

The UPS Store

The UPS Store is the world's largest franchisor of retail shipping, postal, printing, and business service centers and has always been committed to providing personalized and convenient business solutions and a world-class customer experience. In order to continue to provide improved business solutions and a positive experience for their customers, Doner, a full-service advertising agency, was tasked by The UPS Store to find innovative ways to keep a pulse on their core customer base, small business owners.

The UPS Store was looking for a cost effective way to hear directly from small business owners, in order to learn more about what they can do better to meet this audience's unique needs. Doner set out to find new and innovative technologies that would help The UPS Store with these objectives.

The Challenge

- Doner needed to provide an innovative, viable strategy to gain insights about the small business owner target.
- Desired a way to quickly, easily, and continuously engage The UPS Store target audience- small business owners- to gain the benefits of traditional research activities.
- Looked for a single community that could house multiple different types of business owners such as, brick & mortar retail, online retail, and service providers, across various industries.
- Wanted the ability to quickly reach out to this audience for insightful feedback. These insights would be leveraged to better understand the behaviors and attitudes of small business owners and learn how The UPS Store can better meet their needs.

The Approach

Doner recommended an online community to discover critical insights about The UPS Store target audience. In turn, they could use the insights to make better-informed business decisions. Doner decided upon a Fuel Cycle community, and recruited hundreds of small business owners to join their online community, Small Biz Buzz. They selected Fuel Cycle's online community platform because it afforded them the ability to execute qualitative, quantitative and ethnographic research in a single platform. It also consolidated their research expenses, and allowed them 24/7 engagement. The Fuel Cycle community platform provided the perfect environment for The UPS Store small business customers to voice opinions, offer feedback and submit ideas that would assist with loyalty and retention efforts.

The Conclusion:

Fuel Cycle offered a single turnkey platform for Doner and The UPS Store to conduct all their research projects. Due to Fuel Cycle's ease-of-use, they are able to directly involve the community members' voices into the decision making process for new product and service development, marketing & advertising campaigns, and website and store redesigns. Even more, the platform helps multiple departments within The UPS Store and Doner with just one tool, providing further cost benefits of the solution.

Fuel Cycle's online community platform is so fast and easy to use that now multiple studies can be launched in the same time it used to take to do one traditional study. At the moment, they are typically conducting 3-5 research activities a month and gathering findings in days, not weeks. Not only is The UPS Store able to directly engage with their customers in real-time to glean valuable brand insights quickly, they also learn about what small business owners really need, allowing them to make smarter business decisions on how to best target the demographic moving forward.

The Results

- **Measurement of promotions:** determine which promotions appeal to members most and will cause them to make a purchase.
- **Store re-design:** have members take in-store experience surveys to provide feedback on the current design of stores.
- **Innovation/co-creation projects:** learn about products and services that members would like to see that are currently not ordered, i.e. loyalty cards.
- **Marketing & Ad campaign testing:** see what resonates with members most and makes them want to visit The UPS Store website/store.
- **Website usability tests:** test and provide feedback on website experience during corporate website redesign.
- **Media usage activities:** identify what channels work best to reach this segment of their customer base.
- **Collection of user generated content:** ask members to share their small business stories via social media campaigns. The content was used in launch of the new The UPS Store microsite.

Because Fuel Cycle allows Doner and The UPS Store to tap into an “always-on” environment, they are able to continuously mine the community for valuable insights, such as member success stories that they can use for case studies, marketing materials, and potential PR opportunities. Small Biz Buzz not only allows small business owners to connect with The UPS Store team, but also to interact with other small business owners, acting as a resource for them when facing business challenges. This approach of using community to gather insights to improve both The UPS Store business and the members’ own businesses, allows The UPS Store to foster brand advocacy and turn members into all important brand ambassadors.

Overall, Doner and The UPS Store have found that members want to be a part of the community because it allows them the chance to enhance their own businesses and lend their voice to the brand.