Earth Catalyst
Grow Your Impact

Sun Microsystems

Case Study: Mapping and Benchmarking Sun Microsystems' Multi-Media Network

Location: Santa Clara, CA

Industry: Technology

Function: Global computing leader

CHALLENGE

Sun Microsystems, a pioneer in open source software, green IT, and corporate blogging, was preparing to launch the 2.0 version of its online communities and publishing platform. Their slogan had always been "the network is the computer," so the stakes were high for their online network.

They had already invested heavily in building out their online networks:
· 5,000+ employees (1 in 7) actively publishing
· 100,000+ posts and 120,000+ comments in first two years

As they completed their 2.0 strategy, they wanted clarity on their differentiation, strategy, and performance relative to the work of other global IT leaders.

They hired me to map, benchmark, and analyze their networks.

SOLUTION

1. **Multi-network analysis:** Analysis of the content, activity, and user experience across Sun's blogs, podcasts, wikis, and forums
2. **Competitive benchmarking** against the work of CISCO, SAP, and IBM
3. **Quantitative** analysis of activity and engagement metrics
4. **Qualitative** analysis informed by interviews with inventors & trailblazers of each class of publishing technology (I connected with and showed some of the inventors of the wiki, business podcasting, and blogging how Sun was doing it and got their feedback.)
5. **Development** and public launch of a tracking system for customer and industry leader feedback

OUTCOMES

• **Comprehensive findings and recommendations presented to executive leadership**

• **Refined and more tightly integrated 2.0 iteration of Sun's publishing network**
• **Sun was acquired by Oracle for $7B two years later**
• **Their publishing network maintained post-acquisition; even 10 years later there were 200 active Oracle bloggers on the same platform. I then analyzed those for Oracle.**

Keys to success:

1. Comprehensive ecosystem analysis
2. Extensive quantitative benchmarking
3. High-quality expert insights

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4. Meaningful competitive intelligence
5. Robust stakeholder feedback system
6. Executive-level reporting

Sun Microsystems Feedback

"Marshall was AWESOME to work with. He really knows his stuff. He dogged every detail and got answers."
-Joanne Kissling, Sr. Manager, Employee Communications, Sun Microsystems

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