



## **YouMail Robocall Index Campaign Earns National Recognition for App Maker**

### **Big Media and FCC Turn to YouMail CEO as Expert Robocall Authority**

#### **BACKGROUND**

YouMail, Inc. is a provider of intelligent, cloud-based telecommunication services for mobile phones. The company's flagship service is based on an automated virtual receptionist that replaces the subscriber's voicemail on iPhone, Android, and Windows phones.

Headquartered in Irvine, Calif., YouMail was founded in 2007 and is privately funded. The YouMail app blocks robocallers by playing them an out of service greeting. The app works by replacing the user's existing voicemail service, and it provides features to make users more productive and delight the callers that matter.

Alex Quilici serves as the Chief Executive Officer of YouMail. He holds several patents for his work in Internet-enabled voice services. Prior to joining YouMail, Quilici presided over the rapid growth of Quack, an early voice services firm. After building up Quack from three co-founders to more than 125 employees within 18 months, Quilici and his team sold the company to America Online for \$200 million-plus in August 2000.

After the acquisition, Quilici was named Vice President of AOL Voice Services, where he played a major role in growing the unit to over 1 million paying customers. During his six-year stint at AOL, he was responsible for conceiving, launching, and managing various consumer communications services, including AOLbyPhone, AOL Voicemail, and AIM Phonenumber, a free online voicemail service.

#### **CHALLENGE**

Quilici joined the YouMail board as an early investor and the company's interim CEO in 2007, before becoming the fulltime CEO. YouMail had originally marketed its service for telecom carriers to offer the YouMail voicemail app to their phone subscribers. However, Quilici found this initial approach was ineffective due to the lengthy and complex sales cycles for telco partners.

Pivoting to a new marketing strategy, Quilici reframed YouMail as an application for small business owners who lacked adequate resources to hire full-time receptionists. Today, YouMail offers a free basic



service for consumer downloads, and it charges small business owners and others for its “premium” service that provides a comprehensive digital assistant to help route and respond quickly to calls.

YouMail engaged Lumina Communications to pump up the company’s new market positioning in January 2015. The Lumina team quickly found how hard it is to attract media attention and build up a brand presence amid the many thousands of apps available in the iTunes App Store and the Google Play Store.

Initially, Lumina’s PR strategy involved raising public awareness of Quilici based on his industry thought leadership in voice technologies, while also building up attention for the YouMail app among small business media outlets and tech websites. The initial media campaign achieved some success, supplemented by features in numerous app reviews and gift guides.

In addition, Lumina succeeded in securing industry awards for YouMail, including the Mobile Excellence Awards, the Mobile Star Awards, and the 2015 [app] Design Awards. YouMail was also named a finalist in the OC Tech Alliance’s High Tech Awards for 2015, and Lumina secured a public speaking engagement for Quilici at the Mobile Voice Conference.

At the same time, Lumina co-wrote numerous contributed articles with Quilici. This effort resulted in byline placements in outlets such as Wireless Week, About.com Money, Home Business Magazine, Customer Magazine and Idea Café.

Then in June 2015, Quilici published a high-profile piece on CNBC.com titled, “Time to Shut Down Robocalls.” Widespread attention for that article resulted in several more byline placements about the robocalling problem, including TMC.net, RCR Wireless News and elsewhere. This marked the turning point for YouMail to achieve more effective PR outcomes.

## **STRATEGY**

Sensing a shift in momentum based on the media response, Lumina proposed a new direction and Quilici made another bold strategic move. He began working closely with the Lumina team to develop a new concept known as the YouMail Robocall Index. This project quickly emerged as the cornerstone of YouMail’s public relations campaign.

The idea for the Robocall Index was quite simple: By aggregating caller data from YouMail’s sizeable base of active users nationwide, the company could extrapolate robocalling trends and patterns across the larger American population. YouMail would give consumers an online portal and database on the YouMail site so that people could look up their area codes to understand the volume and types of local robocalls in their cities.

By fragmenting the media relations campaign and targeting individual cities, Lumina started to generate widespread local coverage, leading to a broader national story which became another component of the campaign. Within a few months of launching the YouMail Robocall Index in September 2015, the company had struck a nerve by capturing the angst of widespread consumer frustration due to



relentless robocalls. YouMail soon struck up alliances with the Robocall Campaign at Consumers Union, publishing blog posts there and with the Consumerist and Consumer Affairs.

## **RESULTS**

The YouMail Robocall Index soon gained a broad following, earning citations from the Federal Communications Commission as a reliable source for national robocalling data. The FCC even included references to the Robocall Index in its public meeting materials.

YouMail began issuing regular press releases about monthly robocalling trends and hotspots, which caught the attention of local broadcast reporters, talk show hosts, and investigative journalists who were interested in consumer protection. Widespread media coverage started to snowball.

By mid-2016, the campaign had taken off. Literally hundreds of local TV newscasts, radio stations and daily newspapers from cities large and small featured stories about their regional robocalling problems based on stats from the YouMail Robocall Index. Dozens of local broadcast media journalists conducted interviews with Quilici in-studio, on location, by phone and via Skype.

In turn, national media outlets soon started paying attention as more stories appeared with quotes from Quilici, who was increasingly portrayed as an expert national authority on robocall technologies and telecom policies.

By early 2017, YouMail had received unprecedented coverage from many top-tier national news organizations including the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, the Washington Post, USA Today, NBC News, CBS Morning News, CBS MoneyWatch, MSN.com, Dow Jones Moneyish, Yahoo News, Slate and others. Multiple industry publications also cited the Robocall Index, including Cellular News, Mobile Marketing Watch, Mobile Village, eWeek Telecompetitor.com and more.

High-level regional print media placements and syndications for YouMail have also appeared in the Boston Globe, the Chicago Tribune, the Dallas Morning News, the Philadelphia Inquirer, the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, the Miami Herald, the Columbus Dispatch, the Denver Post, the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, the Kansas City Star, the Sacramento Bee, the Honolulu Star-Advertiser, the Portland Press-Herald, the Raleigh News & Observer, the San Antonio Express News, and many, many more.

Based on these advances in brand awareness and subsequent website visitors, YouMail estimates that downloads of its flagship app have risen dramatically in recent month, and further, the company's SEO strategy is becoming much more effective. Quilici credits the YouMail PR campaign for being a crucial centerpiece of the company's broader marketing efforts.



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