

ATTEND A MICROSOFT PARTNER BRIEFING IN YOUR AREA AND HELP CUSTOMERS OPTIMIZE THEIR CORE INFRASTRUCTURE

As a Microsoft partner, you play a significant role in communicating Microsoft's IT Infrastructure Optimization vision and strategy message to our customers. By helping customers build a more secure, well-managed, and dynamic core IT infrastructure, you can help improve IT security, management, and operational costs and make IT a strategic asset for their business. This event series is specifically designed for Microsoft® Certified and Gold Certified Partners who want to learn more about how to communicate and implement Microsoft's Infrastructure vision and strategy.

At the event, you'll learn about the following:

- How to bring in new business by using Microsoft's Infrastructure Optimization Assessment Framework for mid-sized businesses.
- How you can optimize your customers' business infrastructure by leveraging solutions like Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 and Microsoft Office SharePoint® 2007.
- How you can help customers optimize infrastructure security using Microsoft Forefront™ Security Solutions.

To learn more about this West Coast event series and to register, please visit www.msmevents.com.

UPCOMING CITIES AND DATES ON THIS WEST COAST TOUR:

8/23/2007	Orange County	CA
9/13/2007	San Jose	CA
9/18/2007	Boise	ID
9/25/2007	Seattle	WA
9/27/2007	Salt Lake City	UT
10/18/2007	Las Vegas	NV
10/23/2007	Portland	OR
11/6/2007	San Diego	CA
11/8/2007	Los Angeles	CA
11/27/2007	Irvine	CA
11/29/2007	Modesto	CA



PARTNER PROFILE: Having Fun in Southwest Washington: The Microsoft Across America Truck Pays a Visit to Vancouver

It wouldn't be hard to pick one word to describe the tone, style, and manner of Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner Creative Computer Solutions Inc. (CCSI): fun. While products like Windows® Small Business Server and the Microsoft Office suites don't usually rank high on the party animal scale, these guys do it differently.

So it should come as no surprise that when CCSI hosted its inaugural event with the Microsoft Across America truck, the day was, well, fun.

And that, says CCSI's vice president of operations Sean Guerrero, is key to planning and hosting events that support overall marketing efforts. "It's about keeping people engaged, about making them know that they're appreciated, that we're listening to them and ensuring that everyone is having fun," he says. "Who wants to stay at a party that's no fun?"

True to that spirit, Guerrero and his colleagues at CCSI infused a healthy dose of entertainment into all phases of the event—conception, planning, execution, and even follow-up—and did so at every step of the way with an eye to marketing tactics.

The planning team at CCSI, which is on the verge of celebrating a decade in business, has more than 300 clients spanning a broad spectrum of industries, and is based in Vancouver, Wash., initially thought their sole focus was client appreciation. "As we went on, we learned that our event was going to be the first time the Microsoft Across America truck had been to Vancouver," says Guerrero. "While we definitely didn't want to take the focus away from our customers—we wanted the retention—we wanted to broaden it, so we sent out a press release."

Then the marketing began. The first piece to go out was initially flat, but with minimal assembly—folds and tucks, mainly—it became a three-dimensional truck. And emblazoned on the truck was a very simple message: *It's Coming. Look for it June 26, 2007.* "We sent that out three months in advance to create buzz," Guerrero says. "We didn't tell people what we were up to, and then the phones started ringing." Even CCSI's insurance agent called to see if the company needed to take out an additional policy for its new truck.

Being a group that doesn't ever miss an opportunity for customer engagement, Guerrero and the planning team at CCSI next launched a contest. "We sent out a follow-up e-mail to tell people that more information

was on the way," he says. "And we asked them to send us their thoughts about what they thought was coming and agreed to have a drawing for the best idea." The winner? Keep in mind the fun theme here: Several donkeys loaded into the back of the truck with the caption "We're hauling ass!"

Next up on the marketing agenda was a handheld fan in the shape of a stop sign. While one side was a traditional stop sign, on the reverse side it repeated the "Are you ready?" message. Guerrero says that every client he's visited thus far still has the sign displayed in the office.

Finally, CCSI sent the actual invitation—but not, of course, a traditional invitation. The invitation replicated a Washington State license plate with the letters IT'S HERE. On the back of the plate were event details as well as information on ClicktoAttend.com, including the event code.

A week before the event, the CCSI team phoned people who were planning to attend and mailed them the agenda, the lunch menu, and information on prizes to be awarded. And since the information was sent from CCSI, it was no ordinary mailer: custom-made black envelopes were used, as were custom-printed stamps that included the company's logo.



Mouse Pads, Massages, and a Gourmet Lunch

The event itself, Guerrero says, was a resounding success. "The moment the MSAM truck arrived, we all had the feeling that everything we'd been working toward was now here," he says.

To make sure that attendees circulated, CCSI used bistro tables instead of standard rounds and folding chairs. Gourmet coffee was served, as were custom-made pastries and a gourmet lunch. In addition to product demonstrations on board the truck, Guerrero also arranged for a massage therapist to be on-site for the event. And, for a new level of personalization, attendees had their pictures taken while standing in front of the MSAM truck, which were then imposed onto mouse pads with the CCSI logo on them and given away.

Other prizes were awarded based on the custom-printed lottery scratch tickets that also featured the CCSI logo. "Everybody won something," says Guerrero. "Nobody left empty handed."

In terms of return on investment, Guerrero couldn't be more pleased. The event was attended by 105 people—meeting CCSI's expectations—and has, in less than a month, led to the company landing nine new clients and doing additional work with existing ones.

Guerrero advises partners planning events to be as thorough as possible. "We constantly checked ourselves to make sure we were focused on what the attendee experience would be like," he says.

And, while CCSI had a contingency plan since June is unpredictable in the Pacific Northwest, he says he's glad that the weather allowed them to host the event in the parking lot of their offices. "I feel like when our clients call now they have a visual sense of where we work," he says. "And it also gave people a chance to get to know all of our staff on a more personal level, which I think is important."

He also says that follow-up is critical. "The event itself wasn't the end," he says. "It was the beginning." Immediately following the event, the CCSI team sat down in a conference room to review what worked well and what could have been better and then sent an electronic survey to attendees with what Guerrero says were "five very simple questions."

But the follow-up didn't stop there. Guerrero and the team hit the road and visited customers who weren't able to attend, camera in hand, and made them custom mouse pads as well. "We didn't want anyone to feel like they'd missed out," he says.

Finally, Guerrero has one simple but time-proven piece of advice for partners considering planning and hosting an event: "You get out of it what you put into it," he says.

