

## MSR Case Study

# FaceTime™

## Break Through or Be Broken

### SITUATION ANALYSIS:

By late 2001, instant messaging (IM) business solutions provider FaceTime ([www.facetime.com](http://www.facetime.com)) was sinking fast in a quagmire the company could once call its bread-and-butter market.

After lapping up e-business customers by the hundreds with its innovative Instant Customer and IM Call Center solutions, the company was struck hard by the collapse of the new economy and could do little to halt the steady erosion of its e-commerce and dot-com customer base. Amid a reorganization, it was clear that unless the company could rapidly establish a strong foothold in a stable industry, FaceTime would founder.

PR agency MSR Communications also felt the squeeze of a contracting economy. If FaceTime went down, the agency would falter.

For both companies, the mantra was: break through, or be broken.

### CHALLENGES:

#### **Opportunity:**

Research suggested growth opportunities in the financial services sector where IM was widely used, rendering businesses vulnerable to regulatory and security liabilities, but FaceTime didn't have the relationships it needed to quickly penetrate the market.

#### **Time:**

MSR Communications' ability to immediately and effectively publicize FaceTime's new financial services product offering, IM Auditor, to spread the buzz about the company was instrumental for sales growth.

#### **Budget:**

FaceTime was in financial straits; the PR budget was severely limited.

#### **Media Perception:**

The merits of instant messaging as a bona fide enterprise application continued to be largely disregarded by the press.

#### **Customers:**

FaceTime had no financial services customers to verify product assertions.

### STRATEGY:

#### **Leverage Agency Relationships:**

MSR believed in FaceTime's ability to fulfill critical regulatory compliance and security needs within the financial services sector with an IM logging and auditing solution. In October 2001,

Principal, Mary Shank Rockman, contacted a former colleague at a provider of e-mail regulatory solutions for financial services organizations, and convinced the business development executive to take a meeting with FaceTime. The meeting led to a partnership involving an integrated product offering and, most importantly, access to the company's coveted base of marquee financial services customers.

#### **Educate the Media:**

After spearheading FaceTime's entry into the new market, MSR created a thought leadership program to evolve IM's image from a consumer chat toy to a business-critical communications vehicle while raising awareness of the regulatory compliance and security issues posed by IM that were resolved by FaceTime.

Unconvinced that IT, compliance and executive decision makers operating within the financial services industry could all be reached via financial trade publications, MSR targeted an ambitious list of technology and business publications in addition to the trade press. Cutting through would depend on eloquent and persistent pitching.

Pitches described how consumer IM proved to have a life of its own among institutional traders, quickly and quietly working its way into important business processes. Brokers naturally gravitated toward IM to meet trader demand for efficient, responsive service. Managers occasionally leveraged IM to cut through information gridlock before realizing they were wholly dependent on the tool for freer, collaborative data flow. While heralding IM's benefits, MSR called attention to the critical regulatory compliance and security issues posed by corporate IM, and discussed how these issues were being resolved by FaceTime and its IM logging and auditing solution.

#### **Create Analyst Reference Program**

At first, MSR could only leverage its analyst reference program for third-party verification of IM's proliferation and FaceTime's technology. As more reporters took the bait, more sales leads were generated, and soon MSR had a customer reference program teeming with financial services contacts to reiterate the business benefits of IM and the critical need for FaceTime's solutions—especially as they related to compliance regulations. Case studies were leveraged to drive additional coverage.

#### **RESULTS:**

From October 1, 2001 to December 19, 2002, MSR's campaign generated 599 pieces of news and feature coverage. The following year, MSR's 2003 PR efforts yielded 698 pieces of news and feature coverage. And, in 2004, the agency's efforts resulted in an equally impressive 498 articles.

The greatest traction was initially seen, as expected, among the financial trade publications (*Wall Street & Technology, Financial Times, Dealing With Technology, Compliance Reporter*), which raised IM's profile as a major developing trend, breathing life into FaceTime's visibility in top-tier technology and business publications (*Associated Press, Time, Fortune, New York Times, Wall Street Journal, San Francisco Chronicle, CNN, Economist, eWeek, InformationWeek, Computerworld*).

This coverage cemented the public perception of FaceTime as the industry leader. FaceTime reported an average of five new, qualified business leads per week as direct results of press activity. By the end of 2004, FaceTime had won several hundred new accounts in the financial services market.