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Searching the Wright way pays off for Plano Firm

Tony Wright, right, decided to start Plano-based WrightIMC in the height of the recession, but with the help of employees like John Confer, left, the company has \$3 million in annual revenue.

When Texas Tech buddies Tony Wright and John Confer decided to start an interactive marketing agency in March of 2008, they knew economic odds were against them.

“It was probably one of the worst times to start a company,” said Confer, principal of Plano-based WrightIMC.

But WrightIMC managed to flourish despite the Great Recession, experiencing more than 100 percent revenue growth each year since its inception.

“I think it speaks to the strength of the products that we offer,” said Wright, CEO and founder. “They’re effective during down times and good economic times.”

WrightIMC is a full-service interactive marketing agency with deep search-engine marketing roots. Wright, Confer and their team employ real-time search engine optimization (SEO) techniques to boost their clients’ digital presence.

“As consumer behavior has changed (from traditional to online media), being active online has become critical for small, medium and large businesses,” said Mike Merrill, director of marketing for ReachLocal and chairman of the Social Media Club of Dallas.

Merrill described WrightIMC as a “one-stop shop” to its clients.

“You want your company to show up at the top of search engines,” Wright said. “Every company wants to switch form from having to actively find clients to having those leads come to you.”



While many interactive marketing companies rely heavily on automated solutions to boost their clients' digital presence, WrightIMC looks predominantly to people, making each client's marketing strategy distinctive.

"With us, you're not going to get a template. You're going to get a unique strategy catered to your need, your business," Confer said.

The company puts great emphasis on staying up to date with its quickly changing industry.

WrightIMC spends \$10,000 per month on industry tools and subscription services and hosts an in-office learning forum each week.

"One employee speaks each week on a changing or growing trend in the industry that we need to know about," Confer said.

According to Wright, keeping up with the industry is by no means a perfect art.

"We've had missteps," Wright said. "But our tagline is, 'Results give knowledge.' The result of your campaign gives you the knowledge to move forward."

At the same time, WrightIMC gives itself little room to fail. The agency offers its clients month-to-month contracts with the ability to cancel anytime.

"We have to show results every month," Wright said. "We don't have that long-term contract to fall back on."

In addition, the firm sets short-term, high-stakes goals.

"We tell all our clients at the sales process, if after a certain period of time — usually six months — you're not seeing three times (return on investment), then you should fire us," Wright said.

WrightIMC's revenue has grown from \$50,000 in 2008 to \$3 million in 2012. Clients include local and national large and midsize companies, including Travelocity and the American Heart Association.

But according to Confer and Wright, growth doesn't come without repercussions. The company has adjusted its human resources, changed its business model and expanded its offices multiple times over the past five years.

"You can't really predict anything," Wright said. "With (this kind of growth), you adapt as you go."

Some in the industry attribute the company's success to Wright's years of experience and expertise in the field.

"(Wright's) early entry into the search marketing world built quite a name for the company," said Sean Jackson, CFO of Colorado-based Copyblogger Media and past president of Dallas-Fort Worth Search Engine Marketing Association. "It's the reason why we did business with him."

Confer refers to Wright, who has been in the industry for 15 years, as a “founding father of SEO.”

Merrill attributed the company’s success to Wright’s ability to combine his technical SEO expertise with social technologies.

“(Wright) sets the culture standard and expectations (in the office) around his expertise,” Merrill said.

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