

ERS

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2012

Kuhcoon helps you make friends

Startup aims to help businesses navigate social media, Web 2.0.

BY DAVID FALCHEK
STAFF WRITER

Delivering pizza for Dino & Francesco's in Moosic, University of Scranton student Andrew Torba made a suggestion that became a startup company.

He offered to help create and maintain the restaurant's Facebook page. Then did it for other small businesses eager to get into social media but unsure how to do it right and unable to devote the time.

Mr. Torba teamed up with friend, fellow Riverside High School graduate, and Drexel University electrical engineering major Charles "C.J." Szymanski and came up with Kuhcoon. Pronounced "cocoon," the company won the Great Valley Technology Alliance's Business Plan Competition earlier this year.

Kuhcoon has an office in the Scranton Enterprise Center and eight employees. In about a year, Mr. Torba went



JAKE DANNA STEVENS / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

From left, Kuhcoon representatives, co-founder and CEO Andrew Torba, Chief Commercial Officer Silas Sheridan, community manager Allie Hollander, community manager Samantha Pagan, Vice President Jeff Katra and Chief Marketing Officer Mike Toma.

from delivering pizzas around Moosic to chatting up venture capitalists looking to take Kuhcoon national or international.

"I was always entrepreneurial and knew I wanted to start a business," he said. "It wasn't until working with C.J. that I saw that what I was doing was scalable."

The lack of understanding and time to manage social

networking correctly is fairly common among businesses, Mr. Torba found. With Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google Plus, Pinterest and more, many small businesses may feel as though they are missing out. Best practices in the nascent social networking world — such as maintaining content schedules and proper use of pictures and links — are not well-known.

"Businesses recognize the need to be social but don't understand it," he said. "To make it work, you have to be diligent, post every day and create content."

For \$500 per month, Kuhcoon will handle that for a business.

Being on Facebook helps maintain a "community of interest" around the brand, said Shelly Palmer, business consultant and author of the Digital Living blog. But Mr. Palmer has misgivings about companies that tell businesses they can outsource their social media and translate it to sales.

"A business has been building its brand since five minutes after it opened," Mr. Palmer said. "After a year, or 10, or 15, of living your brand, you don't just hand the keys to someone and say 'Here, see what you can do.'"

Mr. Torba counters that his team of three marketing specialists get to know clients, their business, their industry, before representing the company on Facebook.

Kuhcoon marketing specialist Allie Hollander said

she tries to write posts in the voice of the owner. When a follower posts a question to which she doesn't have the answer, she has a point of contact with the client to quickly get and post a response. They also address posted complaints or concerns.

Kuhcoon knows the type and timing of posts to drive the average number of business's followers who see a post from the typical 7 to 15 percent to 25 or 40 percent and increase the number of "shares" — when a follower reposts to their personal news feed to their followers to see.

Business owners get feedback, a repackaging of Facebook's analytics, that shows demographic and engagement information.

One hurdle lies before Mr. Torba and Mr. Szymanski's dream for upscaling Kuhcoon: school. Mr. Torba is beginning his senior year as a philosophy major at the University of Scranton. Mr. Szymanski won't graduate from Drexel until 2014 and plans to work for Kuhcoon from afar.

Contact the writer:
dfalchek@timeshamrock.com

David Falchek. (Sep. 09, 2012). Kuhcoon helps you make friends, re. Andrew Torba, Mike Toma, Jeff Katra, Silas Sheridan, Allie Hollander, Samantha Pagan. The Times-Tribune (Scranton, PA).

Reproduced for educational purposes only. Fair Use relied upon.

David Falchek. (Sep. 09, 2012). Kuhcoon helps you make friends, re. Andrew Torba, Mike Toma, Jeff Katra, Silas Sheridan, Allie Hollander, Samantha Pagan. The Times-Tribune (Scranton, PA).

Source:

TRANSCRIPTION

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2012

Kuhcoon helps you make friends

Startup aims to help businesses navigate social media, Web 2.0.

BY DAVID FALCHEK STAFF WRITER

Delivering pizza for Dino & Francesco's in Moosic, University of Scranton student Andrew Torba made a suggestion that became a startup company

He offered to help create and maintain the restaurant's Facebook page. Then did it for other small businesses eager to get into social media but unsure how to do it right and unable to devote the time.

Mr. Torba teamed up with friend, fellow Riverside High School graduate, and Drexel University electrical engineering major Charles "C.J." Szymanski and came up with Kuhcoon. Pronounced "cocoon," the company won the Great Valley Technology Alliance's Business Plan Competition earlier this year.

Kuhcoon has an office in the Scranton Enterprise Center and eight employees. In about a year, Mr. Torba went from delivering pizzas around Moosic to chatting up venture capitalists looking to take Kuhcoon national or international.

[PHOTO]

JAKE DANNA STEVENS STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

From left, Kuhcoon representatives, co-founder and CEO Andrew Torba, Chief Commercial Officer Silas Sheridan, community manager Allie Hollander, community manager Samantha Pagan, Vice President Jeff Katra and Chief Marketing Officer Mike Toma.

"I was always entrepreneurial and knew I wanted to start a business," he said. "It wasn't until working with C.J. that I saw that what I was doing was scalable."

The lack of understanding and time to manage social networking correctly is fairly common among businesses, Mr. Torba found. With Face-book, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google Plus, Pinterest and more, many small businesses may feel as though they are missing out. Best practices in the nascent social networking world such as maintaining content schedules and proper use of pictures and links are not well-known.

"Businesses recognize the need to be social but don't understand it," he said. "To make it work, you have to be diligent, post every day and create content. " For \$500 per month, Kuhcoon will handle that for a business.

Being on Facebook helps maintain a "community of interest" around the brand, said Shelly Palmer, business consultant and author of the Digital Living blog. But Mr. Palmer has misgivings about companies that tell businesses they can outsource their social media and translate it to sales.

"A business has been building its brand since five minutes after it opened," Mr. Palmer said. "After a year, or 10, or 15, of living your brand, you don't just hand the keys to someone and say 'Here, see what you can do.'"

Mr Torba counters that his team of three marketing specialists get to know clients, their business, their industry before representing the company on Facebook.

Kuhcoon marketing specialist Allie Hollander said she tries to write posts in the voice of the owner. When a follower posts a question to which she doesn't have the answer, she has a point of contact with the client to quickly get and post a response. They also address posted complaints or concerns.

Kuhcoon knows the type and timing of posts to drive the average number of business's followers who see a post from the typical 7 to 15 percent to 25 or 40 percent and increase the number of "shares" when a follower reposts to their personal news feed to their followers to see.

Business owners get feedback, a repackaging of Facebook's analytics, that shows demographic and engagement information.