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PERSONALISATION

B2B DATA
WORKING WITH A
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EXCLUSIVE

FULL SPEED AHEAD AT INSIGHT STREAM

INFORMATION ARTS VETERAN GARY SELBY GETS BACK INTO
B2B MARKETING WITH NEW POWERHOUSE INSIGHT STREAM

PLUS HARTE HANKS DROPS INFORMATION ARTS BRAND | CALLCREDIT CHANGES HANDS
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Insight Stream profile

By Antony Begley, Managing Editor

Back in the B2B driving seat

Almost four years after Information Arts was sold to Harte Hanks, Gary Selby has been lured back to the world of B2B data with his latest venture, Insight Stream. He talks to DBM about the plans for the new company.

Escaping the magnetic pull of data is more difficult than you might imagine. Just ask Gary Selby, CEO of new B2B powerhouse-in-the-making Insight Stream. Just a few years after he and Simon Lawrence sold Information Arts to US giant Harte Hanks in 2010, Selby is back in business and hungry for more success with his new incarnation.

Selby set up Insight Stream late last year with co-founders Geoff Downer and Robert Clark to address what the trio saw as a gaping hole in the market for a business that does, well, more or less what Information Arts used to do.

A sensible enough plan as it was, but the recent news that Harte Hanks has ditched the Information Arts brand adds a little more piquancy to Selby, Downer and Clark's strategy. "We sort of knew that the Information Arts brand would be dropped at one point or another, but the fact that it has happened so soon is interesting," notes Selby. So is he just a tiny bit sad to see the end of a brand he worked so hard to build?

"Nope," he comments matter of factly. "Information Arts was never really a 'baby' for us, it was simply business. We worked very hard at it and we gave it our all, but it was still just business."

Insight Stream is now up and running and

rapidly building a reputation for smart, data-driven marketing that puts insight back at the heart of the decision-making process.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

While Lawrence and Selby both qualified as data gurus in their own right at Information Arts, Selby was very much the creative sales expert, a driven and clinically efficient operator. He didn't start his career in data, however – far from it. He did engineering at Portsmouth then got a job as a sales engineer in Sheffield, not too far from his home city of Derby, before being drawn to London. After a very short-lived first job where the company closed the day before Selby was due to start, he picked up a televerification job at Yellow Pages updating its database which was, in effect, his introduction to the world of B2B data.

After a couple of months of hammering the phones, Selby moved onto selling Yellow Pages' data, a move which was to shape the future of his career and, ultimately, his life. Not that he knew it at the time.

"It was a good period in my life," he recalls. "I had gone from my lowest point to being part of a great team working with great people in just a matter of couple of months. The data we were selling was of high quality and at that point in time there was a boom in

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The B2B marketing industry still seems to be tech-driven rather than genuinely data-driven – technology is an enabler, nothing more and nothing less.

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direct mail so it was a rewarding job."

This was back in the days when the data was sent out as physical labels, literally posted to clients. The data itself was held on enormous magnetic tapes.

A couple of years in the role was enough to convince Selby that he'd found his vocation, a role that he "believed in"

His career saw him work with the future LBM founder Paul Beck, a brief period with Acxiom and a stint with Adrian Gregory running a business unit at TDS, where Selby managed the business data sales function.

Two years later a role at Identex took Selby into the world of consumer data for the first time, selling analytical data and services and working with sophisticated database management capabilities.

The technology available to support data marketing was also evolving quickly in those days, with all sorts of new possibilities opening up for marketers. "By the end of the 90s, another case of 'big company syndrome' had set in," says Selby, "so I decided to bite the bullet and launch Information Arts with Simon Lawrence, who I met at TDS. We worked together back then for a few months and had occasionally discussed a venture together, but the timing had never been right until then."

By the turn of the decade Information Arts was registered and trading with a very clear remit: to maximise the B2B marketing capabilities of its clients. This vision saw the pair pick up big name clients like Vodafone, Shell and Xerox. "The clients had one thing in common," he says. "They all knew that they wanted to make better use of the data they had. Most had well developed CRM systems containing vast amounts of data, but they knew they weren't leveraging it to anywhere near its potential."

The assumption by many clients was that the answer to their problems was to be found in IT. Selby usually disagreed. The real answer was usually far more complex and nuanced, and it was their ability to wheedle out the correct solution for their clients time and again that helped Information Arts build a formidable reputation.

Unsurprisingly, that reputation generated admirers and in 2010, Information Arts was formally sold to Harte Hanks. "Information Arts was bought because we were adding real value for our clients," he believes.

NEXT STEP

After collecting his cheque and seeing out his contractual obligations, Selby decided on a break to work on his tennis and enjoy life with his family, but it wasn't long before he had one eye on a return to the fray.

By 2012 his non-compete clause had expired and, despite his best attempts to stay clear of the industry, he found himself doing little bits and pieces of consultancy



GEOFF DOWNER, ROBERT CLARK AND GARY SELBY, THE DRIVING FORCES BEHIND INSIGHT STREAM.

work here and there. Slowly, a plan began to form, especially after a visit to TFM&A where, to all intents and purposes, it looked like the industry still hadn't learnt many of the lessons of history. "It used to be CRM systems: clients thought all you had to do was a buy one and all your problems would magically vanish. At TFM&A I saw that the 'magical solution' had changed but the problem was still exactly the same. Buy a bit of technology and all will be well."

That trip crystallised his ideas and he began thinking seriously for the first time that there was still a need for a business providing the sorts of solutions that Information Arts did under his and Lawrence's control. "It just looked to me that there had been no progression in B2B marketing since I left the industry a few years ago, the same stuff I'd been saying back then still applied," he says. "The industry still seems to be tech-driven rather than genuinely data-driven, which is crazy. Technology is an enabler, nothing more and nothing less."

The result was a concept that was quickly to develop into Insight Stream. "I firmly believe that there is still a need for an independent agency that can authoritatively put an appreciation of business data back at the heart of the decision-making process."

THREE AMIGOS

To turn the dream into reality, Selby was joined by client strategist Geoff Downer and data specialist Robert Clark, two friends he both likes and rates. Downer is a 30 year

veteran of the data-driven marketing industry, well versed in the application of marketing automation, bridging the gap between marketing and IT.

Clark brings almost 25 years of data experience to the table with stints at Amstrad, Computer Intelligence Corp and Harte Hanks, where he met Selby. Most recently he founded EMEA Data in 2010, filling a gap in the market for consistent marketing intelligence and data solutions across multiple continents.

The three are very much up and running with a number of partnerships already in place, including a hook up with Provenir for the delivery of a number of next generation B2B digital, data-driven marketing solutions. The agreement gives Insight Stream access to Provenir's big data listening and social media engagement platform.

With things moving on apace, life looks rosy and early signs are that Selby's hunch that the world needs another independent B2B data marketing specialist with a longer term outlook seems well founded.

Data and tech agnostic, the ethos of Insight Stream is simply that "we add the value ourselves", as Selby puts it, and that approach leaves the firm a lot of freedom in how it operates and where it moves next.

Selby rules out nothing, other than stepping out of the B2B market, and highlights once more the 75 years' plus of experience that the trio bring to the party.

"It's another exciting period," he concludes, "and we couldn't be in better shape or in a better place." ■

A UTOPIAN VISION

WHERE DATA INSIGHT LIES AT THE HEART OF EVERYTHING

WITH COMPANIES HAVING ACCESS TO MORE AND BETTER DATA THAN EVER, USING IT EFFECTIVELY IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS.

It's a truism that we use all the time; the future success of a business is intimately linked to its ability to both acquire new customers and successfully develop existing ones. This requires the effective engagement of senior management, sales, marketing and IT. And in order to engage with existing and future customers properly, they require knowledge – an intimate understanding of their needs and wants.

At the heart of this is data. Which begs the question of why are so many businesses rich in data resources but poor in insight?

Our 75 years' experience leads us to one overriding conclusion, that the data a business generates becomes an operational function of IT, rather than an asset which can transform the future success of the business. It's as big an issue as that. However large the business, however great the brand – so many answers to the fundamental questions of business growth are contained within data.

Big businesses in particular have data issues: multiple data resources in multiple silos; combinations of archaic legacy systems and whizz-bang new technology; many stakeholders in the management and use of data; multiple suppliers of data products. This can look scary – particularly when considering the additional complexities of B2B, global and channel.

So how is it possible to move forward? Software vendors would have you believe the latest bit of expensive kit will sort you out. It's attractive – tick this box, pay the money and all of your data related customer issues are resolved. Does it ever really deliver? We've lost count of the number of

clients who tell us that it doesn't work, it doesn't deliver on its promises, it's impossible to demonstrate ROI, it's a mismatch with our other technology resources – and it does little for data integrity and insight.

Funnily enough, the problem is rarely with the technology itself - there are plenty of good tools out there. No, the issue is invariably a combination of poor assessment of the business needs, poor buy-in of personnel, poor implementation, poor training, over selling of functionality and little regard to the life-blood of the technology.

DATA, AND HOW IT SHOULD BE USED

It's well accepted that intelligent use of the insight you develop by interrogating data enables you to enhance customer engagement. In recent years we've observed a trend to ignore the importance of the data in the rush to embrace new technologies such as email, web communications, eCommerce and Social CRM. Yet the truth is that successful use and integration of all of these channels depends upon sound data and a clear data strategy – your own 'Insightstream'.

Social channels are here to stay and are now well established as B2B communication tools. But many observers and 'early adopters' have confirmed the obvious – that if you are going to 'listen' via social media, it's essential to your customers' experience to also respond swiftly to issues and comments that arise – good or bad. An array of 'listening' solutions are

available to help you in this - which report to you on coverage of your chosen topics.

However, we go one step further by creating solutions that can automatically trigger responses to issues as they arise. Combining the best features of social listening with campaign management functionality – underpinned by a proper data solution – allows real-time engagement with customer experiences, ideas and issues that may affect your business.

If you like, combining the best principles of 'traditional' data marketing with the most effective 'new' functionality, integrating real time communication with conventional marketing.

With our unrivalled experience of these scenarios, we developed the Insightstream.

The Insightstream is a utopian vision whereby insight from data is placed at the heart of all business decisions.

But it's not utopian – it is fully deliverable!

The Insightstream is a logical series of well-proven stages which clearly identify where a business currently is on its data journey, highlights and celebrates the strengths and weaknesses of existing activity - and clearly shows what should be done to achieve the ultimate goal – embedding insight from data at the heart of the business.

We are a leading provider of global B2B data-driven solutions and the team has more than 75 years' experience in the management of data, insight and database marketing services. ■

DO VISIT OUR WEBSITE WWW.INSIGHT-STREAM.COM TO LEARN MORE AND GET IN TOUCH!

Up a creek without a paddle?

Follow the Insightstream!

True leadership in Global B2B Data Marketing

Insightstream
data - intelligence - engagement

Visit www.insight-stream.com to learn more about the **Insightstream**.

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