

CASE STUDY

LaunchStar® – how Telerik's UX design expertise helped deliver an outstanding application for marketing guru Dan Adams and AIM



LaunchStar, a software package created by Advanced Industrial Marketing (AIM), draws on the wisdom and experience of B2B marketing guru Dan Adams. Called in by AIM midway through an ambitious overhaul of the application, the Telerik Services team (then called NimblePros) helped get the project back on track, delivering an innovative UI design inspired by Dan's personal style.

OVERVIEW

COUNTRY

US

INDUSTRY

Marketing

CUSTOMER PROFILE

Dan Adams and Advanced Industrial Marketing (AIM) are respected in the worldwide B2B marketing community for delivering unique insight into the new product development and launch process, with customers including Dow Chemical and DuPont.

BUSINESS SITUATION

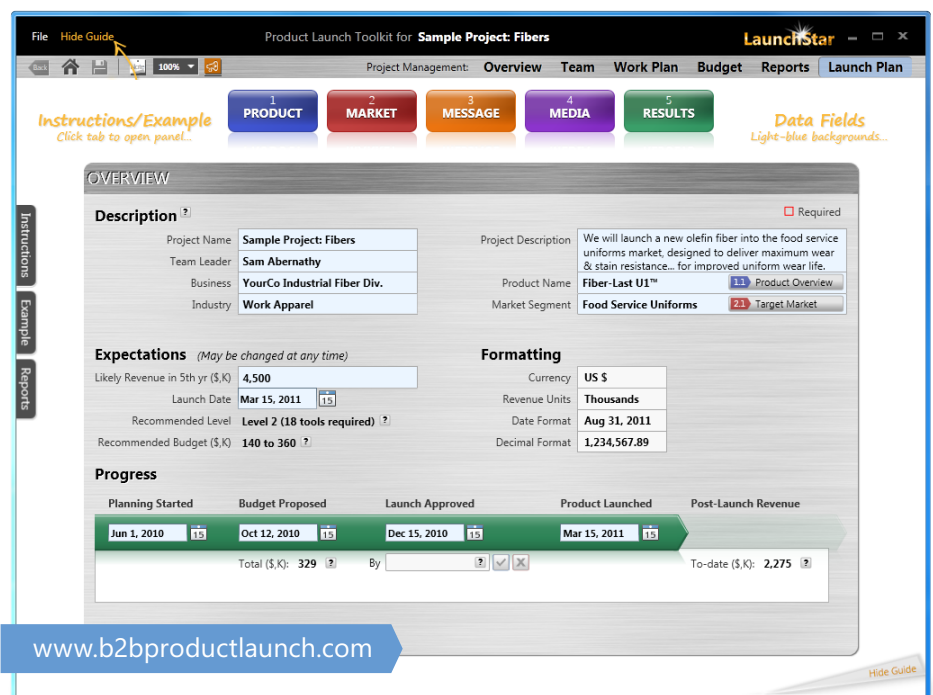
AIM wanted to transform its LaunchStar software solution into a standalone application with a modern user interface and make it available through the cloud. Halfway through the project, it was clear that the user interface designs were not meeting expectations.

SOLUTION

AIM called on the UX expertise of the Telerik Services team (then an independent company called NimblePros) to get the project back on track.

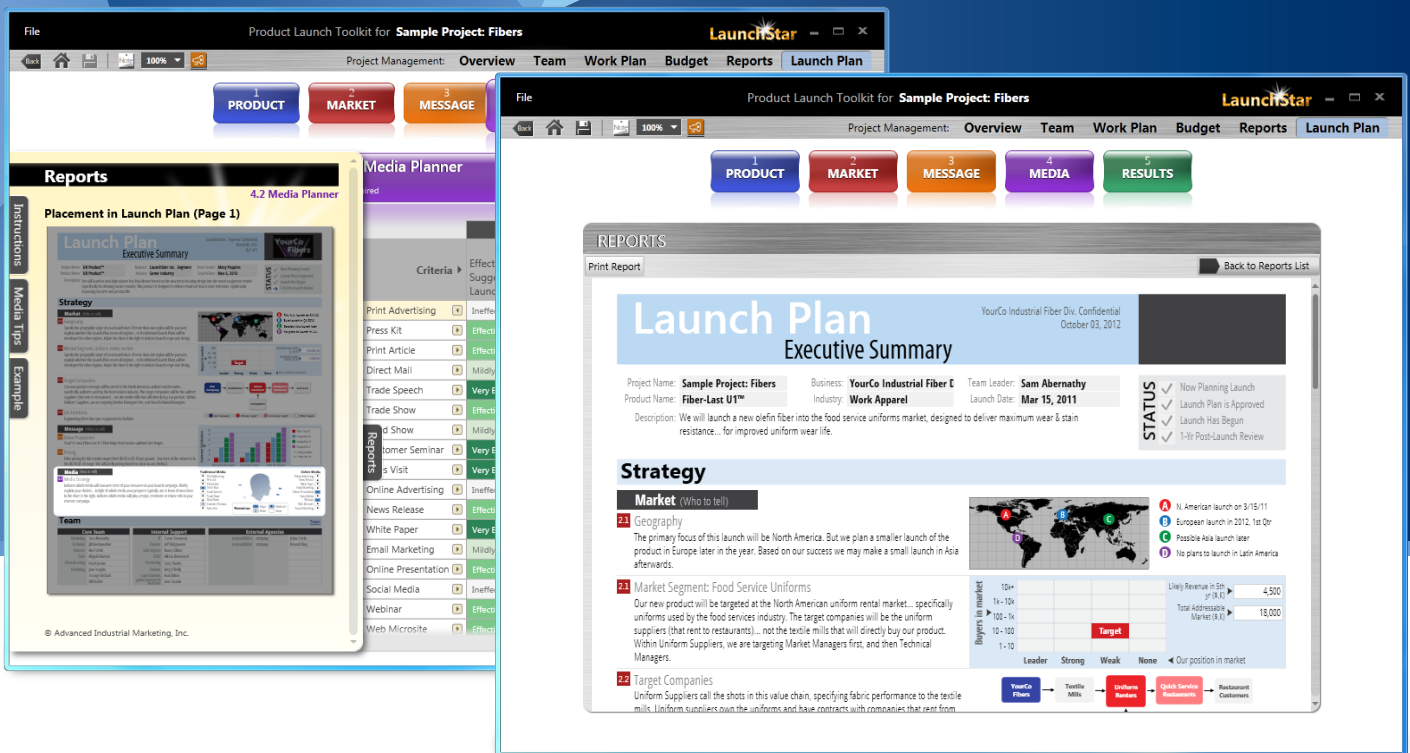
BENEFITS

- Seamless integration of the Services team members with project team
- Rapid development of highly innovative, attractive and functional interface
- On time delivery of project



“Working with Craig and his team was a great experience. Craig really listened to us. Once he got involved, the project became fun again.”

Dan Adams,
International marketing guru and Founder of AIM



BACKGROUND

Dan Adams understands how challenging a new product launch can be. The founder of Advanced Industrial Marketing (AIM) and an internationally recognized B2B marketing guru, Dan has worked with Fortune 100 corporations including Dow Chemical and DuPont to create effective new product launch campaigns.

Determined to bring his insights to a wider audience, Dan and the team at AIM developed the LaunchStar software package. Using metrics developed over years of consulting experience, the system guides marketers through the creation of a launch campaign, helping them choose the best communications channels to take their message to market with the most effective support. At the end of the process, the system generates a high-quality campaign plan document ready to put on a CEO's desk.

LaunchStar is an important part of AIM's business model. "As a marketing consultancy we offer

training as well as software, so good software drives demand for our services," says Dan. "The quality of the software is critical. If we don't have best-in-class software, we don't get the job."

THE CHALLENGE

Originally launched as a Microsoft Excel software solution, by 2011 LaunchStar was beginning to feel dated. Dan and his team decided to overhaul the product and create an entirely new desktop application focusing on ease of use and team-wide collaboration.

"We wanted to move away from Excel," says Dan. "We wanted the user experience to be much better, and we wanted to make the product available through the cloud."

As this kind of development project lay outside AIM's expertise, it seemed natural to hire specialist companies to handle the coding and the user interface

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TELERIK SERVICES – EXPERT UX DEVELOPMENT FROM THE UX EXPERTS

Design is no longer optional. For any application, whatever the market, ease of use is a critical driver of adoption, retention and productivity.

Telerik's expert UX designers can help deliver even the most ambitious project. With a deep understanding of .NET technologies, they can help with any task from a complex application to a custom skin for an individual control.

Better still, the Telerik Services team draws on the collective expertise of the whole Telerik family – not only working closely with experts within Telerik, but also collaborating with members of the Telerik Partner Network to assemble the best combination of skills and experience, whatever the challenge.

HOW NIMBLEPROS BECAME TELERIK SERVICES

Originally an independent .NET software development house, in 2012 NimblePros joined forces with Telerik to form the new Telerik Services Team.

"When Telerik invited us to join their organization, our entire team was excited about the opportunity to assist even more customers with their development needs," says Telerik EVP of Services and NimblePros founder Michelle Smith. "And it's a real benefit for the customers to have the resources of the entire Telerik organization available to support our projects. From the internal Product teams to its strong Telerik Partner Network, Telerik is committed to providing the best solution for the customer, just like we did for Dan Adams and AIM."

"It's not enough to just write code. You need to have integrity, honesty, and exceptional service. Telerik, like NimblePros, understands that, and we are proud to be part of the Telerik team."

design. However, while the developers made good progress, the designers rapidly ran into problems.

"The initial designs were disappointing," says Dan. "We did not feel that the designers understood our ambition for the product. They had a rigid methodology and were very committed to following what they saw as best practice. We wanted to create something fresh and new, but we felt that we were not being heard."

"Eventually, even though the project was by then at an advanced stage, we decided to start over on the user interface. We needed to find a new design team who could understand what we wanted to do and make it into a reality."

THE SOLUTION

AIM contracted the Telerik Services team – then an independent company called NimblePros – to design the user interface. Lead designer on the project was Craig Palenshus.

"My first priority is always to understand the customer's needs," Craig says. "Coming in as a consultant, I don't understand things like the customer does. So my first job was to get inside Dan's head."

Talking with Dan on an almost daily basis, Craig quickly identified two problems with the project. First, the software had usability issues for which he was able to recommend improvements. Second, the interface design did not reflect Dan's inspirational delivery as a consultant and trainer.

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Craig Palenshus,
Lead Designer, Telerik Services

"Dan is known worldwide in B2B marketing and his personality plays an important role in inspiring his audiences. The UX did not reflect his character. It was totally absent. However, this was not the case with other AIM materials, which do reflect Dan's personality and style. We needed to create a professional and polished UI that would complement the other materials."

Craig and his team quickly developed new designs for the application. "We used an agile approach, meaning we didn't design the whole thing up front. We designed from a higher level, figured out the general flow and then designed and implemented a few screens before implementing a few more. This kept the client involved at every step. The client set the priority for what was done, and when."

The design that evolved makes innovative use of white space and color to provide a working environment that evokes Dan's inspirational personality. Special care was taken to optimize ease

of use throughout the interface, encouraging users to explore and engage with all the available functionality. The design was also carried through to the LaunchStar website and collateral material including a book and virtual product packaging, creating a coherent visual identity for the product and its promotion.

Throughout the seven month engagement, Craig and his team worked closely with the development team. Some developers were located in Ukraine, making regular face to face contact impossible. This was offset by Craig's ability to deliver the UI designs in XAML.

"Problems often arise when a designer hands off a pixel design to be built by developers. Things get lost in translation, or are not implemented well. Because I was able to hand the

software team actual code, we were able to eliminate a lot of misunderstanding and make the process faster."

THE RESULT

The new version of LaunchStar is everything the team at AIM hoped for. "The universal reaction from our customers is that they are blown away," says Dan. "They've never seen anything that looks this nice and is this functional."

"Working with Craig and his team was like going from night to day. The project went from a train wreck to a great experience. Craig really listened to us. Once he got involved, the project became fun again."

"Craig and his team were flexible. They were prepared to work with another software house even

though they could be considered competitors. They integrated into the project team seamlessly and we never found ourselves waiting on them. The design cost was 10 percent of the project but we got a lot of bang for our buck."

THE VERDICT

Would AIM use the Telerik Services team again? "Absolutely," says Dan. "I was delighted when I heard that Craig and his colleagues had joined Telerik and I'm looking forward to working with them again on future projects."

ABOUT ADVANCED INDUSTRIAL MARKETING INC

Advanced Industrial Marketing Inc (AIM) conducts training workshops for some of the world's largest firms on four continents. AIM focuses on one thing: providing B2B suppliers with tools and skills to improve their new product development (NPD), particularly in the "fuzzy front end." AIM is famous for its New Product Blueprinting NPD methodology, which developed from Dan Adams' revolutionary work with DuPont, as well as its respected LaunchStar launch planning software.

For more information please contact Dan.Adams@aimtolead.com

ABOUT TELERIK SERVICES

No one knows Telerik's award winning tools better than Telerik. Telerik's Services

team delivers this expertise to customers who need additional resources to help them build better applications and improve processes. Telerik Services combines Telerik's own in-house Services team with an extensive network of partners to provide the optimal profile of skills and expertise, whether the requirement is for software development, training, user experience design or project assessment.

ABOUT TELERIK

Telerik is the market-leading provider of end-to-end solutions for application development, automated software testing, agile project management, reporting, and content management across all major Microsoft development platforms. Telerik is trusted by more than 100,000 customers worldwide for its innovation and industry-best technical support.

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