



Preetha Pulusani's digital marketing company uses a bank account holder's information in order to create customer-specific advertising.

Veteran Huntsville IT executive Preetha Pulusani struck out on her own with software designed to mine with precision the data of online bank customers — transforming it into a targeted, measurable marketing tool.

WEB MARKETING WITH INSIGHT

By Tara Hulen
Photos by Jeffery J. Hanshaw



Every business trying to find its way in the digital world is trying to do the same thing: make money from their websites, online ads and other digital marketing. But it's usually a shotgun approach, with results that are hard to verify.

Using data mining to refine the target and account for results is the holy grail of digital marketing.

Veteran Huntsville IT executive Preetha Pulusani says her new company, DeepTarget Insight Driven Digital Marketing, has its

hands on that grail — at least as far as the banking sector is concerned.

Banks, because they have online account holders, also have a wealth of information waiting to be mined, an untapped asset.

“We use insight about your customer in order to target very relevant messages through these digital channels,” says Pulusani, who has had a long and respected career at IT companies, including Intergraph Corp., where she worked more than 25 years, rising to

be president of Security, Government and Infrastructure and managing a \$400 million budget. In 2006, the Alabama Information Technology Association named her Top IT Executive of the Year.

“I was in the corporate environment for so long, I thought I would always be in the corporate environment,” Pulusani says.

AdeptMedia Corp., an IT startup company providing marketing technology and services, was her first stab at entrepreneurship, from which she says she took away “some very, very hard lessons.”



In 2006, Preetha Pulusani was named the Top IT Executive of the Year by the Alabama Information Technology Association.

Pulusani briefly went back into the corporate world working as joint managing director for a geospatial information systems company in Mumbai, India, and after about a year she was eager to come back to Alabama.

What drew her back was the opportunity to buy the software that lies behind DeepTarget, and Pulusani’s marketing experience in how it could be applied.

The software Pulusani bought was created by two people working in IT for the financial services industry, who saw the potential for using the information already available for insight targeted digital marketing. The software developers are now working for Pulusani and DeepTarget.

The software can be applied to e-mail, mobile and other digital marketing, but the company is now focusing on same-site advertising, she says.

“We are working with an organization so they can communicate and cross-sell to their own account holders. So, it’s coming from a trusted source, it’s based on their preferences and it’s targeted.”

For example, she explains, say an account holder at a bank goes online to pay bills; if the person has a car loan with the bank, no car loan ads will appear. But, if the customer doesn’t have a credit card with the bank, an ad for the bank’s card — perhaps even with an interest rate based on the customer’s credit score — could appear, she says.

“We don’t use banners that appear online arbitrarily. We understand who the banner is going to be viewed by and put the right banner and the right offer in front of the right person.”

Once it’s set up, marketing managers can easily use the software to change text, create new banners from DeepTarget’s thousands of banner templates as often as they like, Pulusani says, and that’s key, because refreshing banners is vital to get customers’ attention, she says.

Another benefit of DeepTarget’s software is “you can get real microanalytics at anytime,” Pulusani says, such as how many customers clicked on a banner, which customers clicked and what other banners that customer clicked on.

DeepTarget also can use “a statistically very conservative process” to calculate profit that is attributable to the DeepTarget software, Pulusani says — something that Google and other search engines can not do.

“We can calculate the profit based on accounts opened from users who were either shown a banner or clicked on a banner. That helps them to show this is what they are paying and this is what they are getting in return.”

In a watch-every-dime economy, the ability to target specific customers and prove return on investment is opening doors to companies that a couple of years ago might have been dismissive, she says.

Pulusani came to Huntsville from India 32 years ago when she got married. She got her computer science degree from the University of Alabama in Huntsville, then began her career in 1980 working as an entry-level programmer for the company that became Intergraph, one of Alabama’s premiere technology companies.

“I feel like we’re at the beginning of something that is really going to blossom,” Pulusani says.

The software behind DeepTarget can be used with other industries with websites and account holders, but for now, Pulusani says, she’ll keep the company focused on financial services.

“We’re a small startup, I want to get as deep and as broad as I can in the financial services industry where we already have a customer base before I branch out to any other industry.”

Staying on track is one thing that gives her confidence, she says, and the other is the people she’s traveling with. “At the end of the day, the journey is very important. It’s making sure you’re working with the right team of people — people are the key. You have to have the right mix of attitude, talent, ethics, everything. The choices you make in the people are really going to determine whether you’re going to move forward and be successful or not. I’m convinced of it.”

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Tara Hulen is a freelance writer for Business Alabama. She lives in Birmingham.