AnswerDash aims to make your website smarter

The Pitch

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AnswerDash promises to save businesses money and boost their sales by making self-service Q&A more effective. The service helps provide instant, context-sensitive answers to customer questions at the appropriate spot within the app or website. This reduces the need for expensive customer-service calls. With each new question, an "answer layer" builds up, making it easier for future users. Business clients range from Big Fish Games to Chef.

What problem are you solving?

AnswerDash solves two major problems. For our customers — online businesses such as apps and e-commerce sites — we make customer support teams more efficient by eliminating the repetitive questions that are time-consuming and costly. This gives them more time to focus on high-value customer problems that results in increased sales and reduces churn. For our website visitors and web app users, we provide online self-service answers right away, enabling them to quickly and confidently accomplish their goals. As a result of this improved efficiency, businesses can grow without having to make big investments in customer support.

How do you pay the bills?

AnswerDash raised $2.54 million in venture financing from Voyager Capital, WRF Capital, Summit Capital, the W Fund and five angel investors, including Seattle "super angel" [Geoff Entress](#). We secured early support from the UW in the form of Commercialization Gap Funding. AnswerDash had its first revenue within a year of launching and has since gained a number of paying customers who are all realizing the business benefits of having instant contextual self-service answers on their websites and apps.

How will you scale?

AnswerDash grows its customer base through direct sales, website signups and partnerships. AnswerDash is built on Amazon Web Services and employs the latest best practices in the industry for maintaining performance at scale.

How do you plan to make money?

AnswerDash makes money through subscription fees paid in a typical tiered Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) model. Higher tiers offer advanced features like analytics that help customers understand what their visitors do and need on their sites.

What keeps you up at night?

There are so many priorities pulling on people's time, and tech workers are particularly very busy. What keeps me up at night is how to cost-effectively bring these benefits to more businesses. Getting people to take notice is always a challenge. The company has taken a very scientific approach to quantifying its value for customers, who typically see 50 percent to 70 percent reductions in their customer support tickets and 10 percent to 30 percent increases in their sales conversion rates.

A closer look: AnswerDash

Founders: Jake Wobbrock, Andy Ko and Parmit Chilana

Experience: Wobbrock and Ko hold doctorates in human-computer interaction from Carnegie Mellon and teach at the University of Washington Information School. Parmit holds a UW doctorate in information science, Her dissertation research at UW led to the founding of AnswerDash. She is now a professor in Management Sciences at the University of Waterloo in Ontario.

Funding:$2.54 million

Founded: September 2012

Location: UW campus

Employees (including founders): 12

Web: answerdash.com

Feedback loop

Dennis Joyce is a Seattle-based angel investor focusing on consumer and business-to-business products. He also produces documentary films. He is a member of the Alliance of Angels.

What are this company's strengths?

AnswerDash automates Frequently Asked Questions for websites, which boosts engagement, drives buying decisions and allows sites to operate more efficiently. It has a number of successful implementations and an experienced management and investing team.

Is this product a game-changer?

Buyers want basic questions answered and sellers want to close the sale without the risk of losing the customer. If AnswerDash can deliver a product that tackles those challenges better than anyone else, it is definitely a game-changer.

What are the risks?

The most obvious risk is whether they can gain market traction in a constantly evolving area. A less obvious risk is whether there is a clear exit strategy to provide investors with a liquidity event. That's an important question every company needs to answer.

Is the market saturated?

There are few really valuable e-commerce solutions capable of driving higher engagement and sales. This space is wide open. The key is to add enough customers and make their product an industry standard solution.

What are the barriers for competitors?

Selling to medium-sized e-commerce businesses requires a diligent and effective sales team. A huge opportunity for AnswerDash is to team up with an industry leader in e-commerce solutions, thereby creating high barriers for its competitors to enter this space.

-- Dennis Joyce