

PALO ALTO NETWORKS SHARPENS ITS CHANNEL EDGE IN A COMPETITIVE SPACE USING SOCIALONDEMAND®

Background

Palo Alto Networks offers a next-generation network security platform that allows enterprises, service providers, and government entities to secure their networks and safely enable the rapidly growing number of complex applications running on their networks.

Palo Alto Networks primarily sells its products and services to end-users through an indirect network of global distributors, resellers and strategic partners, and infrequently directly to end-customers.

Challenges

Network security is a highly competitive market space, with positive brand awareness, product endorsement and product positioning being critical factors in achieving business success.

Not only does a network security vendor like Palo Alto Networks need to gain traction in an end-user base with ever discerning IT decision makers, it also needs to engender loyalty, engagement and sales momentum within its network of distributors and partners.

A key challenge therefore is for Palo Alto Networks to clearly differentiate itself in its global market through the amplification of its marketing message. As such, the vendor proactively strives for innovative ways in which to extend its social media reach and leverage its extensive channel networks to reach and influence IT decision makers.

Approach and Solution

In November 2011, Palo Alto Networks attended a webinar hosted by purechannelapps, which conveyed the benefits of sharing and syndicating social media content through the social media accounts of staff and partners. The webinar also outlined socialondemand - a web based solution from purechannelapps which enables vendors to publish targeted social media content for its partners (or its own staff) and select and publish to their own social media accounts. The high value content is available in real time and without users having to manually sign into any of their social media accounts.

This approach of amplifying social media to and through partners appealed greatly to Palo Alto Networks, and the vendor quickly adopted socialondemand® as a result.

Branded SocialWave, Palo Alto Networks launched the socialondemand platform to its global partners in November 2011. Externally, 24 distributors and 94 resellers immediately signed up to socialondemand, instantly providing Palo Alto with access to over 102,000 new social media connections. In addition to its launch globally across twenty countries, socialondemand was made available internally to Palo Alto Networks employees to access and publish content to their own followers. To date, 53 internal members of staff benefit from content derived from the social media tool, a user group consisting of 23 in marketing, 21 in sales, two senior managers and seven technical people.

“

SocialWave enables us to extend our messaging reach to tens of thousands of our partners' followers. We look forward to incorporating this into our corporate social media strategy and driving more channels sales in the year to come.

”

Donna St John, Head of Worldwide Channel Marketing and Partner Programs at Palo Alto Networks

“ WE SEE SOCIALWAVE AS A STRATEGIC TOOL FOR OUR THROUGH-PARTNER COMMUNICATION. BEING ABLE TO TRACK THE PROLIFERATION OF OUR SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS AND CONTENT THROUGHOUT OUR PARTNER NETWORK IS INVALUABLE.”
CRISTINA SALMASTLIAN, CHANNEL MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS, PALO ALTO NETWORKS

Benefits

socialondemand has enabled Palo Alto Networks to differentiate itself from its competitors in a number of ways.

Control

Given the multi-level content creation together with the solid approval workflow provided within socialondemand, Palo Alto Networks is able to use its incumbent PR agency to post social media content directly into the tool, freeing its own staff to focus on other activities.

Reach

By using this innovative platform to extend its channel message directly to end users, Palo Alto Networks has been able to help its partners influence IT decision makers exactly when and where they are fuelling their IT decisions – in the social media space.

Targeting

A well known drawback of social media is the inherent untargeted nature of the communications vehicle itself. socialondemand negates this by enabling Palo Alto Networks to syndicate filtered, targeted, compliant social media posts based on territory, language, content type, end-user audience and partner preference.

Differentiation

By using socialondemand, Palo Alto Networks has given its global network of distributors and partners an invaluable source of social media content. Saving both time and money in sourcing and creating content it is helping to provide those partners (and its own staff) with a trusted ‘social media voice’ of their own.

Results

Palo Alto Networks has achieved some phenomenal results from its 110 partner companies, 34 distributors and internal staff currently using socialondemand, all reposting real-time, targeted social media content through the tool. Together they have added/attached 860 social media accounts in the system and this represents 230,915 followers, friends and contacts.

Since adopting socialondemand, 295 social media posts have been reposted over 13,087 times by users, achieving over 203,624 clicks, downloads and retweets by their users’ social media connections. One post was reposted 115 times, generating 2,302 clicks and 1,236 retweets alone.

