NAVIAGATING THE DIGITAL MARKETPLACE

Jason Parks leverages passion to achieve results for The Media Captain

Some people tell Jason Parks that he works too much. Late nights and early mornings may find him leaning over a computer, caffeinated beverage within reach, as he edits video clips or scours online articles about the latest digital marketing trends. He claims to be fueled by Red Bull, but really, he’s driven by excitement about the digital marketplace that he grew up in.

His passion drove him to found The Media Captain, a Columbus-based digital marketing agency, in 2010 — soon after he graduated from Arizona State University with a degree in communication and media studies. For him, youthfulness wasn’t a barrier but an advantage.

“I can remember, growing up, how many people would say they wish they tried to start a business or go after their dream job when they were younger,” Parks says. “When I started the company at 22, I didn’t have many responsibilities, so I knew it would be the perfect time to start a business and give it 100 percent.”

Using youthful energy to his benefit, Parks started working fervently to keep his services on the cutting edge, while answering the 24/7 demands of running a business. His enthusiastic work ethic quickly established the company as a serious player, experienced beyond its age. By its second year of operation, The Media Captain’s business doubled, as Parks’ passion for online advertising and search engine marketing sparked results for clients. In its fourth year, the company continues to grow its client list and staff, working with businesses from publicly traded, national brands to local, family-owned companies.

By leveraging the excitement upon which he built his business, Parks cultivated an energetic team to keep growing the digital marketing agency. The Media Captain’s staff is made up of four millennials like Parks, who are equally enthusiastic about their specialties within digital marketing, ranging from web development to graphic design to social media marketing.

The team’s enthusiasm has a snowball effect, compounding into a passion that differentiates the company.

“We’re young and energetic, and that separates us from a lot of our competitors,” Parks says. “Every one of our staff grew up finding information on Google, using social media and online marketing as a part of our everyday lives, so we have a very keen eye for the latest trends in the digital marketing field.”

That youthful, energetic approach is one that would flop in many other industries, especially across the generation gap with established client executives. But in this industry, it is a key to success.

“In most industries, if I was 23 or 24, knocking on business owners’ doors, they wouldn’t take me seriously,” Parks says. “But in the field of new and emerging media, people trust the younger generation because we grew up with all of this online marketing, social media and search engines.”

However, Parks knew that familiarity and enthusiasm wouldn’t be enough to sustain his business — he needed to back those things up with results. So he built his young team around the shared passion for generating bottom-line results, not just online activity.

“There’s a huge difference between somebody who is passionate about getting on their Facebook page and somebody who is passionate about getting return on investment from social media, who can dig down into analytics or search engine optimization,” Parks says. “Our generation is very passionate about the social landscape, but when working with businesses, you have to have a passion for bringing in new business for the client.”

By keeping his team’s digital passions focused on results, Parks leverages their enthusiasm to the clients’ benefit. Each teammate is immersed in his or her specialty, so each one is constantly researching new tools, trends and ideas to stay fresh. In a field as fast paced as digital marketing,
success depends on being cutting edge. In fact, The Media Captain’s website promises a “team that’s obsessed (yes, obsessed) with finding out about the latest and greatest when it comes to digital marketing.”

As the team shares its findings and ideas, the conversation keeps clients’ goals first in mind.

“If there’s something that we read about and think, ‘This could be significantly successful for a client,’ even if a lot of other people aren’t trying that, we feel that it’s worth testing,” Parks says. “By having that attitude where we’re willing to test new advertising projects and stay up with the latest trends, we’ll be able to help our clients with the new, changing technology.”

But that doesn’t mean clients become guinea pigs for testing new ideas.

“The nice thing about being a company in this industry is that, before we test it out with a client, we’ll test it out ourselves on our website or our advertising campaign,” Parks says. “If we find it is successful for us, then we’ll make the pitch.”

The goal is to find the most effective ways to get clients noticed online, but by testing out ideas internally. The Media Captain is exercising its traffic-boosting magic on itself in the process.

“I invest money back into advertising so we can practice what we preach,” says Parks. “We do a lot of SEO for ourselves, and we spend a lot of time on that, because it’s not fair when companies come in and say, ‘We’ll help you with your SEO,’ but their own website isn’t ranking high.”

As part of its digital marketing mix, The Media Captain runs pay-per-click ads to capture search engine traffic from keywords related to its services, and its website ranks high on Google results for keyword phrases such as “Digital Marketing Company Columbus.” The company also advertises on YouTube and other social channels.

Parks had to make some serious investments up front to build a technical foundation where his team’s excitement and experiments could thrive. In what he calls both his riskiest and smartest move, Parks spent $10,000 on professional video and editing equipment — before he had a single client. It quickly paid off as a differentiator:

“Not many digital marketing companies offer video production service,” he says, explaining that online video projects often see better, faster Google ranking results than websites. “This has become extremely valuable for SEO purposes since Google owns YouTube, so this makes us a one-stop shop for everything digital.”

While keeping the focus on results, Parks is also learning to juggle the other daily responsibilities, such as finances, that lead up to the results.

“Owning a business, there are so many things that come up spur of the moment that you need help with,” Parks says. “FirstMerit Bank has always been able to assist me, whether I need to make a transfer from one account to another or open another credit card. There are many tasks that FirstMerit helps me with, which helps with the day-to-day business.”

With a strong banking partner looking out for its interests, the company can focus on continued growth. And as The Media Captain’s specialties expand, so does its client base. But it’s not until those clients start getting customers online that Parks counts it a success. That’s the ever-moving goal line that keeps his team running.

“We find it really rewarding to see that new business is being developed for clients through our online marketing techniques,” Parks says. “We’re always motivated to find new ways to generate more business for them, because at the end of the day, that’s good for them, and it’s good for us, also.”

For more information: www.themediacaptain.com or (614) 564-9313.