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OUT OF SYNC

The Province's
Real Estate Situation

Men of Influence

Unique Communications
Jump.ca opens innovative centre

Tom McClocklin,
Colliers McClocklin Real Estate

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Gerald Buchko,
Vice President of sales and marketing, Jump.ca

STAYING A JUMP AHEAD

STAYING A JUMP AHEAD OF THE COMPETITION IS NO EASY TASK, especially in the highly competitive business of selling cellular phones and other wireless devices. The key, as many successful business leaders can attest to, is standing out from the competition.

“We’re striving to take the wireless retail experience to the next level,” says Kelly Kazakoff, president and CEO of Jump.ca, headquartered in Regina. “If we can be the best at what we do and create unique experiences for our customers, then that will be our differentiator and the reason we’re successful.”

Jump.ca currently operates 14 retail stores in Regina, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, Estevan and will soon open new stores in Regina, Saskatoon and Moose Jaw. Despite the fact that Saskatchewan represents a comparatively small market, the company continues to see continued growth year after year. Jump.ca holds a large percentage of SaskTel contracts in the province and for has earned numerous honours, including the Profit 100 Innovation in Technology Award and three consecutive years on *Profit Magazine’s* “100 Fastest-Growing Companies” list.

More than a decade ago, long before big box retailers in North America began following suit, Jump.ca began offering customers the option to shop online, pick up their purchases in-store, and receive their invoice by email. “We’re always looking to do things that are a bit unique,” says Gerald Buchko, vice president of sales and marketing for Jump.ca.

by
PENNY EATON



DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY

The latest innovation for the company is the new concept store which opened in January at Regina's Cornwall Centre, advertised as "an entirely new shopping experience." The new store features nine touch screen monitors, two interactive Microsoft Surface tables, a "discovery" wall featuring seven 42" LCD displays, five customer-facing point-of-sale monitors and over 50 live cellular phones and smart phones. "You wouldn't expect a wireless retail store of this magnitude to be launched in a smaller market such as Regina, let alone in Canada," says Buchko.

"It's challenging to grasp the full experience without walking into the store," Kazakoff adds. "We've been able to take a great store design and combine it with leading-edge technology and specialized customer service. We've tried to ensure that the people working in that store have incorporated the company philosophy of creating great customer experiences."

One of the coolest features of the new store is the opportunity to try out a Microsoft Surface table.

"People can come in and place a phone onto a surface that looks like a table, and it will automatically identify which phone it is and bring up its features and compare different phones for you," Kazakoff explains. "It tells you all the key things you want to learn, but in a more user-friendly and fun way."

Their website is an essential piece of the overall picture at Jump.ca, and although online sales are growing, the main reason for the Jump.ca site is to provide information. "The major trend we've been seeing is that customers coming into the store are much more knowledgeable about the products and they have a better understanding of what they're looking for," Kazakoff says. "Providing the information online helps with the process when the customer arrives in the store. Anytime we can help facilitate the customer's experience and make it more positive – I think that's where we've seen our best successes online." The website also offers customers the option of signing up for notification of when a specific product comes in or allowing for advance orders.



Photo by Keith Moulding

Jump.ca's new concept store in Regina's Cornwall Centre offers an entirely new wireless shopping experience.

Customers are listening. In January, Jump.ca ran a campaign called "Get Gifted" in which customers called, texted, emailed, or sent in a video explaining why they deserved to get gifted for a certain product or service. "We had a great response, with lots of feedback and hundreds of thousands of hits on our website," says Buchko. "The campaign was somewhat risky in that it was a lot different from the usual flyers and brochures. But the wireless industry in Saskatchewan is a pretty crowded space. You need to be unique to achieve brand awareness."

TECHNOLOGY

IS A STAPLE IN EVERYDAY LIFE

The economic slowdown of the past year has not had a major impact on Jump.ca, partly because of the importance consumers now place on their cell phones and other technology. "Wireless devices have really become the primary communication tool for a large population," Kazakoff says. "Today, people are more

likely to keep their mobile device than their land line. Mobile phones are no longer luxury items – they're a staple in people's everyday lives."

Nonetheless, margins have been shrinking in the wireless industry over the past decade as more products enter the market and the price of devices drops while the costs of production and labour are on the rise. "Much of this business has become about volume," Kazakoff says. "We have to be very good at the process and the delivery mechanism so that we can sell large volumes at the same time as we provide unique, positive experiences for customers. We've been able to achieve that."

A big part of Jump.ca's growth over the past year has been due to the shift from standard cell phones toward "smart" phones. "The world is so mobile today. People want information instantly," Kazakoff explains. "These smart phones aren't just phones – they're mobile computer devices. It's not simply a cell phone where you push 'send'."