

Knight Ridder

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Holly Simmons, Senior Director of Product Marketing, Knight Ridder Digital

Impact Highlights:

- Measured the site effectiveness and usability of KansasCity.com and Philly.com
- Discovered which content and features were adding value to the sites, and which were in need of improvement.
- Keynote recommendations used to enhance overall customer experience.

About Knight Ridder Digital (KRD)

Knight Ridder is the nation's second largest newspaper publisher, with products in print and online. The company publishes 31 daily newspapers in 28 U.S. markets, with a readership of 8.7 million daily and 12.6 million on Sunday. Knight Ridder also has investments in a variety of Internet and technology companies and two newsprint firms. The company's Internet operation, Knight Ridder Digital, develops and manages a variety of online properties, including the websites for The Philadelphia Inquirer, The Kansas City Star, The Miami Herald and San Jose Mercury News. Collectively, the KRD sites reach more than 10 million unique visitors every month.

Knight Ridder Digital's Challenge

Knight Ridder Digital is deeply focused on continuous improvement. To enhance the customer experience, the company regularly bolsters its newspaper sites with new tools and content

ranging from entertainment guides for night owls to interactive discussion boards for sports fans. Knight Ridder Digital believed it was making valuable improvements to its sites, but it had no way of knowing whether visitors were deriving the full benefit of new features—or whether they could even find them on the site. This raised even bigger questions about the overall effectiveness of its sites. Were visitors locating relevant information? Could they easily navigate the site? Was the terminology used on the site concise and easy to understand? In addition, KRD was interested in obtaining third-party research to validate their existing research and hypothesis.

Moreover, Knight Ridder Digital has the additional challenge of managing multiple newspaper sites that vary greatly in terms of design and content. On the one hand, it wanted to make sure it was providing unique information and features that resonated with each local market. On the other hand, Knight Ridder Digital wanted to take advantage of network efficiencies and best practices. Specifically, it wanted to identify the things that

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were working well on a particular site, and encourage its other newspaper sites to adopt those same tools.

The Keynote Solution

Keynote® concentrated its efforts on two Knight Ridder sites: KansasCity.com, the website of The Kansas City Star, and Philly.com, the website of The Philadelphia Inquirer and Philadelphia Daily News. The goal was not simply to understand the workings of these two local sites, but to have them act as a window into what was happening across Knight Ridder’s Internet properties as a whole. Keynote developed in-depth studies designed to assess everything from site organization and visual appeal to breadth of offerings and the likelihood of customers to return to the site. Knight Ridder Digital was looking for a quantitative approach to testing the existing sites with both customers in the local markets of Kansas City and Philadelphia as well as national or non-local customers. Keynote’s automated software allowed KRD to obtain a set of metrics by which to measure current capabilities.

Keynote also outlined a series of tasks to ensure customers were able to properly navigate the site and locate relevant content. One task asked visitors to imagine they were looking for a new job. Keynote was able to monitor where they went online to find out about job openings in the Kansas City area. On Philly.com, visitors were asked to find the latest news about the Philadelphia Eagles, or where they would go to find garage sales advertised in the Philadelphia Inquirer. For each evaluation, Keynote assembled a panel of 200 people: half invited based on local zip codes from the Philadelphia and Kansas City areas, and the other half made up of actual visitors

intercepted while using the site. By closely monitoring the online activities of users, Keynote uncovered critical frustration points and helped Knight Ridder Digital understand which features and content were truly important to its customer base.

“We turned to Keynote because of its solid reputation and proven track record with numerous companies in our direct competitive space,” said Holly Simmons, senior director of “Because of their industry-relevant experience, Keynote consultants were able to quickly grasp what we wanted to accomplish. They develop a detailed set of questions and tasks that really targeted the issues that were important to us.”

The Keynote Impact

Keynote allowed Knight Ridder Digital to clearly see which content, features and services were working on its sites and which ones were in need of improvement. For instance, Knight Ridder Digital found that users had difficulty in locating rental home listings on the site. The name of the link that took users to these listings was changed from “Apartments” to “Rentals” so that users would understand that both apartments and homes for rent were available in the same place.

The Keynote evaluation also revealed that 44% of panelists on KansasCity.com felt the homepage was too cluttered. Knight Ridder Digital is now considering options for creating more visual space on the page based on recommendations from Keynote. Additionally, while panelists understood that Movie Listings could be found under the Entertainment section, they had trouble finding those listings once in the Entertainment section. Armed with this information, Knight Ridder Digital can make the appropriate adjustments and greatly improve

the online experience for its customers.

“Keynote has proven incredibly helpful to us,” says Simmons. “It provides us with a slice of information that we could not get on our own. Thanks to Keynote, we now have a more complete picture of what we are doing well and where we need to focus more effort.”

About Keynote

Keynote Systems (NASDAQ "KEYN") is the global test and measurement company for mobile communications and online business performance.

As an independent and trusted third-party, Keynote provides IT and marketing executives with an unbiased view into their Internet services from around the world. For over a decade, we have been providing measurement data and testing capabilities that allow companies to understand and improve their customer's online and mobile experience.

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