



Case Study: Extensive Business Intelligence Expertise is the Perfect Vintage for Winery Marketing Company and Database Provider

Vintners' Alliance helps wineries better communicate with customers and acquire new ones by identifying purchase patterns, preferences, and optimal pricing, and takes action on the information to provide the right message at the right time. Key to the process is high-quality, cost-effective business intelligence (BI) technology expertise provided by a unique collaboration of local and nearshore development.

Nearshore business intelligence service provider, Software Next Door, partnered with Vertical Spin, a leading US-based online technology provider, to provide a cost-effective BI service without compromising agility or quality.

"Software Next Door uses their sophisticated online marketing BI expertise to ensure our day-to-day operations and technical implementations are top flight. The features they deliver are both comprehensive and high quality, the execution and precision is second to none. They've been integral to our success."

– Ahin Thomas, Vintners' Alliance President & Co-Founder

Background

More and more, wineries are selling directly to consumers using the Internet. Most wineries, however, don't have the resources or expertise to thoroughly manage campaigns, segment their customers, and track and analyze their online marketing and sales. With strong backgrounds and experience in retail, business intelligence and the wine industry, and sensing an unfulfilled need in the market, Vintners' Alliance was born.

Vintners' Alliance provides technology and tools that enable wineries to expand their direct-to-consumer business, including customer acquisition and conversion tools, analytics, customer segmentation and referrals. Understanding and having predictive models on who customers are, how to find more of them, and how to better communicate is critical to direct sales success. Segmenting customer data to predict buying behavior and managing vivid, effective and relevant campaigns based on the data is a science.

The Challenge

In a nutshell, Vintners' Alliance needed sophisticated online marketing business intelligence development expertise at a reasonable price that would provide rapid and flexible response to its evolving needs.

As a fast growing yet lean technology startup, Vintners' Alliance first needed to design, develop and deploy the company's BI infrastructure. The solution had to collate large amounts of data – transaction, web and marketing – into a centralized multi-tenant analytics environment leveraged for data mining and personalized reporting. Vertical Spin helped prove the model by delivering a version 1 solution that enabled Vintners' Alliance to enter the market. Expanding the team locally beyond the initial product version, however, proved to be a challenge on a startup budget, especially since architects and developers with significant BI expertise were needed. Remote development proved to be the most economical way to expand the product. In addition, since the product was new and the team small, continuing to work using a collaborative and agile design process was critical.



The Solution

Vertical Spin, citing their unique mix of extensive online marketing BI expertise, competitive rates and focus on Agile software development, recommended engaging their nearshore partner, Software Next Door, a software development outsourcing firm located in Mexico.

Vertical Spin and Software Next Door began by collaborating on a month-long project to develop a robust ETL infrastructure for integrating third-party e-commerce and direct marketing data from a number of vendors. The goal was to enhance and complement Vintners' Alliance's existing reporting and segmentation offerings using open source technologies specifically selected for their scalability, performance, and ease of implementation and maintenance, as well as for the availability of trained technical resources.

After the success of the initial project, the nearshore engineers took on a larger role, specifically developing additional application modules, including customizable cross-channel marketing reports, a set of sophisticated purchase segmentation reports, and on-demand custom extracts for use in direct marketing campaigns. Over the course of the following six months, most of the core development and production support work was transitioned to a Software Next Door team based in Mexico. In a short timeframe, the Software Next Door team quickly exceeded its original charter of software development, and began to contribute heavily to the long-term technology vision of the Vintners' Alliance suite of products and services, enriching the original feature set and technical implementation with cutting edge BI and online marketing best practices.

Vintners' Alliance maximized the impact of its investment in software development while retaining the oversight of their US-based partner, mitigating the risk of failure. In the near future the entire ETL infrastructure will be migrated to Talend's Open Studio tool kit to leverage advanced metadata and transformation capabilities.

Results with Software Next Door

Outsourcing a portion of their software development was the right decision for Vintners' Alliance. The company got the help of informed BI experts who consistently delivered quality results on time and within budget.

"We love being in on the ground floor, especially when our expertise is a critical component to a company's success," said Dan Federman, chief executive officer at Software Next Door. "Helping both Vintners' Alliance build the right products and wineries expand their business made it a blue ribbon win for everyone involved."

"I have partnered with many teams around the globe and the partnership with Software Next Door gave us a service that made sense. Vertical Spin is able to provide senior leadership at an affordable price. We can continue providing a hands-on collaborative and innovative service. In addition, the Mexican development center of Software Next Door is a short flight away. I can easily fly down for 2-3 day design session and keep our local momentum."

– Anthony Severo, Vertical Spin Managing Partner