



isolated Re-Brand Transforms Culture and Enables Company to Weather the Pandemic Successfully

What You Need to Know

Many organizations struggle with internal strife due to siloed teams or positions. Marketing and sales are frequent combatants, a situation that is particularly unfortunate as sales enablement works best when it's the responsibility and purview of both teams. Although sales enablement is often perceived as marketing-led, the fact is that while the sales team needs the resources marketing provides, the marketing team also needs feedback and context from sales in order to source the most effective and useful leads. The two roles certainly do depend on one another, but if the communication is lacking, this interdependence can breed frustration for both divisions. Without proper synergy, the sales team will be uninformed about the company's marketing campaigns, and the marketing team won't know what actually helps the sales team close deals. Any disconnect between the two leads all too easily to finger-pointing, with marketing saying sales isn't closing enough deals and sales blaming marketing for low-quality leads.

This age-old problem was only exacerbated by the novel coronavirus pandemic. In remote environments, with most team members working from home, communication issues were certainly not limited to sales and marketing, but many organizations have found that the past year has been especially difficult for those two divisions. Additionally, businesses were required to execute their growth plans while being distributed.

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AT A GLANCE

Research Participant

isolated

The Situation

- Feeling of disconnection from customers
- Lack of cohesion in presentation of the product portfolio
- Pandemic hindering synergy between sales and marketing

Success Highlights

- Shifting branding focus to the customer
- Forging greater alignment between sales and marketing
- Creating and implementing production and collaboration tools
- Increasing internal collaboration and productivity with isolated-native tools
- Promoting isolated's own employer brand to align with customer brand



About the Participant

isolved is a vendor in the human capital management (HCM) software market. Founded in 1986, isolved is well established in the human resources (HR) field as a provider of comprehensive workforce management solutions for small- to medium-sized businesses. The company offers a wide variety of tools designed to help its clients transform the employee experience, including platforms for benefit services, talent management, engagement management, and HR and payroll. isolved leverages both direct technology and service sales and a robust partner network to deliver its solutions, enabling the company to pair its cutting-edge cloud-based technology offerings with strong service provider relationships.

isolved is headquartered in Charlotte, NC and has grown significantly in the last few years: the company now employs more than 1,300 people. In addition to its own substantial workforce, isolved serves some five million employees through the more than 145,000 employers it counts among its clients. With this impressive growth has come considerable changes, including the appointment of a new chief executive officer, Mark Duffell, in March 2020 to bring even more velocity to the business. isolved also brought on Chief Marketing and Strategy Officer James Norwood just six months later.

3Sixty Insights spoke with Vice President of Marketing Lina Tonk and Director of Brand and Content Amberly Dressler about how isolved successfully navigated the pandemic while planning and executing on rapid growth plans and completing a re-brand.

The Situation

isolved leadership had determined that the company was not connecting with its customers as well as it could be. In an effort spearheaded by CEO Duffell, the company set about re-vamping its brand to define its messaging through the voice of the customer and bring consistency to its service and technology portfolio.

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only failed to reflect the company’s size and stature in the marketing but also what isolated leadership envisioned. The lack of cohesiveness was difficult for potential customers to navigate. Certainly, the divergence was not supporting customer trust, which everyone at isolated agreed was critical. Tonk notes that the pandemic amplified the importance of trust: “Your customer or your prospect is now inviting you or welcoming you into their own homes, it doesn’t get any more personal.”

Naturally, the pandemic also brought its own challenges for isolated. When the marketing team first made the transition to remote work amid aggressive exciting growth plans, they found they were not getting the response with webinars that they’d come to expect from in-person trade shows. Results from direct mail, which had previously been a strong source of leads for them, also plummeted amid early concerns about virus transmission.

Additionally, the pandemic hindered the importance of sales and marketing synergy. Persistent efforts to build and maintain the relationship between the two divisions were highly successful, resulting in a strong two-way line of communication “aligning on any initiative that either office has.” Now, however, the marketing team was challenged to convey information to their colleagues in sales as effectively in virtual presentations as they could have through in-person conversations and trainings.

There were difficulties within marketing, too. The department was well on its way to doubling in size in less than a year and the rapid growth meant new colleagues could not meet each other in person or strategize how to ensure new centralized approaches could meet individual, team, department and organizational goals.

The Solutions

isolated debuted its new brand in October 2020 with the flagship product coming together as [isolated People Cloud](#), an intelligently connected HCM platform that lives under one product umbrella. isolated People Cloud encapsulates all of isolated’s many functionalities, reflecting the company’s

isolated not only addressed problems of brand unity with isolated People Cloud, but also emphasized the client perspective. “It became very apparent to us early on as we launched our brand that we needed to stop talking about ourselves,” says Tonk. They instead sought ways to convey the story and experience they saw resonating with prospective customers through current customers’ voices.



identity as a full-scale employee experience solution with a single umbrella brand that covers all isolated products and services.

The HCM vendor not only addressed problems of brand unity with isolated People Cloud, but also emphasized the client perspective. “It became very apparent to us early on as we launched our brand that we needed to stop talking about ourselves,” says Tonk. They instead sought ways to convey the story they saw resonating with prospective customers through current customers’ voices. With this rebrand, the marketing team and their peers across departments also began “drinking their own champagne” by leveraging the full power of isolated People Cloud themselves. Collaboration became easier by using their engagement modules, goal-setting and milestone tracking became more effective using their performance modules and it became easier for all employees to share the value of isolated People Cloud with customers by becoming customers themselves. When it came to communicating this value externally, one way they accomplished this brand storytelling was through LinkedIn. Because isolated does not differentiate between its client-facing and internal brands, branding efforts have naturally carried over to the employee experience as well, and isolated employee discussion has proliferated on the networking site.

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Much of this brand building centered around building a dedicated team for analyst relations, public relations, content, social media and other brand-moving functions.

Internally, to help navigate the pandemic, isolated has implemented a number of new tools. Tonk and Dressler note that they have also increased their usage of existing tools and isolated People Cloud to contend with recent challenges.

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isolated’s engagement modules also became essential for both customers and themselves. Tonk calls Share & Perform (which encompasses employee surveys, collaboration, rewards and recognition, goal setting, performance reviews, 360-peer feedback and, now, giving and volunteering) their “powerhouse of engagement.” Share & Perform, one of the company’s own employee experience tools, facilitates communication with the sales teams while most worked remotely during the extensive social-distancing phase of the pandemic. Tonk estimates that she personally was using Share & Perform at only about 30 percent of its capability before the pandemic, but she realized that she now needs to be using it to the full extent of its potential reasoning, “because it was going to amplify my meeting, my voice, my team’s voice, or our initiatives.”

Part of its “win as one” motto also comes down to goal setting within Share & Perform. Every individual’s goals tie to a team goal, tie to a department goal and tie to an organizational goal. This method allows individuals to know that their work matters toward the wider vision of the company.

Cross-team collaboration on individual projects became critical digitally as well. The marketing team as a whole opted to implement a project management tool [Trello](#). The ability to easily add new users and centralize project management was a key consideration: as the team scaled, marketing teams became more centralized hubs for campaigns, content and creative services. Trello allowed full visibility into each project while ensuring the brand voice remained consistent, breaking down any siloes or ad-hoc requests that could be created without a centralized approach.

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Success

Far from being disrupted by the pandemic, isolved has had a very successful year – finding synergy across teams and with their own tools to do so. The company was able to launch its new brand and to grow significantly, both internally and externally.

A Strong Employee Culture

While tools can set the foundation for collaboration, culture is set through empowerment and inclusivity of employees. Tonk says that there is a focus within isolved on relationships to ensure synergy between departments. “It’s thinking, what can we do together? How do we build that relationship? Before we even go and start all these goals . . . how do we work together?”

As isolved continues to bring on more staff and add to its roster of 145,000 customers, rave reviews of the recently restructured onboarding processes are clear evidence of the company’s strong culture and investment in leveraging each and every tool at their disposal.

Enhanced Communication

There’s no better indicator of the positive culture shift at isolved than the strong sense of empathy Tonk observes between the sales and marketing teams, but remote work threatened to dampen the connection isolved had worked so hard to forge. The company’s own Share and Perform tool helped to ensure interactions with colleagues weren’t just transactional in nature: Tonk says it helped to replicate the level of connection they would have experienced when going out for dinner or to the bar, which she jokes are the best relationships you’ll ever have with colleagues.

The self-service nature of isolved People Cloud has also been instrumental to business continuity. Tonk credits it with employees being able to onboard effectively, conduct open enrollment seamlessly, sign up for learning

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courses and more – all in a modern user interface for employees to feel confident and taken care of.

Sense of Community

As mentioned, LinkedIn has been a powerhouse channel for isolved to share their brand externally. The uniquely energetic employee discussion proliferating on LinkedIn demonstrates the strong community within the company. Tonk says Chief of People Amy Mosher is largely responsible for building that highly participatory and welcoming presence on the networking site. It has not gone unnoticed: an external partner recently asked Tonk if she had transitioned to a role in HR, because he'd noticed she was posting about hiring for other departments. She told him that she was just excited. "It's another department, but I want to help them hire the right people, and my connections are going to help them do that." For all employees, isolved's Share & Perform platform gives them access to referral links too, allowing them to help hire people they know and get rewarded for it.

Increased Productivity

From an operational standpoint, Dressler says, "A centralized tool for project management has been our best friend." The platform has not only facilitated the everyday tasks that must be completed to execute on a project, but also allowed the staff to measure improvements. Using Trello to compare productivity from the first quarter, they observed a 47 percent productivity increase.

The key performance indicators also demonstrate excellent productivity: Dressler shares that "the number of conversions we've had from content assets, quarter over quarter, is up 660 percent. And the number of new users to our site is up triple digits." Dressler credits the gains to effective ways to connect with colleagues as their strategy changed from team-driven to a centralized approach.

isolved's growth continues with apparent ease. Both the sales and marketing teams have expanded significantly: Dressler says that they went from 10 or 15 marketers to two or three times that number, and Tonk adds that the marketing team as a whole has grown 55 percent.

Business has grown, too. isolved started a demand generation program for the digital side of the business in 2020, and marketing had 64 percent impact on that source. In the fourth quarter, that was up to 90 percent. Tonk acknowledges that many companies invested heavily in digital during the pandemic, but she says that what isolved did differently was to become more technologically sophisticated with digital.

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Continued Growth

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People First Perspective

With the new brand's efforts to emphasize trust and the client perspective, Tonk believes that the company is now really speaking to prospects about what they truly need. "I don't believe we were as clear before." Tonk says the [company's recent acquisition of Givful](#), a workplace giving and volunteering software, exemplifies isolved's connection with its customers and ability to really think of what it can do for customers' employees as they heal from the pandemic crisis.

isolved has made a concerted shift toward people-based marketing. Tonk points to the company's digital investment and to its sophisticated account-based marketing (ABM) program. The marketing team adapted its strategy to the responses it was observing during the pandemic and ultimately switched the order completely: marketing now first pursues a lead's attention through digital and ABM, and then introduces webinars when they have the attention. Dressler notes that this represents a shift in a leader's mindset as well. A leader interested in quality over quantity needs to be able to recognize that getting 30 strong prospects to attend a webinar might be better than pursuing large attendance numbers. Tonk adds that what makes those 30 people truly



qualified prospects is that by the time they get to the webinar, marketing has already put in the work to ensure they are ready to talk.

While the marketing team was originally disappointed with the response to direct mail at the beginning of the pandemic, when many people were wary of accepting packages for fear of contracting the virus through surfaces, that concern faded as understanding of the coronavirus improved. isolved also took the time to re-think its approach to direct mail. It's now more personalized, and marketing is once again seeing returns in leads from this approach.

Next Steps for isolved

Dressler says that this year it is all about “proving the brand” through the voice of the customer, employee, and independent sources like analysts and journalists. The company's main focus will be on sustaining growth, accelerating their market impact even further and maintaining the positive changes that resulted from the pandemic like extensive collaboration, and telling the brand story through the voice of the customer. They have already implemented a few more tools this year, and plans are in place for further additions. In February, the company launched an employee advocacy tool from the vendor [PostBeyond](#), which has gone over well so far. Dressler points out that had isolved not had

that culture of sharing and empowerment in place, the team wouldn't have seen such success with the utilization. She credits Mosher's efforts in particular for the fact that “everyone was already feeling empowered and wanting to share.”

The team also plans to prolong the initiatives that proved to have a positive effect after they were introduced out of necessity during the pandemic, such as using a centralized tool for project management.. Dressler noted the importance of maintaining what she calls the “tactical arm of Trello,” making sure that all teams feed into the broader strategy and none are reduced to order takers, which can happen when usage of the platform is allowed to become too siloed.

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Since the new people-based approach has worked well during the pandemic, isolved's marketing team will continue full steam ahead. In addition to frequent analysis, Tonk and team plan to analyze overall results at year's end to determine whether direct mail has the same impact post-return to the office. In the meantime, the company is doubling down on that medium: the demand generation team will soon be implementing [Alyce](#), a platform that enables personalized swag gifting.



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A Brand and Company Transformed

With isolved People Cloud, isolved successfully rebranded itself as a unified and wholly people-focused entity. The new and improved brand, originally revamped to correct perceptions externally, has also proven transformative internally. That isolved's period of growth was not stalled by the pandemic is proof positive of the strength of its employee culture. In fact, isolved was poised for success in 2020, as only those companies with the most solid foundations were. The isolved team was able to approach the challenges of the pandemic as opportunities, and whether by reinventing the company's marketing strategy or finding new ways to connect with one another, isolved managed to capitalize on those opportunities and emerge victorious. In a time that has threatened to sink less-stable businesses, isolved transformed itself and pulled off another year of tremendous growth.

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