



An Organic Food Startup Back To The Roots Uses ProsperWorks to Run Sales and PR efforts



About Back to the Roots

The company's roots go back to when a pair of UC Berkeley seniors learned about using used coffee grinds to grow mushrooms in a business ethics class. Both students independently contacted the professor, who introduced them to one another. Those students — Alejandro Velez and Nikhil Arora — didn't know each other at the time, but have since gone on to sow the seeds of Back to the Roots together. First, they began experimenting in their fraternity's kitchen with coffee beans from a local coffee shop. Early on, their work piqued the interest of Berkeley chef Alice Waters, a staunch promoter of organic food — she loved the idea of turning waste into organic gourmet food. "I'm so inspired by a little project in Berkeley," Waters said in a [video published by Back to the Roots](#). Her endorsement early on helped the team pick up momentum. The next step was getting their marketing team on board and getting their product onto shelves at Whole Foods. Those wins at the start made Alex and Nikhil's paths clear: They both declined corporate job offers and decided to dedicate their days and nights to urban mushroom farming. Back to the Roots now educates people with their inspirational mission to reconnect families to where their food comes from, making it as easy as possible for people to become urban farmers and grow their own food regardless of where they live.



Growth Factor

Launched in 2009, Back to the Roots now has a 12 full-time staff in their Oakland, Calif., office. Business is going extremely well, growing their categories from two to 18 products by the end of 2015. They've launched a ready-to-eat product line and [recently launched U.S.-grown, 100 per cent stoneground breakfast cereals](#). The company also launched nationwide at Target, in 2,000 Home Depot stores, Nordstrom, Crate & Barrel, Whole Foods and Costco. "And we are just getting started," says Ali O'Grady, marketing lead at Back to the Roots.



ProsperWorks Keeps the Sales Team on Track

"Prosperworks has saved us a substantial amount of time — I'm on it all day. Without this tool, I really think that it would add several hours every day," says Annalee Finkenbinder, Partnerships Lead at Back to the Roots.

Why They Chose ProsperWorks

As the business grew, Alex and Nikhil knew they needed to invest in a customer relationship management (CRM) solution. They had looked into solutions such as Salesforce and Netsuite before settling on ProsperWorks. "Its very important for a small company like ours that the people we work with are personable and [trustworthy], and we felt that way with ProsperWorks," says Annalee. "Because we are such a small team (three people to be exact) and has expanded so rapidly, our hands were full. That's why we chose ProsperWorks — they provided all the features other CRMs have in addition to being extremely user-friendly. It also integrated very well with Gmail, which we use everyday, so we didn't have to make any changes to our current workflow," adds Annalee.

Their Workflow & Setup

"Our contacts are brokers, sales leads, distributors and producers. When I receive an email, I'll add that person as a contact or a lead if it's someone who I plan to follow up with. Typically I add a task after that," Annalee explains. "ProsperWorks keeps me organized. No details are left out and it's easy for me to recover previous conversations and to view old history with an account, and you can do all that in one place. It also keeps me on the track with every lead and contact, as if haven't spoken to any of them for a while I can go back and see where we last left off. I really appreciate the reminders I get from ProsperWorks, too," Annalee says, adding that the Automated Contact Search feature has also been very helpful, especially in the Chrome extension, because it allows her to see who she's speaking to side-by-side with the email. Annalee goes on to explain the primary reason for having two separate accounts between the sales and PR team is that they have a completely different network of people. For example, they all work with Whole Foods but with different departments, so the system helps them make that separation.

How to Do PR Using ProsperWorks

Other than her primary role as a marketing lead, Ali O'Grady also handles the company's public relations. After having learned how ProsperWorks has helped the company's sales team grow, she decided to use it for PR purposes, too. Prior to implementing ProsperWorks, Ali and her team used Excel to manage press leads and contacts. Since the team relies heavily on earned media to get further media coverage, it requires a lot of press outreach. "We were looking for a better way to streamline our contacts, and to know whom they are talking to as well as when the last conversations were," says Ali.

Segmenting the List of Contacts and Leads

Ali and her team uses ProsperWorks to create a more segmented contact list. First, they uploaded lists of press leads as contacts and assigned each a company, a category and a contact type. Ali divided the contact types into media A, B and C levels and categories to differentiate contacts related to business publications, from food and nutrition-oriented outlets. This segmentation enabled her to efficiently manage and filter leads, pursue follow ups and assign tasks. For example, she'd filter Media A list, and make sure all of the people on that list are contacted. "IT DEFINITELY SAVED US A COUPLE HOURS A WEEK ON DATA INPUT"

When she receives new inbound inquiries, within the Chrome extension, she adds them as contacts and assigns them to the appropriate list. "The Chrome plugin is definitely my favorite part about ProsperWorks. The ease of adding people and the efficiency of having our database being synced and updated in real time, are extremely helpful," Ali continues, "It definitely saved us a couple hours a week on data input." She also uses ProsperWorks to follow up with her press leads. "I regularly check on my list to find out who I need to be following up with. Having an efficient follow-up process has helped us pursue more press leads," says Ali. "I'd definitely recommend ProsperWorks to other PR teams. Not only for record-keeping, but for the ability to have multiple people viewing and engaging in conversations efficiently. The support team has been great helping us onboard and communicate our needs, too." Ali's usage demonstrates how a contact-based company can efficiently adopt and benefit from a CRM solution.



How is your company using ProsperWorks? Tell us about it.