

Interactive Internet Marketing for B2B Companies Offering Web Design, CRM Integration and Marketing Automation Software Implementation



Chris Vendilli
Founder & CEO

CEOCFO: Mr. Vendilli, what is ProFromGo?

Mr. Vendilli: We are a veteran owned, interactive marketing agency located in Pittsburgh. About 40% of our business is web design type projects. We focus on mostly mid-market B2B companies primarily in manufacturing or professional services. We will do CRM integrations and help them implement marketing automation software as well to improve sales and marketing efficiencies. The remainder of our business is a little bit of media production, photography and video, and a good bit of marketing communications, digital marketing & digital advertising. We also help our clients develop and execute a blogging strategy which we have got some great results with, in addition to social media content creation & management, sales strategies, and of course ongoing website development.

CEOCFO: Would you like to see some of the areas outside of web design increase for you?

Mr. Vendilli: Our marketing retainer clients are a solid part of our business model where it gives us some stability since they equate to monthly recurring revenue for us. A lot of times, most of our bigger clients started with a website project and we kind of gained trust with them and became a good consultant where those additional services started to make more sense and kicked off a little later. Very rarely does a client come along ready to get started right off the bat with marketing and advertising.

CEOCFO: What do you understand on a fundamental level about internet marketing that perhaps others do not?

Mr. Vendilli: I think the need for tracking is way underrated. We have worked with many companies that think digital marketing will not work for them or that digital advertising will not work for them. They even suggested that they have tried it before and that means it won't work if they try again. We oftentimes discover they did not have a good system to track or ear mark leads or conversions as being attributed back to digital marketing or advertising so how could they make any conclusions? They sort of look at top line revenue or soft metrics like traffic, and Facebook likes, when they should be looking at individual prospects or deals, and more specifically deal value, and exactly how that deal was generated. We help them get a mechanism in place to get more clarity with all of that so we can quickly prove it is either working or not working and adjust as needed.

CEOCFO: What types of B2B companies are turning to you?

Mr. Vendilli: We have focused on manufacturers and professional services. In professional services, you would have attorneys, CPAs and any type of service provider. With manufacturers, we look for B2B manufacturers, the more niche, the better. Our approach works best where the sales cycle is a little longer and the average deal value is high. We have a couple clients in oil and energy who either provide services, equipment rentals, and other big ticket items in their industry. We also have some manufacturers in home improvement, so that sort of thing tends to work well. We are for a client profile that entails high transaction value deals, and a longer sales cycle. The more consultative the sales process, the better. That is where what we do is pretty effective because it is difficult to get ROI quickly or measurably for something like a pizza shop where they have high transaction volume and low transaction value. Whereas with someone who sells \$400,000 trucks, it is a much different sell where positioning them as an authority and the general principles of inbound marketing work much better, not to mention the infrastructure we give them for checking their deals and prospects and making sure they follow up has additional benefit. That is where many times, we can bring in new opportunities for the top of the funnel, but we can also help at the middle of the funnel where we are nurturing them and convincing them they're making a sound decision by staying top of mind as they do their buyer's research. Our goal is to position our client as a trusted authority in their industry by producing great content.

CEOFCO: Do clients typically take advantage of the CRM type services or the follow up that you are able to offer?

Mr. Vendilli: That is where we are a little bit different. We are very boutique and we kind of work shoulder to shoulder with them to help their sales team and get that buy in these things work because if they don't believe in it and use the tools alongside us, it's much more difficult to see positive results. It is pretty essential that they use the tools and sometimes it takes some time but they quickly realize the more hands on they are with it, the more they can sell. It allows them to manage more opportunities effectively and do more with less. The tools we leverage were designed to let small sales teams have tailored conversations with a lot of prospects without being glued to a keyboard.

CEOFCO: Are companies turning to you as they understand the range of what you offer or does it come as a surprise to them?

Mr. Vendilli: I think it comes as a surprise sometimes where they do a project with us and we get a chance to build a little trust and show them what we have done for other clients and how it might apply for them. In other cases, we have clients who worked with different marketing agencies and just did not get the results they were hoping for. In some cases, it is someone who wants to give it a try and it's a whole new world. They have either seen us present a workshop or they saw a similar workshop and somehow came across us and sort of a fresh start but they are giving it a fair shake where many times we can hopefully show a similar business we have worked with or look at what they are doing and give suggestions for improvement.

CEOFCO: What might people search under to find ProFromGo? How do you reach out?

Mr. Vendilli: Our new conversations come to us in a variety of different ways. The most effective for us has been referrals. We have grown significantly through referrals and word of mouth. We also do free workshops with trade organizations like different councils and chambers of commerce where we will come out and give some solid free advice including doing some of our proprietary worksheets with them during the session which we've developed to help them think through how they can potentially include inbound marketing in their marketing mix. We also get quite a few leads from the internet, either a paid search or an organic search that leads them back to us.

"We're most differentiated in how we put sophisticated tools and systems in place to measure our work for our sake (to get constant improvement) while giving clients the added benefit of giving them the infrastructure they need for growth. We dig into defining our client's goals in real business terms like target revenue, # of new customers, and how etc. - not soft digital marketing metrics that really should be viewed as key performance indicators like Facebook likes, and traffic growth. Then we lay out a strategy to get there." - Chris Vendilli

CEOFCO: According to your site, the talent on tap at ProFromGo is what makes the company unique. What is special about your talent?

Mr. Vendilli: We invested a good bit of time and money into continuing education and trying to get special certifications that allow us to execute better. For example, we have someone on staff that is certified with Google analytics. Most of my team is also certified with various tracks and very familiar with HubSpot's sales and marketing software. We are constantly innovating new ways to do things by keeping a finger on the pulse of what is happening. The only way to leverage your digital strategy is to have smart people who are using their noggin to see what is working, test, track, implement, and rinse and repeat.

CEOFCO: Does it all come down to the numbers in the end?

Mr. Vendilli: We do a good bit of testing and tracking and get the systems in place up front. The reporting dashboards we give them are pretty clear in addition to the weekly and monthly status emails that they receive in terms of traffic and leads. Many times I think it does come back to the numbers. What's really important and sometimes forgotten though is to analyze the numbers. They tell a story, and that story can help you constantly and perpetually improve your strategy for better results. I think it does come back to the numbers many times and we put the right tools in place so that they are able to see and analyze the numbers. We will even help with that analysis.

CEOFCO: Does the overall economy come into play with many of your clients? Do they turn to you when things are bad because they really need help or are they more likely to turn to you when things are going well because they have a little more funds to invest?

Mr. Vendilli: I started my business in 2007 when things were not good for anyone. We still managed to grow pretty significantly in our first few years where 2011 was when I resigned from an unrelated full time position with salary, retirement, and benefits to go full bore with this. I think that the bigger companies especially really understand that when

things are slow, that is when it is time to do more with marketing and advertising because it will have a trickle-down effect to the bottom line.

CEOCFO: *Where does your military experience come into play in running a business?*

Mr. Vendilli: I think core values play a big part of it. It is putting forth your best effort and having integrity with everything that you do. It has also helped in that we have obtained our veteran certified enterprise with the federal government. That is a new growth opportunity we have been working on where it takes a lot to get your foot in the door but we definitely will have some good opportunities ahead with certain government contracts. It is sort of a two-pronged benefit: One is related to work ethic and how I go about conducting business based on life-shaping experiences I had while in the military. The second is with our certification, how it may help us go after and obtain bigger opportunities.

CEOCFO: *How are you preparing for some of the challenges working with the government?*

Mr. Vendilli: I started working with a few different consultants. One was to help us with state county and local government and another to focus on federal government opportunities. The biggest challenge getting started there is you do not know what you do not know. It really is a whole new world so I made the conscious decision to invest money vs time and carefully select a few experienced pros to help me navigate these new waters. We are following our mantra of relying on good people and putting the right people in the seats even in seeking out assistance from outside consultants to help steer us on government work.

CEOCFO: *How is business?*

Mr., Vendilli: It is good. For the past two years, we have grown about thirty to forty percent each year. We are trying to grow carefully. I have actually seen it happen with clients where they grow too fast and it creates cash flow issues where the projects are sort of front loaded and you get paid later. It is just getting smarter about how we manage business and being selective about how we grow, I think what is keeping us on track.

CEOCFO: *What is ahead a year from now?*

Mr. Vendilli: I am hoping to significantly grow the federal, state and local contracting side of the business. This requires us to do things differently, mainly with our sales and marketing approach, because the way you sell and market to the government is different than how you sell and market to privately held companies. The most exciting part about this opportunity however, is that the way we deliver and execute is still very similar. I see a lot of efficiency in pivoting slightly to change whom we are targeting. If we can learn how to sell and market to the government, I think the rest will be fairly easy for us. I would say that is probably in the very near future in terms of where we are going and when it's going to start re-shaping the direction of the company.

CEOCFO: *Would you tell us about your relationship with Google?*

Mr. Vendilli: We have three different certification tracks we are involved in with Google. The first one is the Google Apps Authorized Reseller program, which is where we can help our clients convert to using Google's infrastructure for their email accounts or other productivity related software and services such as Google Docs and Google Spreadsheets. We basically rebrand Gmail, Google Calendar, Google Docs, Google Drive and other Google tools for business use. One of my favorite tools in that suite is Hangouts, which allows them to have a way to chat and video conference cross-platform and cross-device: video and screen sharing between iPhones and Androids, Macs and Windows. We are also in the Google Street View certified photography program, which means we are able to bring Google Street View inside of a brick and mortar to do a Google Street View style virtual tour. We have another website that shows off a lot of our work in that program at BizView360.com. The third one that we are fairly active in is the Google AdWords program. That is where we basically have trained and certified folks on tap to help our clients plan, setup, and execute an advertising campaign or strategy, using Google AdWords. The advertising campaign pairs well with the CRM integrations and consulting we provide to help clients easily see which specific ads are getting business, and how much.

CEOCFO: *What surprised you in becoming an entrepreneur?*

Mr. Vendilli: Being in an industry where most of the work we do is intangible, in other words, we aren't creating a physical product - you cannot hold a website or unbox it like you can a real product. I was kind of surprised at some of the misconceptions people have when they are paying for a service like ours where the end result is a new website or a delivered marketing campaign. It's important to us to have clients who understand the nature of our work and remember we are essentially selling our time. We have had to be careful about who we work with and making sure the proper expectations are set. In addition to that, it is being careful about focusing on those relationships with employees and clients so they understand at the end of the day that there are real people that are fielding every request.

CEO CFO: *How do your daughters get along with your giant Doberman?*

Mr. Vendilli: They are pretty good. She is kind of the gentle giant so I think she thinks they are her kids too. She keeps an eye on them and howls when they are crying if we do not get there fast enough. She is like an extra set of eyes and ears, helping us run the household.

CEO CFO: *Why choose ProFromGo?*

Mr. Vendilli: We are a very boutique agency, so you are not going to be working with an intern or a junior rep at any stage of your project. We're passionate and experienced. Our end goal is the same as our clients' and that is to move the needle. We're most differentiated in how we put sophisticated tools and systems in place to measure our work for our sake (to get constant improvement) while giving clients the added benefit of giving them the infrastructure they need for growth. We dig into defining our client's goals in real business terms like target revenue, # of new customers, and how etc. - not soft digital marketing metrics that really should be viewed as key performance indicators like Facebook likes, and traffic growth. Then we lay out a strategy to get there.

Interview conducted by: Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor, CEO CFO Magazine



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