

## **Velocity Merchant Services Works with DeVry University Students to Improve Efficiency**

By Lorraine Wolfe

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Over the last four months, five students from DeVry University's Addison campus worked with Velocity Merchant Services (VMS), one of the largest direct payment processors for small to medium-sized businesses in the nation, to generate and implement sound ideas to improve the processor's operational efficiency. Students from information technology, human resources and marketing backgrounds worked with their corresponding departments within VMS to determine a best course of action for each area. Throughout the class, the students gained invaluable resume-building business experience while the client company received an abundance of research and recommendations to help strengthen their organization.

For the students, working alongside a client in a real business environment was a little intimidating. "We didn't know what to expect when we first met [the client]," said Abdiel Gallardo Jr., a senior studying Technical Management, with a specialization in Operations Management, at DeVry University and a member of the VMS marketing team. "I appreciated that VMS provided us with a relaxed atmosphere and really took the time to listen to us and hear all of our ideas, no matter how off-the-wall they may have sounded. It was an environment where brainstorming could really thrive."

"One of the initial challenges was deciding which areas needed the most help, and then establishing which projects we could accomplish in our given time frame," said Gallardo. At the onset, the goal was to "videoize" sections of VMS' website by pinpointing areas of the site that could be enhanced with multimedia material, such as video tutorials and testimonials. However, due to real-world limitations, including budget and production resources, the team's project evolved into other recommended solutions.

Since the processor's recent expansion into a 15,000 plus square foot building, the company has been challenged with keeping its business processes up to speed with its rapid growth. Having DeVry University's students come in was a great opportunity for VMS to get an unbiased, third party opinion on how and where they had room to improve.

After the first meeting with the client, the marketing team decided to focus its attention on the company's website, recommending that much effort be expended into the testimonials page. "The way the page is set up now doesn't lend any credibility to the company," said Kataliya Pudthong, a marketing team member and DeVry University student. Throughout the duration of the class, VMS was presented with a wealth of decision-making materials about how best to revamp their testimonials page as well as how to obtain testimonials from existing satisfied customers.

Trying to gather testimonial material from customers provided the team with another real-world challenge. "It's not easy to get a hold of business owners," said Joanna Sliwinska, a DeVry University student. "They're so busy running their business, no one wants to sit down and give you 10 minutes of their time." The team maneuvered past this obstacle by delivering several different tactics to acquire customer testimonials as well as an array of different formats to both capture and display them on the website.

As a final team recommendation, the students decided that the area needing the most improvement in the immediate future was in Search Engine Optimization and Search Engine Marketing. “No matter how great your site is, it doesn’t matter if people never find it,” said Pudthong. The team recommended several free solutions including Google’s Web Analytics and Google’s Website Optimizer. Through testing and analyzing tracker results, the company can make informed decisions about what direction to take their site and make knowledge-based choices to better improve business processes.

What impact will the senior project class’ efforts have on VMS? It’s hard to measure outcomes this soon, but from a professional perspective, all of the teams’ recommendations are foundationally sound. It will take time to implement many of the concepts because of their complex nature, but the energy and spirit that each team brought to the table was like a breath of fresh air to the company.

***Picture caption: DeVry University’s Marketing Team’s final meeting at VMS in Downers Grove, IL***

*From Left to Right: Arun Ponnappan, VMS’ Director of Recruitment; Lorraine Wolfe, VMS’ Marketing Coordinator; DeVry University’s Student Marketing Team: Kataliya Pudthong, Joanna Sliwinska, Abdiel Gallardo Jr.*

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