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One on One with Lineup's Mike Mendoza

▶ BY SARAH ZOOK MANAGING EDITOR

When Mike Mendoza, CEO of Lineup Systems, was the global IT director for Metro International (www.metro.lu), based in Luxembourg, he struggled to find a sales system for the free daily that resulted in positive growth.

"We went to all the usual suspects and said show us what you can do," Mendoza told *News & Tech.* The result, Mendoza said, was conversation after conversation where he heard, "When the phone rings you book an ad like this."

"This is Metro, we're a free daily," Mendoza said. "The phone never rings. How do you sell with this system?"

Metro had to claw and scrape for every sale, so they needed a sales system.

In 2005, Mendoza set out to build a system that at the time was very relevant for Metro. By 2009 it was relevant for everyone.

"We have the DNA of relentless sales," Mendoza said.

In its infancy, Lineup Systems focused on mid-market newspapers, but larger markets saw the advantage, too. Time Inc. and News Corp. were two of the first clients.

Expansion

The company built up its European clientele and in 2012 decided to make sure it had a presence in the U.S., Mendoza said.

"We really felt like the mid market in the U.S. needed some support," he said.

Lineup is focused on building up the American systems separate from the European market. The company hired 12 people in 2016 and is planning 25 new hires globally this year.

"We don't want our growth to limit our customer service," Mendoza said. So as a rule, Lineup strives to hire industry experts, invest in them and train them well so that when a media company is ready to implement a Lineup System, Lineup is ready.

"If you're sitting across the desk from Lineup, you know that the person has 10 to 20 years experience," Mendoza said. "We actually want people to understand the business language of a media company. Lineup sees success from this growth."

'Recognized for our tech'

Growth and change is a constant for Lineup Systems.

"By the time we get the deal and it goes live, the entire industry is changing again," Mendoza said. So the team created a full-fast product and web-based

Photo: Lineup Systems

> " *We want to take good sales reps and make them great. We want to take an average sales rep and make them good. Let's make all of them heroes.* "
>
> — Mike Mendoza, CEO Lineup Systems

platform, he said. The system has weekly drops of new software that is updated every six weeks.

"If you want to keep your business viable with trends, sales and products, our products are one step ahead," Mendoza said. "Someone has most likely already asked for the tool you need."

The industry can do great things with great tools, according to Mendoza.

"People always look at our industry like it's a bunch of ancient tech and old ideas, but we're being recognized for our tech," said Mendoza. Lineup appeared on The Sunday Times' 2016 Hiscox Tech Track 100 list.

Solid investors have made the difference in Lineup's success.

"Thanks to our investors, we never have to wait for a customer to sign a check in order to put them in business," Mendoza said.

The goal of the company, Mendoza said, is to build the product with the customer in mind and make sure that the customer can succeed. If the customer succeeds, Lineup will too, is Mendoza's thinking.

"We are generating cash and 20 percent of total revenue goes back into our product," Mendoza said. "Our clients have trust in us."

This is the reason Lineup is successful, Mendoza thinks.

"We're not growing because we've put in an excellent sales strategy. What we try to do is put a good solid foundation in product and knowledge and try to share that with as many customers as possible," he said.

Helping customers

The system is fluid, said Mendoza. "How we do it with one customer and another might be totally different."

The AdPoint system from Lineup is a sales prompting system. The entire thing is designed for the sales staff to have the tools to think "what can I do to make more money today."

The system allows sales agents to book every media channel, see financials and analytics.

"We have to walk the walk with our product," Mendoza said. "We're really proud."

Management gets real-time data, discounts, inventory, pagination and analytics allowing them to make moves to increase sales at a moment's notice. The commission module allows the reps to see how much commission they receive from each sale.

"It's like crack for the reps," Mendoza said. "We thought it would just be a management tool, but it's probably one of our most used features."

The system doesn't target cost cuts, explained Mendoza.

"That's not our game," he said. "We want to take good sales reps and make them great. We want to take an average sales rep and make them good. Let's make all of them heroes."

Taking action

The web-based, go-anywhere system is focused on helping media companies regain ground, Mendoza said.

"How you get people to take action from the product we're giving them," he said. "It's a better approach than yelling at your team and talking about project margins and timelines."

Being media industry people turned tech experts has allowed Lineup to build a system that communicates in the way media representatives communicate and gives them the tools to be successful in today's challenging environment.

"We have to help media businesses and as long as that message is out there, we keep winning business," Mendoza said. ▲