# ACE National: Raising awareness and entrepreneurship with the 'unconventional' client.

*Established in 1999, ACE National is a federally registered trade association for the adult nightclub industry—including establishments publicly traded on Nasdaq and named by Forbes as some of the top-grossing small businesses in the U.S. ACE National meets membership demands of strategy implementation and feature-rich trade association management. Built on social media, political education and peer-to-peer networking, ACE offers its membership high quality discount services from major corporations, boasting cost effectiveness. Many clubs turn to ACE National as the 'go-to' resource for their regional or U.S. operations.*

> **"ACE National eliminates barriers through its political and legislative education programs, vendor discount negotiations and its public relations strategies. As a member of ACE, our executives reap invaluable savings and knowledge designed to increase their profit margins and build a sense of community. The benefits of membership are virtually immediate and very powerful."**
> **--Jim St. John, ACE National President**

## Membership Needs

Empowerment Enterprises, Ltd. spoke to a number of adult club operators to understand their requirements, challenges and key expectations. Most adult entertainment clubs wanted legislative or discount solutions that would be simple to deploy while mitigating risks such as high costs, restrictive sanctions or an onerous implementation cycle. An additional requirement was the ability to quickly build rapport with new markets/legislatures. Generally, adapting and meeting specific requirements of corporate vendors or political influencers took an unnecessarily long time and was often met with ridicule or distrust of the industry.

"We wanted to create a solution that would check all these boxes for our members. Also, we did not want to create and manage a large data center, as our core competence lies in entertainment and hospitality, not in IT infrastructure, politics or major legislative influence," explains Micheal Ocello, Former ACE National President.

## Solution

Empowerment Enterprises, Ltd. envisaged a solution that streamlines and optimizes ACE National Membership utilization. The firm decided to build a cloud-based solution to eliminate the need for the association to manage a data center and to focus its energy on its core competence.

Empowerment Enterprises, Ltd. quickly realized that it required customized "Membership Relations Software" and not just computing resources. "We wanted more than compute power and storage on demand. We wanted to build and optimize a solution for ACE National and manage that solution so their membership could concentrate on their respective businesses," says Angelina Spencer, President of EE Ltd. and ACE

National Association Manager. The firm evaluated all the major cloud platforms, including Amazon, Google and Microsoft. "We decided in favor of a smaller but effective program, "Wild Apricot" as it offers a complete set of tools and technologies along with a customization that allows quicker development," she adds.

Empowerment Enterprises, Ltd. took approximately three months to develop and test Wild Apricot applications with ACE Membership. It "went live" in late 2011. "We took time to develop because we wanted to ensure that we could use the features of Wild Apricot in an 'easy to pass along way' so that ACE membership would not have to touch the core architecture of the program," explains Spencer. In addition, the EE Ltd. team developed several related platforms through Wild Apricot, including creating an industry wide database, membership applications and fees, newsletter distribution and legislative updates/alerts.

An important aspect of the membership development was to ensure an open platform strategy. The goal was to make the ACE National Website easily extensible by connecting through the Wild Apricot service. "Third-party application integration is of primary importance to our membership and hence we wanted to ensure that we could offer easy data exchange between the site and our applications," explains David Fairchild, ACE National Vice President.

The ACE National Service is available on smart phones and tablets across the Windows, iOS, Android and Blackberry **platform**.

**Benefits**

Approximately 400 ACE members, a 55% one-year increase, use Wild Apricot, a feature-rich software solution. The ACE National Board of Directors maintains and pushes efficiency of the program in every aspect its operations.

**Membership Optimization**

Empowerment Enterprises, Ltd. manages and optimizes all facets of ACE National operations, from legislative tracking, association management and discount programs to ACE National Board meetings, tradeshows and strategic planning initiatives. "Members have access to information they need, to realize growth and savings almost immediately through our network," explains Macy John, EE Ltd. Social Media Director. She adds, "Members don't waste time filling out complicated forms or maneuvering through complex instructions."

**Superior Performance**

The ACE Membership Relations Software, built and maintained by EE Ltd., offers the ACE National Board of Directors and its advisory counsel instant, real time visibility to critical data and the ability to update and manage information from anywhere 24/7.

**Best Practices**

The application builds trust and rapport with ACE Membership and adds several industry best practices as well.

"We combine features such as membership fees with discounts and resources to authenticate and provide immediate results for the club executive. And, we use industry best practices for clubs to ensure the highest level of follow through with the ACE Mission Statement," adds Spencer.

**Lower Association Management Costs**

"Wild Apricot eliminates barriers such as high cost of maintenance and difficulty levels. It allows us to offer a utility-like service," comments Spencer. "We focus our energy on upgrading our solutions, thus adding value for ACE Members instead of maintaining and upgrading the IT infrastructure**."**

**Greater Flexibility**

Empowerment Enterprises, Ltd. delivers an integrated suite of applications through its affiliate partners and team members. A company can take advantage of our base solution network to establish newer strategies as needed. More importantly, the firm realizes the need for an open architecture that allows two-way data flow and communication for its clients. "This is a big benefit to our clients in terms of integration, rapport, professionalism and cost-savings," discloses Spencer.

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