

Client

Kinek Technologies

Project

Marketing Message Development

Client Industry

Specialty Software

Summary

Kinek was a company with a unique vision of electronic commerce, and a set of software tools that could make it better. Starting with a single product to support parcel delivery, it expanded its scope to cover payments processing as well. Along the way, though, some core ideas got lost in the technology and the feature set.

The Need

Kinek Technologies was founded in November 2000 by Canadian IT exec Kerry McLellan, after a very personal eye-opening experience. He ordered a gift for his wife from Victoria's Secret, and realized there was no good place to ship it. Not home, since it was surprise. Not the office, considering the sender. A neighbor? His mom?

On-line shopping was growing every year, and all of those small parcels were putting a strain on the infrastructure. The delivery business model was based on B2B commerce, with lots of parcels going to a single location. It's much harder to deliver to lots of separate households, especially when there's often no one home. So Kerry imagined a new kind of delivery. What if people could redirect their parcels to their local post office, or a convenience store, or even an automated lock box? The savings would be huge.

Kinek was established to design the software that could make this happen. Something web-based,

and user friendly, which would make the whole commerce system more reliable, convenient and secure.

The delivery solution was pilot tested in the UK and by then Kinek had recognized a new market: its parcel receipt conformation technology could be repurposed to confirm receipt of payments. That would enable an entirely new line of services, which would be very attractive to on-line retailers and card companies.

But that put Kinek in a difficult situation. By expanding its scope to deliver the maximum value, it seemed to be offering all things to all people. The benefits were real, but were stated so broadly they lacked credibility. Kinek was confusing its customers. What was it selling in the end? A software, or a service? A tool for shoppers, a credit card security protocol or a technology for delivery firms? Unfortunately, the answer was all of the above.



Our Approach

We started this project by going back to basics.

After a few preliminary conference calls, we developed some data gathering materials – a project brief about K Street’s mandate, and a set of questions to focus discussions during face-to-face interviews.

We then spent three days at the client’s facilities in Saint John, New Brunswick, Canada. We talked to just about everyone, sometimes alone and sometimes in groups, believing that a cross-functional story would give us the richest sense of what Kinek was all about.

The results were provided to Kinek in a detailed report, so they could be validated by management. That would ensure we didn’t blend in any flavors that were contrary to the intended strategy.

A gradual erosion of nomenclature was one factor in the confusion. The concept of getting the parcel to the purchaser was sometimes referred to as “delivery” other times as “logistics” and other times as “fulfillment.” Kinek’s particular market space might be called “remote commerce” or “distance commerce” or “virtual” commerce, with internal

debates about which was the right term. Getting agreement on a common language was a small but important step forward.

Our fact-finding led us to an understanding of the company that had four primary dimensions. There was a top-level holistic story, with the unifying sense of commerce as a cycle. There was a detailed, functional story about Kinek’s offerings to improve the delivery of goods, and a corresponding story about its ability to secure the transfer of payments. Finally, there was a story about the technological innovations that made it all possible.

These four dimensions were captured in four internal white papers, which were circulated and critiqued by the client’s managers and sales force. With only a few changes, these papers provided the basic content needed for a new set of brochure ware, the revamping of the company’s website, a new trade show booth, and a renewed sense of self.

Kinek also adopted K Street’s recommended tagline: Delivering on the promise of remote commerce.

The screenshot shows the Kinek Technologies website. At the top, there are navigation tabs: ABOUT KINEK, OUR SOLUTION, EXPERIENCE, NEWS & EVENTS, PARTNERS, and INVESTORS. Below the navigation is a main headline: "Delivering on the promise of remote commerce". To the right of the headline is a sub-headline: "Kinek develops software solutions that improve the efficiency of remote commerce - making transactions more convenient, more reliable, and more secure." Below the headline is a diagram of the "Commerce Cycle" showing a flow between Payment Agents, Consumers, Delivery Agents, and the Remote Commerce Core. The diagram is titled "Delivering on the Promise of Remote Commerce" and "The Challenge of Fundamental Change".

Client Quote

“Kinek Technologies operates in an extremely complex market, but the principals of Knowledge Street were able to make our story understandable and accessible to whomever wanted to hear it.

K Street was able to facilitate a group of extremely talented and educated technologists through a process that, in essence, allowed people to understand that less is more and that simplicity outweighs complexity. The foundational elements that were developed in the messaging phase of our program became key components that directed all of the follow-on work, and were what made the entire positioning program an overwhelming success.”

R. M. Manning, VP-Marketing & Business Development

