amigorena wanted a true branded user community for customers as well as prospects. He wanted a way to create and communicate with an invested audience, keeping track of every suggestion, bug report and new idea.

Create a branded community for both customers and prospects

IS Decisions evaluated Get Satisfaction and UserVoice for a user community for their FileAudit 4 beta program. “UserVoice was far more adapted to what we had in mind,” said Amigorena. The simpler interface, customization and back-office features were deciding factors.

“The back-office features were something that we compared with other products, and very much liked with UserVoice,” agreed community manager Chris Bunn. Single sign-on for current testers and future users was also an important feature.

The overall feel of the community played a part as well. “UserVoice felt a lot more directed towards the IT Pro end user,” noted Bunn.
IS Decisions created a user community for the FileAudit 4 beta program that users accessed directly from the product interface. UserVoice design features allowed them to build a space that blended with their brand.

Beta testers shared feedback and asked questions about the current UI and features. Testers voted on suggestions posted by members as well as on IS Decisions’ own ideas.

"We are very eager to get as much customer feedback as we can," said Amigorena. “Obviously the user community is the right tool for that.” They also added a series of video tutorials into the user community. Knowledge Base searches directed users and prospects to the relevant videos.

"One guy suggests an idea, a couple of others comment on the idea—that creates a synergy that puts things in motion," he said. It creates a far more collective, collaborative type of experience than one-to-one emails.

The embedded video tutorials also proved highly successful, engaging 60–70 percent of the community.

The beta test user community allowed the company to make better decisions during the product-testing period with many customer suggestions added to the released version or planned for the next release.

The company was so pleased with the FileAudit 4 beta user community test that they launched a user community for the UserLock 7 beta program. Their plan is to unveil more of their roadmap and intended features to start getting early feedback. “That’s the kind of promise we make in our product link to the user community,” said Amigorena. “If you join the community you’re going to have direct contact and influence with our team.”

Social media is still important for making first contact, but IS Decisions recognizes the advantage of a branded community for extended customer engagement. Though a heavy, early adopter of social media, IS Decisions recognized social media for what it is – a catalyst rather than the medium for extended customer engagement. Said Amigorena, “In the end, the quality and quantity of participation in our user community is far better than we have on social media.”