

Case Study: Calcasieu Parish Public Library

Library Gives Back to Business Community with BusinessDecision

Following an overwhelming victory for the library mill levy in May 2009, the Calcasieu Parish Public Library turns its focus to helping businesses and parish leaders use market segmentation data and geographic information system (GIS) tools to find new customers and attract new businesses.

At a glance:

Location: Lake Charles, Louisiana

Population Served: 185,400

Number of Locations: Central Library
+ 13 branches

BusinessDecision Customer Since:
2009

Contact:

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Increased Visibility Yields Greater Support

In May 2009, Calcasieu Parish Public Library faced a challenge in asking the voters to renew a 5.99 mill tax that was approved in 1999. Since the millage was covered under Louisiana's homestead exemption, individual homeowners would pay no tax for the first \$75,000 in value of their homes. This meant that the library would need to turn to the business community to shoulder a larger part of the cost of the mill levy.

In soliciting the business community's support for the tax renewal, Library Director Michael Sawyer laid out a strong case as to why good libraries are good for business, demonstrating that strong libraries serve as a magnet to attract traffic to businesses, especially in difficult economic times. But beyond that, Sawyer said, they needed to be more visible to the business community to get them excited about the library.

According to Sawyer, the business community had always supported the library as a community resource, but didn't

necessarily see the value to them as business people. "We showed them BusinessDecision—a library resource designed to help small businesses find new customers, retain current customers, and select strategically sound locations—and used it as a key selling point to garner business support for the mill levy." With BusinessDecision the library was able to demonstrate that there is a direct correlation between library services and the growth and sustainability of local businesses, and, in turn, the potential for job creation and economic development.

BusinessDecision and Calcasieu Parish

Calcasieu Parish and the surrounding area have not been as affected by the down economy as other areas of the country. New businesses are locating in the area and the industrial base has not experienced layoffs. With BusinessDecision, Sawyer says, the library makes a significant contribution to the economic development of the area.

BusinessDecision is a business database offered through public libraries that helps

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small businesses succeed by increasing their market share and growing their clientele. BusinessDecision can help businesses find new customers, identify new store locations, analyze trade areas, perform competitive analysis, target media buys and direct mail campaigns, expand into new markets and select the right merchandise mix.

A powerful feature in BusinessDecision is the use of the Tapestry market segmentation system. Market segmentation is a tool that analyzes a vast array of data that helps businesses focus on the right consumers for their unique goods or services. Determining the market segments in a local area provides a big leg up for a small business, since large corporations use market segmentation all the time.

Using BusinessDecision, the library has learned that almost half of Calcasieu Parish households falls into five market segments:

- Midland Crowd 18.5%
- Crossroads 10.3%
- Modest Income Homes 7.9%
- Home Town 6.8%
- Midlife Junction 5.2%

This market segmentation information, and much more socioeconomic and demographic data available through BusinessDecision, provides critical details for attracting businesses to the Calcasieu area as well as helping business owners

Midland Crowd vs. Crossroads

These are the two largest segments in Calcasieu Parish, with very different market characteristics. The implications for businesses that understand these differences are enormous. Using BusinessDecision, business owners can not only identify the segments but locate them geographically for purposes of locating a store or planning a direct marketing campaign.

For example, Midland Crowd has a median household income of \$47,000. Workers are employed largely in blue-collar occupations. More than 80% own their homes. The vehicle of choice is a truck. They like hunting and fishing. There is a strong demand for kid's products. Country music is popular as are DVD players. They are politically conservative, devoted pet lovers, interested in domestic travel and value convenience offered by fast-food restaurants, cell phones, and the Internet.

By contrast, Crossroads are young, with a median age of 32 years. Median household income is \$48,000 and educational attainment is lower than the U.S. average. Half of Crossroads households live in mobile homes and they are more likely than the general population to have moved or relocated in the last five years. They shop at discount department stores. They commonly buy used vehicles and do their own maintenance. Home improvement projects rank low. They are more likely to own a satellite dish than to subscribe to cable. Birds are an especially popular pet.

BusinessDecision uses 65 market segments from the Tapestry market segmentation system to help businesses, entrepreneurs and non-profit organizations better understand their markets. Contact the library for more details on market segmentation and your business.

utilize resources effectively to attract and retain customers. Sawyer points to several initiatives the library is undertaking with BusinessDecision to help area businesses:

- Collaborate with the Parish Administrator to help promote the parish and attract more businesses.
- Actively work with SCORE to show entrepreneurs how to gather data for a business plan, find customers, and locate their business for success.
- Develop a joint program with the McNeese State University Business School.

The Calcasieu Parish Public Library's annual subscription to BusinessDecision includes data for Allen, Beauregard, Calcasieu, Cameron, and Jefferson Davis parishes. The service is available in the library and from any Internet-enabled computer through the library's website.

"Market segmentation as a tool has been available to big businesses for a long time, but until now not accessible to small businesses, non-profit agencies or entrepreneurs," Sawyer said. "We are very excited about the ways in which BusinessDecision can help our business owners better utilize their resources by focusing on the market segments that are most profitable for them. This is an incredible resource, available free to our community, and all you need is a library card to access it."

BusinessDecision Patron Story

Chriss Pace, BenchmarkCPS Calcasieu Parish, LA

In the early 1990s, Chriss Pace had his first experience with geographic information systems (GIS). At the time he worked as a consultant with the Louisiana Governor's Office of Rural Development where they used GIS to plot resources and examine geographic areas for management consolidation opportunities.

Fast forward to today. As a member of the Southwest Louisiana (SWLA) Chamber of Commerce Technology Committee, Pace is actively engaged in attracting new technology and industry into the area. Based on his prior experience with GIS, he wants to create a graphical representation of life in the five parishes of the southwest corner of Louisiana to demonstrate the value of the area to businesses and families who might be interested in relocating.

When the Calcasieu Parish Public Library purchased BusinessDecision, Pace was amazed to find the type of GIS information he had used in the Governor's office now available for use at no charge through the public library. "We are in the early stages of building a seed center to be affiliated with McNeese State University in Lake Charles. This will be the center of information for

entrepreneurs with a forum for raising capital. BusinessDecision offers tremendous capabilities and will be the place for aspiring business people to start.”

In his preliminary research for the Technology Committee, Pace was able to produce BusinessDecision reports that showed the demographics of the population living within a one, three or five mile radius of Lake Charles, including income, age, occupation, consumer spending habits and housing. The reports are available as spreadsheets or as graphical representations using pie charts and bar graphs.

According to Pace, the ability to convey information about SWLA in graphic format will be an enormous help in telling the story of the region. “Many people respond best to graphic images such as the ones we can produce with BusinessDecision. This database is the best use of tax dollars I’ve ever seen in my life,” he said.

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About BusinessDecision

BusinessDecision is a business database offered through public libraries that helps small businesses succeed by increasing their market share and growing their clientele, and that helps public libraries promote economic sustainability in their local community by meeting the needs of small businesses and other entrepreneurs. BusinessDecision Academic is a business database offered through academic libraries to help students and faculty undertake classroom and research projects. For more about BusinessDecision visit www.businessdecision.info or contact Julie Peterson toll free at (888) 606-7600 or by email at Julie@businessdecision.info.

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CIVICTechnologies provides a full suite of web services, customized applications and consulting services to meet the complete geographic information systems (GIS) needs of libraries and businesses—from small and medium enterprises to Fortune 500 companies—across a diverse range of industries. CIVICTechnologies enables its customers to visualize data in new and innovative ways in order to deliver more effective products and services, make better informed decisions, build consensus faster, allocate resources more wisely, and implement organization-wide solutions more effectively. For more information, call Marc Futterman toll free at (888) 606-7600 or email him at maf@civicttechnologies.com; or visit www.civicttechnologies.com.