

Airfoil + Microsoft

17 YEARS OF PARTNERSHIP

In the early 2000s, Microsoft was looking to build a bridge. A chasm separated the tech giant from small-business owners and consumers, many of whom saw Microsoft as a global corporation existing only to serve other huge companies.

In order to reach a wider variety of U.S. audiences, Microsoft needed a new voice. How could the company rework its reputation and resonate with skeptical SMBs? How could it make its products and services relevant outside the enterprise? And how could it adapt to a workforce that was increasingly using its own devices on the job?

MICROSOFT + AIRFOIL: PREPARE FOR LIFT-OFF

A new public relations firm had some ambitious ideas and started out on what would become a prosperous and long-term partnership. Over the course of 17 years, Airfoil helped Microsoft establish a deeper connection with consumers, small businesses and local enterprises. The agency also provided the compass to help navigate the unpredictable, ever-evolving terrain of digital communications.

Airfoil's work began in establishing meaningful relationships with influencers and media. To get Microsoft's story told, Airfoil developed media and content strategies focused on making the tech giant more relevant to a wider variety of audiences. That strategy included generating campaign-driven media relations programs in 25 major U.S. markets. Airfoil also leveraged thought leadership contributions attributed to Microsoft executives that reached key audiences via syndication.

Airfoil's work spanned local and global markets alike, boosting awareness and engagement with Microsoft's extensive portfolio of products. For the better part of two decades, Airfoil's diligence, versatility and flexibility helped Microsoft forge a stronger relationship with small-business owners, consumers, enterprise customers and partners alike. Here are a few of the highlights.



OVER THE COURSE OF 17 YEARS, AIRFOIL HELPED MICROSOFT ESTABLISH A DEEPER CONNECTION WITH CONSUMERS, SMALL BUSINESSES AND LOCAL ENTERPRISES.



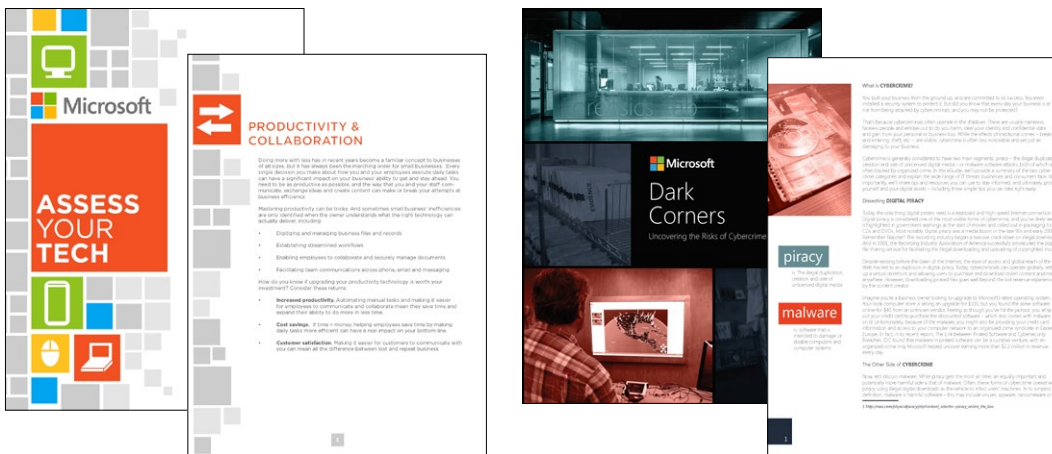
AIRFOIL'S INITIATIVES

SMALL AND MID-SIZED BUSINESSES.

Once upon a time, Microsoft's "big business" reputation tended to alienate companies with just a handful of employees. However, that reputation didn't reflect reality. Microsoft was always invested in small businesses, and Airfoil facilitated a productive conversation between Microsoft and SMBs. One successful engagement campaign invited small businesses to create and submit short videos demonstrating how they use tech to spur innovation and growth. These contests opened the door for Microsoft to share tips and highlight success stories, positioning itself as a coach and mentor that connects business owners who face similar challenges of being their own IT experts.

Airfoil also helped Microsoft develop custom content, including eGuides, that spoke directly to entrepreneurs, presenting need-to-know advice about software customization, security concerns and other mission-critical topics. A documentary film profiling a Main Street artisan shop gained widespread popularity on social-media channels. A thought-leadership initiative for Microsoft's executive team gained momentum on social channels, engaging influencers through a congenial voice. Airfoil's approach to the SMB sector was about making a complicated, multifaceted brand accessible: Here's how we can help you. Here's the link. Download it. Try it. The barriers between Microsoft and small businesses dissolved, and Microsoft enjoyed prosperous relationships with new customers. The efforts also benefitted from Airfoil's service offering expansion beyond media relations and into lead generation, content marketing and influencer marketing.

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CONSUMERS.

Even for an industry giant like Microsoft, it can be a challenge to grab consumers' attention with a new product or an important announcement. Over the course of Airfoil's 17-year body of work with Microsoft, the agency flexed its media-relations muscle to boost consumer awareness and enable hands-on experiences with Microsoft's diverse offerings. One of the key strategies involved positioning Microsoft's products as lifestyle products rather than "tech gadgets." That meant analyzing common consumer pain points in using devices, software and services, inspiring people to visit Microsoft stores for hands-on experiences. In addition to coordinating product reviews in major publications, Airfoil also engaged directly with key audiences, conducting demos that showed how Microsoft's software solutions were relevant to individuals and families. Airfoil understood the importance of emphasizing each product's relevance to the end user rather than the tech specs and stats. By providing unique hands-on opportunities for journalists and consumers to experience Microsoft's offerings, Airfoil showed that an informed consumer is an engaged consumer.

MICROSOFT'S PARTNER ECOSYSTEM.

When a big, small or somewhere-in-between company uses Microsoft's tech stack, it often leads to new solutions, new business models, new connections with other Microsoft partners and new opportunities for those companies to grow. Microsoft generates 90 percent of its revenue in this community of innovators and thinkers, and Airfoil helped them nurture these key relationships. The agency deployed content and media campaigns to familiarize partners with cloud computing, and Microsoft helped partners shift from on-premises computing to the cloud. This work included media relations and event management, as well as coordinated thought-leadership and influencer-marketing campaigns. These efforts included developing a wide array of content, an essential part of drawing in, say, an IT consulting company doing custom deployments of Office 365. Airfoil helped Microsoft introduce the right product to the right customer in the right way.



**TOGETHER, AIRFOIL
AND MICROSOFT
PRODUCTIVELY
SOLVED PROBLEMS
AT THE POINTS
WHERE PRODUCTS,
INFORMATION AND
PEOPLE INTERSECT.**



DISCRETE PROGRAMS.

Microsoft's broad range of products and target audiences required an agency that could match its dynamic diversity. Airfoil was up to the task, remaining adaptive and open to new challenges. The agency developed specialized programs to address Microsoft's variety of needs: Campaigns to promote anti-piracy and software asset management, job-creation programs, planning worldwide partner conferences, and coordinating involvement in STEM and robotics events. Airfoil helped demonstrate the applicative value of Azure, Windows, Xbox, Office, the Microsoft Store and Microsoft Dynamics within specific applications. Security was a key challenge for Microsoft customers and a key priority for Microsoft, so Airfoil promoted the Security Intelligence Report (SIR). This quarterly analysis of global data included condensed insights and prescriptive guidance businesses could use, including best practices for fending off phishing and malware attacks. As the line between homes and traditional offices blurred, the project progressed to focus on in-home security applications. Together, Airfoil and Microsoft productively solved problems at the points where products, information and people intersect.

ENTERPRISE.

In order to elevate Microsoft's brand, people and products in new corners of the domestic market, Airfoil developed detailed strategies through meaningful in-depth research. Independent research established a solid foundation for Microsoft's messaging strategy in the enterprise, allowing the company to equip local sales teams with insightful targeted content. Airfoil placed Microsoft's enterprise sales managers in front of cameras and microphones to offer guidance on key challenges, including internet safety and remote-working strategies. By addressing topics such as security and privacy, Microsoft spokespeople weren't just selling a product – they were engaging and educating local communities. These efforts resulted in extraordinary feedback from businesses, underscoring the importance of local media in spreading the word: Microsoft's solutions enable success in every office, whether that office happens to be at your kitchen counter or in a metropolitan high-rise.

IS YOUR BUSINESS OUTGROWING YOUR ACCOUNTING SOFTWARE?

Have you asked yourself whether your current accounting solution is keeping up with your business' growth and financial needs? If you run into any of these issues, consider them signs to move beyond your basic accounting solution:

- You're having a hard time keeping up with customer demand
- You're unable to handle an increasing number of transactions
- Gaining visibility into business performance takes days
- You've identified a lack of integration capabilities
- Your software simply doesn't support your business' ongoing growth

Seeking a solution beyond the basic offerings will turn limitations and issues into:

- Increased Productivity
- Increased Sales
- Simplified Business Operations

Advancing business growth with a business solution from Microsoft gives you many more capabilities:

- Seamless integration with Office 365, Microsoft Excel and Outlook
- Cloud-based deployment options with a scalable platform that better fits your business needs
- Gain insights into data decision support that goes beyond simple financial management
- Access your information anywhere with mobile capabilities
- Tailored and personalized dashboards allowing employees to become more efficient in their day-to-day responsibilities

78% of SMBs stated they use a mobile device to access work-related information while away from the office or their computer

84% of SMBs feel that mobile technology has positively affected their company's productivity

93% experienced an increase in productivity outside of the office because of cloud technology

Unless your financial solution is managing all of your needs! Visit www.microsoft.com/dynamics to learn more.

Microsoft Dynamics

Independent research informed strategies and pieces of targeted content, such as infographics





In an era defined by digital disruption, Airfoil's work with Microsoft evolved in lock step with the rapidly changing tech landscape. As the web became ubiquitous in every home, Airfoil's efforts transitioned to full-service marketing initiatives, including content marketing and lead generation. With the dawn of Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, Airfoil crafted effective social-media and influencer-marketing strategies that targeted businesses and individuals alike.

As a result, Microsoft reaped the benefits of a reinvigorated reputation, and Airfoil grew from a modest regional firm to an agency with national reach. Airfoil opened offices in Silicon Valley and New York City, giving it the dexterity to manage clients across times zones.

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YOU GUYS

ROCK!

-STEVE FIELDING,
SENIOR MARKETING
COMMUNICATIONS
MANAGER, MICROSOFT

PARTNER WITH US

We are always looking to partner with visionary companies looking to grow in their space. Our team excels at helping brands shift market perception, enter new markets, and launch products. Get in touch today to learn how Airfoil can help your business soar.

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