The Most Powerful Name in Corporate News

Revolutionary Interaction Platform allowing Brands to better Connect with Consumers

CEOCFO: Mr. Ontko, would you tell us the vision behind Skipstone?
Mr. Ontko: The idea behind Skipstone is to create a better way for consumers and brands to connect. Oftentimes brands deliver their marketing and advertising messages, they only touch on a few items for a few moments, which if we are lucky keeps consumers interested. The problem with the current way of doing things is once we have peaked interest, consumers cannot delve deeper into the process. Skipstone allows the consumer to go deeper by simply asking a question. Because we know what questions consumers have, we can prerecord those answers and serve that up in a video, text format or even audio format. We are finally engaging with the consumer; we are having a two-way conversation with them.

CEOCFO: Why has this approach not been used before?
Mr. Ontko: I have considered doing something similar in the training arena in 1995 but the technology was not available then. I had another company that I started, ran successfully and sold. Now the technology is ready for this interaction so we are going to do it. Researching patent applications shows us this is unique. This is one of those things, like many of the ideas I have, when someone looks at it they hit themself in the head and say wow that seems so easy.

CEOCFO: Where are you in the process? Are people using this service today?
Mr. Ontko: We are about two months away from full production of phase 1. We are onboarding new clients, early adopters believe aligning with this new technology will be a benefit to their brand.
CEOCFO: *What types of companies have been most interested so far?*

Mr. Ontko: Colleges, hospitals, companies that sell products such as car tires, retail locations, even hotels. We are surprised by the diversity of industries that are considering Skipstone.

CEOCFO: *When you approach a company or when they reach out to you, do people understand immediately? What are you finding?*

Mr. Ontko: I am finding that as soon as people see our demo, they are ready to sign up.

CEOCFO: *How will you work with a client in structuring what the product looks like?*

Mr. Ontko: We are going to have multi-level engagement. There are some large brands who will want us to be very engaged at every step and we are prepared for that. There will be advertising agencies and video production companies that will bring their expertise to simply access our system. There will be smaller operations who will self-sign up and self-implement. The benefit of Skipstone is that it will work for all companies big and small, from the National Hotel Chain to the local Hotel Franchise.

CEOCFO: *How do you keep it simple enough so that the consumer will engage?*

Mr. Ontko: Skipstone works seamlessly in various environments. Speaking questions and hearing answers is simple, efficient and works great at home: but in a subway or on a plane it is better to type questions and see answers along with the video. Skipstone is designed to work at home, on the go, and in a store.

CEOCFO: *How are you able to do that with the nuances of different regions in the different ways that people speak?*

Mr. Ontko: Voice recognition software is so much more advanced than it was just a few years ago. Much has been learned regarding regional differences in language. In addition to the way questions are recognized, Skipstone even offers regional differences in how we speak to the customer, in other words Brands can create Skipstones for play in specific parts of the country. Remember Skipstone offers the ability to type questions and see text answers to make sure regional language differences never prevent customer engagement.

CEOCFO: *What has changed from your original concept?*

Mr. Ontko: I always knew that there would be a training component of Skipstone and that is where the idea was rooted. I started with the product demo because I felt that was the biggest need, but I am surprised how much interest there is in the training component of Skipstone.

CEOCFO: *How have you made that easy?*

Mr. Ontko: I am a salesman by trade; I sold cars for many years. The biggest change between product demo and training is that you need a button that a trainee can click and hear why we said what we said and not just what we said. In other words, if I am telling someone that you should greet a customer by saying “Welcome to our Store”, the trainee might change that to “good morning” or “how are you today?” For the training aspect, we need to tell a person that ‘welcome’ should be the first word out of their mouth every time and when we tell them why they will remember.
CEOCFO: So, you are adding value-added insights!
Mr. Ontko: Yes, our training is to teach people a craft: To me Sales is a craft.

CEOCFO: Are companies aware of that or will that come later?
Mr. Ontko: I am working with a very large company now and I do not know will if they will start with the training component or if they are going to start with the product demo component. That will be something that is determined in the next few weeks. I had intended on rolling out product demo first and then training plus there is a meeting component of this that has not been publicly announced yet. The meeting component will allow people to be in the same meeting not just in different places but at different times. Can you imagine if you had a meeting with a colleague in Australia and you could have the meeting at 9:00 am your time and they could have the same meeting at 9:00 am their time?

CEOCFO: How is that the same meaning?
Mr. Ontko: A meeting notice will be sent out to several meeting attendees: each will see a pre-recorded demo they can view and ask questions to. The first attendee will watch the presentation, ask a question and see the answer. The second attendee will see the demo, see the first question asked and the answer, ask a question of their own and so on. Early attendees will have a chance to see subsequent questions and answers.

CEOCFO: What is the plan for the next year or so?
Mr. Ontko: We are wrapping up development of phase one, product demo. As phase two and three are completed, we will fully develop the training infrastructure so companies specializing in training can begin utilizing Skipstone. As the New Year begins we should be ready to start development of Skipstone Meeting.

CEOCFO: Do you have the funding for the steps you would like to take and will you be seeking investments or partners in any way?
Mr. Ontko: I really do not know if we will seek investment. The only investment we would consider is go-to-market funding. We will weigh the benefits of a quicker strategy versus the cost of investment.

CEOCFO: Why pay attention to Skipstone?
Mr. Ontko: Skipstone is revolutionizing the way brands and consumers connect, period. Imagine the day when you can ask a question directly to a Television Commercial. Imagine asking your car how to change its clock after daylight savings time. Imagine listening to a song and asking the artist what the lyrics mean. Skipstone is going to be so intertwined with the fabric of our daily lives that it is going to be one of those things that once you have you will never want to be without it.

CEOCFO: How would that potentially work with interaction with television and particularly when someone has negative comments about the show?
Mr. Ontko: Viewers of content will be able to ask question of the content. They may ask a Television show “why did you kill off my favorite character?” This will alert the producer that perhaps they should reconsider the move, perhaps a little TV Magic should bring the character back. The benefit of Skipstone is we have this interaction with the viewer that we have never had in the past.

Interview conducted by: Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor, CEOCFO Magazine