Homebase

Reinventing the online shopping experience to boost digital sales by double digits

Overview

The need
With 40 percent of its customers beginning their home improvement journeys online, Homebase recognised a valuable opportunity to drive digital revenues—but how could it inspire more visitors to purchase?

The solution
Homebase designed a fresh e-commerce experience supported by IBM® Commerce solutions, enabling it to understand individual customer preferences, serve tailored content and streamline every journey.

The benefit
Today, Homebase offers product recommendations and promotions tailored to each digital visitor's individual preferences—attracting 30 percent more online visitors and driving double-digit sales growth on all digital channels.

Home improvement retail is going through a major transformation. New generations of shoppers increasingly see e-commerce as the norm, and expect to browse and buy products online or on mobile rather than travelling to their local store.

As more consumers treat the e-commerce site as a showroom, offering the right digital experience can make the difference between winning a new customer, and losing the business to a competitor. How can established brands replicate the hard-won success of their bricks-and-mortar stores on the e-commerce channel?

Delight customers, drive sales

Homebase, one of the UK's leading home and garden retailers, faced exactly this challenge.

Jo Kenrick, Director of Marketing at Homebase, explains: "For many years, Homebase has cultivated a strong brand identity through our retail stores. We are now seeing a shift in customer preferences—around 40 percent of our customers start their retail journeys online, and many choose to make their purchases without viewing the products in store beforehand.

"We recognised a valuable opportunity to increase our revenues on the digital channel. With more than 38,000 home and garden products in our catalogue, we needed to help each customer find the products they were looking for without overwhelming them with information."

"To realise our vision for the e-commerce channel, we wanted a partner with deep knowledge of the retail industry and proven experience in the digital space. The IBM team delivered on our requirements perfectly—and their insight has been invaluable in shaping the personalised digital journeys that our customers enjoy today," says Jo Kenrick, Director of Marketing at Homebase.

Solution components

Software
- IBM® Campaign
- IBM Digital Analytics
- IBM Tealeaf®
- IBM WebSphere® Commerce
- BloomReach Search, Navigation and Personalization

Jo Kenrick continues: "In addition to streamlining customer journeys, we wanted to learn from our interactions online to build a deeper understanding of customer preferences. The aim was to inspire customers with relevant products that they might not otherwise have considered—and crucially, to build the kinds of rewarding, personalised experiences that keep customers coming back."

Selecting an end-to-end solution

To achieve its goal, Homebase decided to adopt a fresh approach to e-commerce based on IBM Commerce solutions.

"Of all the solutions we considered, we felt that the IBM Commerce portfolio was the best fit for Homebase's strategic requirements," says Jo Kenrick. "The IBM offering includes a proven e-commerce platform with rich analytics capabilities built in—enabling us to gain deep insight into the paths that visitors take through our site, and the types of products and services they may be interested in.

"In addition, the IBM solution is fully integrated with our back-end systems for order, customer and supply chain management. Homebase pioneered omni-channel retail strategies such as 'reserve and collect' in the UK home improvement market, so we immediately recognised the benefit of tighter integration between the digital and in-store channels."

Building a personalised experience

Working with a team from IBM Interactive Experience, Homebase implemented a brand new e-commerce store for desktop and mobile using IBM WebSphere® Commerce software.

Using pre-tagged templates in IBM WebSphere Commerce and the BloomReach Search, Navigation and Personalization solution, Homebase is shaping a streamlined digital experience that enables visitors to find products and services of interest faster than ever before.

"Before, we relied on static product and category pages to reach our digital customers—today, that's all changed," says Jo Kenrick. "Our e-commerce platform now offers dynamic search suggestions and product recommendations, which delivers a seamless journey from browsing our site to placing an order.

"For example, when customers begin typing a search term on one of our sites or apps, we show them suggested searches that other customers with similar browsing patterns have found helpful. After customers have found products that they are interested in, they can compare features, colour options and prices with a single click."

> *"Our IBM Commerce solutions have helped us to transform our digital presence into an interactive, inspirational showroom."*

— Jo Kenrick, Director of Marketing, Homebase

Jo Kenrick adds: "And because customers are increasingly using the site as a showroom, we have enriched our product pages with product images, demonstration videos, how-to guides and more—enabling us to bring the interactive experience of an in-store visit to any desktop, mobile or tablet."

Ensuring seamless journeys

With IBM Tealeaf® customer experience management software, Homebase can base its web design decisions on insight, not instinct. Using advanced analytics, IBM Tealeaf software identifies sticking points along the customer journey, and helps to highlight the changes required to enable visitors to move seamlessly through the site.

Thanks to IBM Campaign and IBM Digital Analytics software, Homebase is building closer relationships with digital customers.

"Our IBM Commerce solutions give us the opportunity to get to know our customers on a truly one-to-one level, which is helping us to transform our approach to marketing," says Jo Kenrick. "IBM Campaign enables us to use data on customer preferences to share tailored product recommendations with our customers via email. By analysing the effectiveness of our campaigns using IBM Digital Analytics, we can better understand what inspires each customer to purchase, and refine our marketing strategies to drive conversion."

Attracting 30 percent more online visitors

With IBM Commerce solutions driving its e-commerce strategy, Homebase can connect each of its visitors with the products and services they need to realise their unique home improvement goals.

"Today, our visitors can effortlessly explore, compare and buy products that are relevant to them—whether they are browsing online, on mobile or on one of our apps," says Jo Kenrick. "The results speak for themselves: we are now attracting 30 percent more online visitors."

Jo Kenrick continues: "Because IBM Commerce solutions enable us to make such relevant product recommendations, we have achieved double-digit growth in all our digital sales channels. Similarly, offering relevant content means that customers are browsing the site for longer—and bounce rates for our key search and category pages have shrunk by an average of 10 percent."

Jo Kenrick concludes: "Our IBM Commerce solutions have helped us to transform our e-commerce platform into an interactive, inspirational showroom. By continuing our close collaboration with IBM, we are creating new products and services to delight our customers, drive digital sales and nurture loyalty."

About Homebase

Founded in 1954 and headquartered in Milton Keynes, England, Homebase is a leading home-improvement retailer. With 38,000 home and garden products and more than 296 stores across the United Kingdom, in the financial year to February 2015 the company generated annual revenues of GBP1.5 billion.

To learn more about Homebase, visit: homebase.co.uk

For more information

To learn more about IBM Commerce solutions, contact your IBM representative or IBM Business Partner, or visit the following website: **ibm.com**/commerce

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