



As a winner of the 2011 Ingenious Awards, Saskatoon-based TinyEYE Therapy Systems offered a first-rate example of what it takes to win. As a best-practice example, here is the company's nomination form. Some proprietary information has been redacted.

Project

Online Speech Therapy Services

Project Category

Online Speech Therapy Services SME Private

Category

SME Private

Nominated Company (if not a self-nomination)

Greg Sutton

Chief Executive Officer, TinyEYE Therapy Systems

Business Circumstances

Across North America there is a severe shortage of Speech Language Pathologists (SLPs) in schools. In addition, more than 90% of the SLP workforce is female and there is a significant percentage that leaves the workforce for extended periods of time to attend to family responsibilities. TinyEYE Therapy Services provides a solution to this shortage. There are approximately 50,000 school based SLPs in North America. These SLPs typically spend a considerable proportion of their time driving between schools and completing administrative tasks. This results in less than 50% of SLP time spent providing direct therapy to students. TinyEye's solution was to create a web-based therapy platform that could be accessed by any school with a computer and high speed internet connection. Traditional tele-health systems cost \$5,000-\$20,000 for equipment, require huge amounts of bandwidth and need an internal network administrator to manage the connections. TinyEYE's system requires only a standard computer, a web camera, a headset and high speed internet access. In delivering SLP

service via a web-based platform, TinyEye has automated reporting functions and eliminated travel time. This allows SLPs to spend more time with students.

Business Objectives

TinyEYE's objective was to create a viable business by providing a solution to chronic SLP shortages. It is also part of their mission to improve the lives of children and decrease the overall cost of therapy to the end user through reductions in non-essential activities.

Challenges

TinyEYE has overcome numerous challenges on the pathway to success. Not the least of these is that their home province of Saskatchewan is the only region in the world that prohibits speech therapy telepractice. They have also conflicted with the regional SLP regulatory body. The speech therapy software platform that TinyEYE utilizes needed to operate on the broadest range of computer and bandwidth configurations possible. This has proved difficult and there are minimum requirements with regards to CPU, RAM and bandwidth for end users. However, TinyEYE's services are not prohibitive and they continue to develop algorithms and automated remote monitoring tools that detect and adjust resources and settings based on the end users changing circumstances. Finally, convincing clients that online speech therapy services could work was difficult. At the cutting edge of their market service, TinyEYE has seen extensive evidence based research positively reinforcing the efficacy of online speech therapy since their founding. Furthermore, the majority of their customers access them as a last resort, having exhausted every other recruitment effort. Most of these clients stay with the company because of the quality of service and benefit to students.

Role of IT

TinyEye created the world's first web-based speech therapy telepractice software solution. Their entire business model is premised on the ability to remotely provide top-quality SLP care and service via internet. The design, implementation and execution of this program is only possible through the aggressive and innovative application of communications strategy and technology.

Measurable Results

TinyEYE's model has proven so successful that, even with the local regulatory hurdles, TinyEYE serves over 350 school children in Saskatchewan that would otherwise not receive services. On the other hand, those same local restrictions encouraged the business to look beyond the region and develop into a strong exporter with more than xx% of sales now coming from outside of Canada. In every setting, the results are constructive with clients retaining the service because of its benefit to students and cost efficiency. They have completed over 40,000 online therapy sessions with more than 3,000 children, spanning 12 countries and four languages (English, French, Spanish, Dutch). The business is growing at a rate of more than xx% a year and currently employs 10 corporate staff and 35 SLPs. Their SLPs are able to continually meet a 90% productivity

rate, which means they are spending 90% of their time working directly with children and only 10% on reporting and other activities. Overall, this is a 40% increase in the amount of SLP time spent helping students. Between a rapidly growing business and improved service to customers, TinyEYE Therapy Services is demonstrating the power of effective use of communications technology.