

Case in Point: Launching a Company and Product Through Crowdfunding

Blossom: From Kickstarter to CES – Taking the IoT to the Backyard

Blossom is an innovative start-up, which developed a first-of-its-kind smart sprinkler system that extends the benefits of home automation outside to the yard by bringing the smart home outdoors. The Blossom System leverages the power of cloud computing and real time weather data to optimize the irrigation schedule used to manage existing sprinklers – giving users easy access to control the watering of their garden from their smart phone, tablet or computer.

Blossom was founded by three innovators who worked closely together over the years at Skype, Cisco and Linksys. With strong backgrounds in networking and consumer electronics, the trio set their sights on creating a device that played in the Internet of Things (IoT) category, which is estimated to be 50 Billion connected devices by 2020.

Staking a Claim

Blossom sought to stake its claim as an IoT innovator by taking the smart home outdoors. Once prototypes, field tests, and hardware were completed – the company took to crowdfunding as a platform to formally launch their product and take initial orders.

With just two weeks before Blossom’s Kickstarter page went live, Lages was brought in to formulate a strategy to launch the company and the new product.

And while there is plenty of cache and sizzle surrounding crowdfunding, there is also plenty of skepticism about the validity of companies that engage in it. Lages worked to legitimize the product and company by playing up the founders’ track record and tapping into their insider network.

The winter season offered challenges during Blossom’s launch, and messaging was tailored to resonate with varying audiences. Much of the rest of the U.S. was covered in snow, while the West faced severe drought conditions and water restrictions. Messaging regarding the drought, saving water and minimizing water utility bills resonated with the West, but those messages had to be secondary for the other parts of the nation.

Short Runway Before Takeoff

Blossom also needed Lages to craft a plan to build buzz with their inner circle. Broadening social network connections and enlisting industry influencers and media added to the mix, creating a ground swell of attention and most importantly Kickstarter backers. Concurrent with the roll-out of Kickstarter, Lages was tasked with developing a plan that would keep Blossom front and center long after Kickstarter.



The Program

Lages formed a strategy to leverage the Kickstarter campaign as a springboard for the full roll-out of Blossom. The development of strategic messaging positioned Blossom as a leader in taking the smart home to the backyard – and the PR program also included media/analyst intelligence, materials development, news releases, media relations, social and industry analyst relations to effectively spread the word about Blossom.

Serving as a center point for collaboration with key contributors, such as the design and social media teams, Lages ensured that each group was meeting deadlines and conveying the same messages to external audiences.

Lages also ensured that Blossom was differentiated from competitors. Messaging that gave emphasis to the device’s unique pairing of Powerline and Wi-Fi technologies allowed media, analysts and potential backers to learn about the nearly limitless range that enabled the device to be accessible no matter its location. Blossom’s leg up against the competition helped it to stand out in the smart home category and led to several secured media and analyst telebriefings.

Outreach about the success of the Kickstarter campaign further piqued the attention of top-tier media and analysts. Blossom closed its crowdfunding campaign at more than triple its initial funding goal of \$30,000, finishing at \$102,600 with 847 backers. Lages used the broad reach and third party validation brought on by media coverage to accelerate acquiring backers.

Next up: CES via an exclusive media event without the expense of being on the show floor. Having a presence at the show allowed Blossom to announce the launch of its device on an international stage and be included in many CES-related articles. It also paved the way for relationship building that would be leveraged in the next phase of outreach during a review program.



The Results

Blossom was well received by media, and **in just 8 weeks was included in 94 articles totaling 391,731,853 impressions**. Outlet categories included: Apple/Mac, Technology, Android, News, Business, General Interest, Consumer Electronics and Gadget. Blossom gained visibility and participated in tradeshow broadcast opportunities, including Stuff.TV, #CESLive and CNET's First Look from the show floor. Top-tier placements generated sales of the device – and Blossom was positioned as an innovator in taking the smart home outdoors.



“Blossom's internet-connected hub uses weather forecasts to determine when to spray water, and can also be triggered by the owner's smartphone.” – *BBC*

“Though some big names like Apple and Google aren't exhibiting at CES, hundreds of smart-home hardware makers are. Examples include Blossom, a startup offering a new smart sprinkler controller to save on water bills.”

– *The Wall Street Journal*

“The range, the price, the number of zones covered, and the weather-proofing all seem deliberately intended to outdo its nearest competitor.” – *CNET*

“Blossom CEO Manrique Brenes told me this is only the first of many products from Blossom, which sees itself as a smart home company which will design products for the ‘outside of the house.’ I think that's a smart differentiation in a space that is becoming increasingly crowded with new entrants.” – *Industry Analyst and Forbes Contributor, Michael Wolf*



“During the launch of Blossom, the Lages team proved to be exceptionally nimble and able to roll-out a full PR program in short order. They were skilled at crafting a message that resonated with media and carried forward our brand, landing Blossom many impactful media hits. We were very pleased that Lages was more than just a PR partner – they were a capable marketing partner in all regards as well.”

– *Manrique Brenes, Founder and CEO, Blossom*

BBC, The Wall Street Journal, CNET, WIRED, Consumer Reports, Family Circle, Good Housekeeping, HGTV, Engadget, Ubergizmo, CE Pro, Stuff.TV, Digital Trends, iMore, Android Central, AOL Tech, TWICE, CNET en Español, MacTrast, socaTECH, TMCNet, Electronic House



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