



SonarData

URL: <http://www.sonardata.com>

This business uses electronic commerce technologies to:

- Market its specialist software internationally
- Deal with customer inquiries through their Web site
- Transfer data to clients.

Fisheries acoustics business

SonarData is a small Tasmanian company specialising in fisheries acoustics and acoustic seabed classification. Established some three years ago, they have developed a range of specialist software programs to process raw data from scientific echo sounders located on research vessels. Devices called data loggers record the data from the echo sounders, which is interpreted by SonarData's software to create information used for scientific analysis. The software can give detailed facts on an ocean plot for scientific echo integration analysis, such as a measure of the density and population of fish in a given area.

Following the introduction of SonarData's products to the Australian market, the past twelve months have seen the development of export markets with clients in the United Kingdom, North America, Spain, Portugal and South Africa. The company's aim is to become internationally recognised as a developer of high quality software in the specialised field of fisheries acoustics.

Product customisation

SonarData's product is Windows™ based, providing an interface that they believe is more intuitive than competing products. The software has been developed on a modular basis, enabling clients to purchase the base module and then combine extra modules as required. The company prides itself on the ability to provide individual customisation of the software, depending on client need. The system has the unique ability to process many different data types.

Marketing on the Web

Potential clients can download demonstration versions of the software for free from the SonarData Web site. The demonstration software allows customers to use all features of the product with their own data sets, but does not allow extensive output of analysis results. The company has been successfully advertising their software on the Internet, as well as direct marketing to potential clients at key scientific institutes. The target audience is quite distinct,

enabling SonarData to successfully direct market their products, as well as gain from 'word of mouth' support within the industry.

Client contact and reference point

An advantage for this organisation is that their client base is highly conversant with the Internet, and readily uses the company's Web site as a contact point. For example, any new customers or existing customers can upload their data sets to the Web site for compatibility checks by SonarData. If the software is unable to read the data sets correctly, the company is able to change the import algorithm to account for new data types. This in turn means that the software becomes more flexible by broadening its compatibility with each new data type, and helps expand the potential market. Thanks to the Internet, SonarData can transfer data and software to clients with minimal costs and fast turnaround.

Making the most of limited resources

Sonar Data's Web site enables the company to provide clients with personalised, efficient and cost-effective service, no matter where in the world they are located. Being a small business with limited resources, the company uses its Web site to provide answers to frequently asked questions and provide other information about their software products. Potential and existing clients can email any other queries direct to SonarData from the Web site. As software updates are developed, existing clients can download this information from the Web site.

The future

The company is well-placed to operate electronically as their product can be delivered, supported and updated through the Internet; their target market is readily defined, customers are regular users of the Internet and are comfortable with using email and the Internet as a basis for communication. Future developments planned by the company include product enhancements and updating the Web site.