

Talking shop with Web.com CEO David Brown

Lilitera R. Williams
The Recorder



David Brown

Tim Finchem and Web.com CEO David Brown announced a 10-year agreement making Web.com the new umbrella sponsor of the former Nationwide Tour.

Web.com is an innovative website design company that constantly aims to accomplish one main goal: Help small businesses succeed online.

A haven of resourcefulness and independent opportunities, Web.com is notably the fastest growing online marketing company that focuses on assisting this specific market of prospering businesses.

Not only does the company aim to foster an environment of infinite growth for its employees, it also allows them the opportunity to recognize the potential in their individual talents and gifts.

Web.com and the PGA Tour

In June, PGA Tour Commissioner

The Web.com Tour will continue to identify and transition players who are ready to compete and win on the PGA Tour. It currently awards membership to the 25 leading money winners at the end of the season. Beginning in 2013, however, the importance of the Web.com Tour will further increase when the new qualifying structure for the PGA Tour expands

that number to 50.

In addition to the umbrella sponsorship, Web.com also became an official marketing partner of the PGA Tour, Web.com Tour and Champions Tour.

Web.com will also enhance each Web.com Tour community through charitable outreach. In 2011 the Web.com Tour (formerly the Nationwide Tour) raised \$7.35 million for charity, pushing its cumulative total since inception in 1990 to \$75 million.

Sitting down with David Brown

As a full-time Quality Control Editor and aspiring entrepreneur, I've had the pleasure of witnessing Web.com's mission firsthand.

I was recently granted permission to conduct a one-on-one interview with the company's CEO and Ponte Vedra Beach resident David Brown.

"How are we going to help them if they don't know who we are?" was the question he asked himself after much influence from his family and close colleagues while struggling with the decision to take the company public in 2005.

Despite his former reluctance to permit media coverage, Brown willingly shared his thoughts surrounding the company's current and future goals, and even provided candid advice for those who desire to pursue a career beyond corporate constraints.

Recorder: Why do you think it's so important for small businesses to maintain an effective online presence?

Brown: In today's environment with so many consumers searching for information online, learning about current events, and shopping, everyone spends their time on their mobile phone or on their computer and, therefore, if you're trying to survive and get mindshare amongst that population that's online, you need to be online.

The next part of the equation, which makes it difficult, is that just being online isn't good enough, because you want to actually get found in searches.

That means your online presence has to be better than your competitors'.

Also, once they come to your site you want them to convert into a lead or a sale. So, you've got to have done a higher level of preparation in your online presence.

I think it's not only critical to be there, but now you need to be there in an effective way.

Recorder: How was the PGA Tour deal arranged and secured? What are the specific benefits of the partnership?

Brown: As you know the PGA Tour is headquartered in Ponte Vedra and Web.com is headquartered here in



Photo submitted by Lilitera R. Williams

Web.com CEO and the author at an event at the company's headquarters in Jacksonville.

Jacksonville.

I knew that they were looking for a new sponsor and they became familiar with us as a company and got very excited about the alignment of what we try to do — which is help small businesses succeed online — and with what they do — which is help young professional golfers achieve their full potential and make the PGA Tour.

We also both have a strong desire to help the communities we operate in and we both see our jobs and our businesses as a mission.

So, that alignment really made it possible for us to do the deal.

What I see us getting from it is name recognition, and not just name recognition but positive name recognition.

The PGA Tour is so highly regarded and when people think of our name I want them to think well of us. I want them to think we stand for something good and then, of course, I want the reality to be there.

The second thing we're going to get is an opportunity to help in a much broader way. If I had to try to figure out how to reach 100 markets in the United States so that we could help those markets and help the communities and the charities, this is the single easiest way to unlock the door to the biggest markets in the United States.

This is going to allow Web.com to help charities all across the country, as well as small businesses. So, I think that's a major opportunity.

The final thing is we're planning on sending a team into every Web.com Tour and ultimately every PGA Tour and Champions Tour event to help small businesses conduct educational seminars and to help them understand what it takes to be successful. We're

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not charging for it, it's just one of our ways to help small businesses survive and become stronger in this merging online marketplace.

It's the quickest and easiest platform for us to reach all these markets and I'm super excited about it.

Recorder: Explain Web.com's production tier. How are the websites developed and maintained from beginning to end?

Brown: Well, we use an unusual process. We basically apply all the steps it takes to build a website, from gathering information and coming up with a concept, to copywriting, designing, optimizing and quality control, and we create a manufacturing process.

Then, we hire people that have special gifts in each of those areas. We plug them into the part of the process where their skills and their strengths are most evident and I like that for two reasons. It serves the customer in the most efficient way.

We have a very efficient process, but the reason I really love it is because it serves our employees. They get to use their gift or skill in the way that it was intended to be used. They don't have to be great in all areas. They can be great in the area where they have their greatest strength and then they can grow in the organization. That's one of the reasons why our company exists, to create an opportunity for the gifts and skills of people to come out.

Recorder: What are your primary responsibilities as the CEO?

Brown: My primary responsibility is to be focused on the culture of the company, to make sure that it's a good place for our employees to work and that we're customer focused.

I have a lot of technical things that I do each day. I talk to investors and analysts and I manage the senior management team, but when I really think about what's important to me, it has to do with the culture of the company.

Are we being honest? Do we have integrity? Is there genuineness within our company?

I look for the places where we aren't genuine. I don't see them all. It's not perfect, but that's my mission here, to do what it is we say we're going to do.

When you look at our values, I realize those are great values to have as a company and I know we fail at them each day, but my job each day coming in is to try harder to make sure that we live up to them.

Recorder: How dedicated are you to customer satisfaction and meeting the customer's expectations?

Brown: We exist to serve. That's the most important thing. That's what I believe my mission in life is, whether



Photo submitted by the PGA Tour

Bill Calfee (left), President of the Web.com Tour; golfer Luke List; David Brown, Chairman, President & CEO of Web.com; golfer Casey Wittenberg and golfer Andres Gonzales. List, Wittenberg and Gonzales are three of the four leading money winners on the Web.com Tour.

it's a customer or an employee.

Each day I take a number of calls directly from customers. I always take them first. I have an escalation team now that always does the research and reports back to me. Each and every customer complaint that comes back to me, I know that it's been resolved and that we satisfied the customer or died trying.

So, I would tell you that I'm very focused and I follow one simple rule: at the end of the day did we treat the customer the way I would want to be treated — and if we didn't, then make it right.

Recorder: How much has the company's revenue increased over the years and what were the particular improvements that directly affected the company's financial success?

Brown: Well, it's been a fun ride here. We've been acquisitive, acquiring a number of companies and we've also grown just because people have referred customers to us and our marketing plans.

We were approximately a \$30 million revenue company in 2005 when we went public. This year we'll probably be in the range of \$500 million.

We had about 50,000 customers in 2005 and this year we'll probably have about 3 million, so in the seven years that we've been a public company that gives you a sense of the growth rate. I'm not sure what those multiples are, but they're big multiples.

I think the opportunity is as great in growth as it's been the last seven years because the market is finally getting serious about using the Internet and going online to grow their business.

So, the future is probably brighter for our company going forward than it has been in the rearview mirror.

Recorder: What advice would you give to small business owners?

Brown: Get help. It's a very difficult environment to navigate and stay current and to really get value.

It's very easy to have a website, but it's very difficult to have a website that beats the competition and gets your ranking higher and keeps it there, and then exploits Facebook or mobile or other forms of social media.

I think finding a trusted partner is the best advice that I could give someone and just realize that like everything else in life, it's not static so you've got to constantly improve. That's why I think help is so important.

Recorder: What is your ultimate goal for the company's growth and expansion? Five years from now?

Brown: This is going to sound odd, but I don't have any ultimate goals other than to help as many people as possible and do it in the most genuine way possible.

I don't feel constrained by a 5- or 10-year customer or revenue plan. I think the opportunity is great and my constraint is will we actually do a genuine job of serving the market.

I hope that if it's possible to get from 3 million to 5 million, or 5 million to 7 million or 10 million, then I would feel like we've helped a lot of people and really served well. That's how I think about the business and everything else takes care of itself when you genuinely serve well.

If you have the interest of your customer at heart and you work hard, and surround yourself with good people, you all of a sudden have a really good business and that's what we do here. We put those pieces together in order to have a really good business.

Vicky Oakes

St. Johns County Supervisor of Elections

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