



## Case Study Series: What's Working in Marketing & Selling Professional Services

### Networking Solutions Company Discovers the Power of Email and Social Networks

By Stephanie Tilton

#### OVERVIEW

Founded in 1996, Juniper Networks® offers high-performance networking solutions to the enterprise, public sector, and service-provider industries. One of the company's key technology differentiators is Junos®, its single operating system that works across all its products. To boost the number of Junos advocates, or technical enthusiasts, within its target market, Juniper launched a campaign that ended up earning the *2009 B2B Marketing Award for Best Use of Email*.

#### SITUATION

##### Taking on the Industry Giant

One of Juniper's main competitors was Cisco Systems. While Cisco might have dominated the networking solutions market in terms of revenues, Juniper claimed a very loyal user base impressed by Junos' ease of use, manageability, and power. Claire Macland, Senior Director of EMEA Marketing for Juniper Networks, decided to tap into this following to build strong advocacy for its solutions.

Knowing that its offerings gained the most traction within organizations whose technical personnel had a broad base of Junos skills, Juniper developed a customer advocacy program aimed at expanding that knowledge. Targeted at both prospects and existing customers, the campaign focused on contacts that shared two common characteristics: they were technical in focus and had at some point expressed interest in Junos.

#### APPROACH

Working with Base One – a B2B agency based in the UK – Macland's team sent an email to a list of about 4,500 network architects and programmers, with a goal of understanding what content they wanted Juniper to develop. In exchange for their views, Juniper offered the recipients *JUNOS Enterprise Routing*, a technical book published by O'Reilly Media. The free offer, in combination with a one-month time limit to submit ideas, encouraged prompt response.

This was a new, dialogue-based approach for Juniper. Like many B2B companies, Juniper typically solicited information from its prospects when offering content so it could follow up with another offer. "Since the objective was to build a base of advocates, we needed to deliver exactly what our target market wanted so they'd have a positive experience and evangelize on our behalf," explains Macland.

### **Deliver on Your Promise**

The response astounded Macland and her team: 40% of recipients submitted ideas. Plus, the email went viral, leading to another 450 or so responses. Furthermore, Juniper discovered that the URL with the book offer had been posted on blogs around the world. Though the campaign was focused on the Europe, Middle East, and Africa region, people from all geographies sent in details of what they wanted to learn about Junos.

Macland's team aggregated all comments and distilled them into common requests, and then designed the rest of the campaign around those interest areas. Base One then created a web portal dubbed J-Central to serve as the main hosting platform for the most requested resources, which included:

- Online lab facilities to try out Juniper equipment in a virtual setting
- Online forum enabling program participants to interact and chat with Juniper experts
- Webcasts and technical tutorials
- Roadmap information
- Education and certification programs

### **Engage Program Participants**

Based on responses to polls in J-Central, Macland's team uncovered topics of interest to program participants. It then sent out invites for live events featuring Juniper's chief engineering and technical experts. If Macland and her team ever questioned the enthusiasm of program participants, those doubts were laid to rest. The campaign's last event was oversubscribed by 200% within five hours of invitations being delivered.

These monthly videocasts were very compelling, offering live demonstrations of Juniper technology and interactive Q&A. "Participants in countries around the world could interact with the engineers behind our technology. The conversations continued long after the events had finished," explains Macland.

### **Stay in Touch**

As often as once per week, Juniper emailed alerts about site updates, such as online webinars and training, practice environments, coding libraries, and software releases. "Remember, this was a strongly opted-in list because of the usefulness of the content, so frequent emails were welcomed," continues Macland.

Even though the campaign was initially developed around an email approach, Juniper tapped into Web 2.0 technologies and social-media platforms, including YouTube, live chat, forums, and Twitter. By embedding "forward-to-a-friend" mechanisms into its communications, Juniper made it easy for recipients to pass them on and for the company to measure activity. By the end of the campaign, nearly all emails ended up going viral. Plus, Macland's team could see how many contacts it had built up and how quickly they responded to various promotions.

### **Expand Involvement**

Juniper's channel partners also joined the program to learn more about Junos. Because partners were involved in the same events, chats, real-time polls, and other activities as the program participants, they had an opportunity to engage with potential customers. While the company facilitated various ways for the channel to participate, it didn't share contact names as leads. "That's not in the spirit of what we originally promised to those who responded to our campaign. After all, in an advocacy program, you're not selling. You're building ongoing support, respect, and appreciation for the brand, which goes a long way," explains Macland.

## RESULTS

From the time the campaign was launched in September 2008 until it ended in October 2009, Juniper more than tripled the size of its contact base, to over 15,000. That said, with a goal of boosting advocacy, the company measured success using a different metric.

Prospects, customers, and partners expressed pleasure about their experience of the brand. "That's like gold dust for a marketer. And these are just the people we've heard from. On the Internet, we're confident that when people talk about their experience of this campaign, they'll say it has been very positive," says Macland.

### Seeing Social Networking Work

As part of encouraging dialogue, Juniper had offered the email address of one of its employees so program participants could submit feedback. While it was extremely time-consuming for this employee to respond to every communication, she ultimately developed a large Twitter following. "It's a prime example of how these social-networking platforms work. If people see value, they'll use them," continues Macland.

### Building on Success

Because so many advocates joined the program, the campaign and program were adopted globally within Juniper. US headquarters is now responsible for nurturing the program, delivering additional resources, and finding more interactive ways to engage with advocates, such as via live chat, Twitter, and YouTube. "While the success of this campaign hasn't altered our approach to marketing, it has given us the extra incentive we needed to build a program that helps expand our technical advocacy programs," concludes Macland.

### Additional Insights Shared by Juniper

- Give prospects and customers what they want, not what you want them to have.
- Provide a platform that allows dialogue to happen.
- Encourage your messages to go viral by making them easy to share.
- Resist selling hard to your brand advocates or you'll quickly alienate them.

## RESOURCES

J-Central portal: <http://www.juniper.net/junos>

Press release announcing B2B award: [http://www.juniper.net/us/en/company/press-center/press-releases/2009/pr\\_2009\\_12\\_16-01\\_00.html](http://www.juniper.net/us/en/company/press-center/press-releases/2009/pr_2009_12_16-01_00.html)

JUNOS Enterprise Routing:

<http://www.juniper.net/us/en/training/jnbooks/enterpriserouting.html>

Juniper YouTube channel: <http://www.youtube.com/junipernetworks>