

INNOVATION

A look at innovative organizations, concepts, products and people

Co. Gives Financial Professionals A Clear Picture of Clients' Needs

SOFTWARE: Marketing Videos and Analytics Used To Determine Best Prospects

■ By BRAD GRAVES

Kim Folsom has blended two areas she knows well — video marketing technology and financial education — to create a software platform for helping financial professionals gain small-business clients.

Folsom compares her business, **Reel Qualified**, to a dating website, saying she takes an eHarmony-style approach to matching financial advisers with the self-employed and microbusinesses — those with 10 or fewer employees. Its product is called Reel Smarts.



Kim Folsom

The company's analytics software, which is at the heart of Reel Smarts, helps financial services salespeople identify their best leads by tracking how prospective customers react while watching marketing videos.

Such customers start with a "magnet video," meant to draw them in and lead to other videos. On the back end, Folsom's software tracks which videos potential customers view, how many times they view them, when they interrupt viewing and whether they share the videos on



Facebook. Between videos, the software asks prospective customers to share information about themselves.

As each prospect goes through the process, the sales manager collects intelligence. It's much better than approaching a person cold, with just a name and email address, Folsom said. It opens the door for a more relevant conversation.

Revenue comes from financial advisers whom, Folsom said, spend \$10.8 billion yearly to market themselves to small businesses. Nevertheless, only 11 percent of such businesses have a financial coach or quarterback, Folsom said, leaving room for Reel Qualified to grow.

Folsom said she has 10 financial advisers using the system, and she is piloting the program with locally based **Westland Financial Services.**

Pairing Areas of Expertise

Folsom had some promising video-based marketing technology associated with Reel Qualified. Two incubators — EvoNexus and Plug and Play San Diego

REEL QUALIFIED

CEO: Kim Folsom

Revenue: Undisclosed

No. of local employees: Five

Investors: Undisclosed angel investors, Plug and Play San Diego

Headquarters: EvoNexus incubator, downtown San Diego

Year founded: 2013

What makes the company innovative: Offers an algorithm that tracks how prospective customers react to sales videos, collects other information, and with this combination identifies the best sales leads

Key factors for success: Offering engaging and relevant content, offering a great experience and making quality matches

— saw its potential, and both brought her on board. As time passed, however, Folsom and her mentors thought her business plan needed more focus.

As a serial entrepreneur, Folsom knows it can take time and perhaps an outsider's eye to polish a business plan. Working within the lean startup model, under which an entrepreneur seeks to solve a specific problem in a specific market, she applied the video marketing technology to financial education — her other area of specialty.

Folsom's previous businesses had strong video elements. She founded, ShowUhow, which offers product infor-

mation videos for online shoppers. **Sony Corp.** (NYSE: SNE), **Panasonic Corp.** (OTC: PCRFY) and **Wal-Mart Stores Inc.** (NYSE: WMT) were among the big brands and retailers using her solution. **SellPoint Inc.**, a San Francisco Bay Area company, bought ShowUhow in early 2013 for an undisclosed amount.

Several years earlier, Folsom was CEO of Seminar Source, which offered video on demand, providing continuing education for medical doctors and professionals.

Folsom, 53, declined to give revenue for her latest project, though she said ReelQualified is generating revenue.

Financial Core to Success

The businesswoman graduated from Montgomery High School in San Diego and earned her bachelor's degree from San Diego State University and an MBA from Pepperdine University.

When she's not tending her startup, Folsom is on the board of Carlsbad's Army and Navy Academy. She also sits on the advisory board for SDSU's College of Business Administration. Folsom has taught finance through the University of Phoenix and the University of Redlands.

"Personal finance is core to personal success," she said.

Asked about her exit strategy for Reel Qualified, Folsom said it probably won't come anytime soon. She hopes to exit after she has put many small-business owners in reach of their retirement goals.



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