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# NEXTIER BANK PODCASTING CASE STUDY

TEXT BY MARK JULIANO

image: NexTier

**NEXTIER IS A** regional bank with 15 community branches north of Pittsburgh, a private bank in Radnor, Pennsylvania, and a loan production office in Scottsdale, Arizona. The bank caters to both small-to-medium sized businesses as well as consumers. They have been in business for over 128 years, with deep roots in the community. With respect to podcasting, it has changed the way they do marketing.

“We think we’re different in our approach to a business owner and his business,” says Patty Perhacs, Sr. Vice President and Marketing Director with NexTier.

“Anyone who has been called on by a bank probably has a similar experience: The banker comes in, he sits down, introduces himself, and then starts talking about rates, and products, and services, and basically says to the business owner - What are you paying? We’ll see if we can beat your rates.”

“NexTier is different, and our approach is unique in that we are very consultative. We do research and spend time understanding what’s going on in their business today and the challenges they face. We work with our experts from our various business lines, to really put together a comprehensive solution for that particular business owner’s needs.”

Both NexTier and Patty can certainly be considered early pioneers of corporate podcasting. Specifically, Patty has been the podcasting champion within the bank, and early on she recognized the rapid growth of iPods, MP3 players, and iTunes, and saw the opportunity for podcasting as a new medium to convey its marketing messages and differentiate the bank. “As you know, it’s really tough out there. We at NexTier pride ourselves on our innovation. I was very excited to



image: NexTier

embrace this new medium throughout our enterprise.”

The bank’s consultative approach is evidenced in their use of podcasting, which began in January

2007. Currently, NexTier uses podcasting primarily as an educational tool and in turn uses the educational tool for marketing.

Before podcasting, NexTier held an in-person seminar-style Business Learning Series. The bank’s employees would come together with private business owners to discuss relevant topics. “Initially, we thought it would be great to have a recording of the event for all those people who couldn’t attend. We could push out an email of the podcast to customers and prospects.” Recording of events is typical as an initial usage of podcasting by companies, and it is recommended because of its relative simplicity.

Subsequently, NexTier began doing live podcasting (talkcasting) using services provided by TalkShoe ([www.talkshoe.com](http://www.talkshoe.com)). The bank holds a live podcast on the internet once a month, where online participants can talk and text-chat with bank experts. TalkShoe enables the podcast host to control the conversation via muting, see-who’s-talking indication, and request-to-talk

queuing. The online sessions are also broadcast live (streamed), and recorded as a podcast.

“Talkcasting is just great because it's live, and it can be interactive and what's even nicer, you have something to show for your time that you can share with other business owners and customers,” says Patty.

NexTier has also begun to build an online podcast and resource library, where visitors will be able to select different podcast topics off the shelf. “We're really excited about the library. Instead of having white papers, we'll have podcasts.”

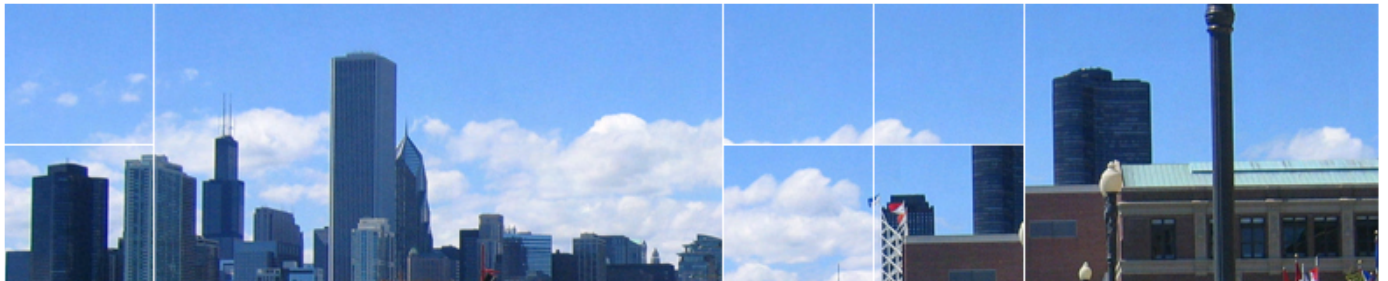


image: NexTier

So what has NexTier gained from their podcasting endeavors? “I'll tell you what. We've turned a lot of heads using podcasting,” comments Patty. “We impressed people, and they said, ‘Wow, look at this! They're a small community bank, and look at the types of things they're doing. Who is this NexTier and how can they help me?’”

“Podcasting and educating gives us a lot more credibility. I think it also helps us build our brand. I'm just finding that there are more and more ways to utilize it. There are early adopter customers out there. They're innovators. They're the kind of people that can appreciate what NexTier can do for them, so it's really a win-win for everybody.”

NexTier weaves podcasting into the fabric of their overall marketing strategy to send a consistent message. For example, they promote their podcasts and talkcasts through their traditional advertising, direct mail and personal selling, which

sends people to their website to hear what their experts have to say. Similarly, their podcasts point people back to their website.

Asked about what advice she'd give other companies venturing into podcasting, Patty says that the company should have someone act in the role of ‘product champion’ when introducing a new technology like podcasting. “I tell you, I was a little apprehensive, although I was the one leading the charge and selling it throughout the company. I needed to get everyone on board, because ultimately, they'd be the ones doing the podcasts.”

Patty also says that while podcasting is a relatively new technology, in many ways, it's just like any other marketing vehicle. “You just have to think through what it is you have to say, and what's your message. How do you want to help your customers or prospects?” For NexTier and other corporate users, it comes down to asking the classic marketing questions: Who's your target audience? What are your company's benefits? What's your message? And so forth.

Finally, Patty says, “Go to our website, [www.thebank.com](http://www.thebank.com), and listen to our recorded podcasts. And jump in on our live TalkShoe talkcasts. That's the easiest way to play with it.” All-in-all, it's clear that NexTier has had a good experience with podcasting and highly recommends that other companies start to explore the technology.

NexTier  
<http://www.thebank.com>  
 Mark Juliano  
<http://www.talkshoe.com>