

Digital Marketing and Communications Solutions that Focuses on Strategy, Web Development and the Integration of Modern Technology



Craig Cooke
CEO
Rhythm

CEOCFO: *Mr. Cooke, what is Rhythm?*

Mr. Cooke: Rhythm is a digital marketing agency. We provide marketing communications solutions focusing on digital channels.

CEOCFO: *What is your approach at Rhythm? What do you understand that others may not?*

Mr. Cooke: We take a 21st Century approach to problem solving. We use a three part hierarchy, where at the top level we are striving to create what we call effective brand experiences, and we do that through producing integrated marketing solutions with a digital core. We do that by leveraging our three pillars of strategy, design and technology.

CEOCFO: *Would you give us an example of a typical engagement and something more outside the box?*

Mr. Cooke: For example, a client engagement could involve a large website project to begin with, such as a customer website design and development, whether it is a brand new site or a redesign. You could think of that as the digital core to an integrated solution. There may be some other integration points that we are adding on top of the website, such as an email marketing platform or a CRM platform, or even an integration with a customer's in-house IT systems. That would be an integrated solution and digital is at the core, meaning this big website is central core component. We finish that project and we are taking our three pillars of strategy, design and technology, and really thinking in those three aspects to create this web experience. We make sure we are implementing strategic thinking to satisfy goals and objectives. It is a human centered design approach satisfying business goals and objectives, but at the same time making sure that we are fulfilling audience or user needs, under the watchful eye of feasibility. We want to create a solution that is not going to break the bank, but make fiscal sense, and keep timing in mind. We think of this as the marketing infrastructure and once the infrastructure is in place, then we work with the client on an ongoing basis for ongoing marketing communications. That could be through a variety of channels, such as email or online display, search marketing through SEO or paid search. There are a number of digital channels that add onto that integrated solution. It is all driving people back to that digital core, which is the website. Then we are collecting data and optimizing that data to optimize performance.

CEOCFO: *How do you help an organization hone in what they really want out of their website and what their goal is?*

Mr. Cooke: That is a great question. We are very process oriented here at Rhythm, so when we work with our clients we are not saying that this is the trick of the day that will solve all of their problems, or that we are giving them a template that will work 100% for them and meet all of their needs. Everything is looked at as a custom engagement, where every business situation is unique and will require problem solving to meet their needs. We go through a process starting with discovery, where we meet with key stakeholders within an organization. We conduct interviews and there could be surveys, as well as we may talk to their customers and people on their sales team. We do a variety of interviews to gather information, and perform our own research into their business, their business environment and their competitors. Once we get through all of that discovery phase, we also document it in a formal discovery report. Then we enter into the strategic phase. This is where we have representatives from our three pillars of design, strategy and technology meet, because we

have organized our team infrastructure around those three pillars. We have our leaders in those three pillars come together and innovate. They take all of that discovery information and start to come up with creative solutions to address what has come to the surface. Initially a client may not know what they want out of their website, but once we meet with them and start identifying things, what they want will start to rise to the surface. Once we get through the strategic phase, we also document that through a strategic design report that takes into account design, technical and strategic considerations, as well as any functional or technical requirements. This really gives us a guiding force in this document to execute the initiatives that are at hand. Once we get through that phase, then we start the design phase. Things may come up as we go through the process, because every step builds on the previous step. However, the process uncovers all of these issues and brings them to the surface.

"Rhythm is a progressive agency for the 21st Century. We understand that our competitive business environment is driven by technology and we are bringing modern solutions to the table that leverage technology to be more effective and will help secure positive ROI and bottom line results." - Craig Cooke

CEOCFO: *What types of company turn to you and at what point in time?*

Mr. Cooke: We have a pretty diverse client base, which is nice because we are not dependent upon the rise and fall of any one particular industry. However, there are some challenges where a client may want some deep expertise within an industry and they cannot get past that thinking. When they get stuck in that thinking, many times they end up getting just another "me too" solution or template solution, where there are no fresh perspectives that are going to bring innovation to the table. Therefore, our process helps us to be able to translate success that we experienced in one industry and bring it to the table, to a client in another industry. That is why we are able to have such a diverse client base. On the other hand, we have developed some niches organically over time, such as healthcare, where we have different healthcare segments. We have hospitals, health plans, pharmaceutical, senior living, and medical device companies. These are the many different types of healthcare companies that we have been doing business with for about the past 15 years. Another vertical that we have developed is real estate, where we have Irvine Company, CBRE and some others. One more vertical is the industrial, manufacturing sector. Those have developed organically over time and the situation for when these clients come to us differs with each client. Some clients have their own in house team, where for example one of our real estate clients has a large department internally, but they have a number of different initiatives that are ongoing, so there are many things that they cannot do themselves. Therefore, they will turn to a company like Rhythm to help them to produce a new website, because it was something that they could not do internally. Others may have a robust team, but they are too busy to handle a certain project, such as in the case of Silverado Care, where they have a good size in house marketing department and they handle a great deal of things internally when it comes to print, video and social, but we did their custom website development. We handle all of their search marketing, SEO, and paid search. We set them up on our email platform as well. Therefore, we are working in partnership as an extension of the marketing team.

CEOCFO: *Are companies coming to you because they understand that strategy first approach, or are they surprised as they get into the process?*

Mr. Cooke: That is a great question and I wish that was case, where everyone is coming to us because they subscribe to that strategy first approach that we advocate. Some people get it and they value strategy. They feel very comfortable with us because of our alignment and mindset. Some others feel that they have strategy handled in-house, so it is more of us executing the strategy that they have defined, because they cannot handle the execution part of it, which is fine because we are working as an extension of the team. There are times however, when the organization does not have a strategy and they do not even value strategy. They are just looking for the quick, dirty solution to solve all of their problems. In those cases, it does take some education to help them understand the value of taking a strategy first approach. With our process, it is meant to be a scalable framework, so if someone does not have strategy covered internally, and they tend to be more concerned about cost, we will scale it down and do a limited discovery and strategy process. Instead of a full comprehensive report, the discovery report and strategic design plan will be a discovery and strategic design brief. Therefore, we are not skipping steps, we are still working through the process, only at a minimal basis, so that we can do the things that we need to do with some sort of guiding light.

CEOCFO: *How is business?*

Mr. Cooke: Business is very good. We are very busy. In fact, just before you called I approved another offer letter to go out to another developer/programmer that we are going to bring onboard. We will be around 45 people at that point. We just found out a few weeks ago that we made the Inc. 5000 list for a third year in a row, which is great, and that is because of the growth that we have experienced over the past 4 to 5 years. We have also been on the Orange Country Business Journals Fastest Growing Private Company list for over the past 2 years. The new list will be coming out pretty soon, and

we will probably be on that one as well. We have also been on their Best Places to Work in Orange County over the past couple of years, which is nice. We believe in fostering a strong brand culture here. We are also getting new clients onboard. We just signed on Segway as a new client, so we are excited to work with them because they are a great big national brand.

CEO CFO: *How do companies find you? Do many companies come through search? If so, what categories, words or terms would they key in to find Rhythm?*

Mr. Cooke: Yes some people do come through search. We do have our site optimized for search and we do our own paid search activity as well. Just today, I saw a couple of leads come through our search efforts. We have seven core services that we talk about on our website, but what we talked about earlier is more of our philosophical approach as far as effective brand experiences through integrated marketing solutions with a digital core, based on our three pillars. However, when it comes down to it, the services that we are providing are custom web development, email marketing, search marketing, online display, video for online, social media and apps. Normally, people are looking for one of those services or a combination of those services. Therefore, if they come through search, they may have been looking for an agency to provide search marketing or custom web development and they are inquiring in those terms. We do get a great deal of business from referrals from clients that we work with. They have a great experience so they start referring business to us. We also do networking, just being out and about, so it is a combination of marketing and business development efforts that generate business.

CEO CFO: *Put it together for our readers. Why choose Rhythm?*

Mr. Cooke: Rhythm is a progressive agency for the 21st Century. We understand that our competitive business environment is driven by technology and we are bringing modern solutions to the table that leverage technology to be more effective and will help secure positive ROI and bottom line results.



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INTEGRATED MARKETING. DIGITAL CORE.

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