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Case Study: Bishop Company Driving New Growth and Profitability with IBM WebSphere® Commerce





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*–Keith McCormick,
President, Bishop Company*

Faced with an underperforming, under-served e-commerce store, Bishop partnered with Zobrist Consulting to create a site that has become a go-to industry destination and driving force in their company's growth. In order to be successful in an increasingly competitive marketplace, Bishop knew that they needed to provide an intuitive, informative, and intelligent online shopping experience and found a solution that would help them do just that.

Founded in 1946, the Bishop Company is the industry leading distributor of top-quality tools and equipment for professional arborists and landscapers. The company's clientele ranges from private tradesmen to authorized retailers across the country.

Business Need:

Bishop Company was no longer able to find technical support to improve and enhance the site on its outdated e-commerce platform. Confronted with stagnating online sales and a lagging economy, Bishop Company knew it was time to take action and revamp its e-commerce platform. “We weren't able to bring products to market fast enough” says Keith McCormick, President of Bishop Company, which was threatening the company's long-standing position as the industry leader.

Challenge:

The Bishop Company required an e-commerce site that could satisfy the needs of the younger generation of savvy online shoppers, convince longtime print catalog customers to place their orders online, and be a true reflection of their status as the industry leader.

Solution:

Bishop tapped Zobrist to implement eZcommerce, a complete e-commerce solution based on IBM WebSphere® Commerce. The Bishop team liked the way that the system empowers business users and ensures long-term support and extensibility. In early May of 2011, the team launched the new www.bishco.com, a website that is now a go-to destination for an extensive line of professional arborist and landscaper products. “I had an extremely positive experience working with Teresa and the technical staff [at Zobrist Consulting Group]. They have seasoned experts who communicate very well with each other to get the job done,” says McCormick, “It's definitely a relationship I plan on continuing.”

Solution Overview

Technical Specifications:

WebSphere Commerce Express V7 on IBM x3650-M2 RM Server, back-end integration with A+ from Infor Corporation running on iSeries model 520

Results:

- 200% increase in e-commerce channel sales revenue in the first 2 months after launch
- 75% of this increase consists of customer conversions from telephone to e-commerce ordering
- 25% from brand new customers

Benefits:

- Long-term call-center cost savings
- Increase in customer satisfaction
- Targeted marketing capabilities
- Enables business users
- Minimal development time
- Round-the-clock monitoring and technical support

The Zobrist team leveraged the quick-to-market development capabilities of eZcommerce, combined with its sophisticated marketing and merchandising capabilities to enable Bishop to efficiently promote key products and react to market trends. Qualities of the new site include:

Intuitive Shopping Design: The new site allows customers to shop the way that comes most naturally to them, whether by browsing through navigation, searching by product information, or quick ordering with SKU numbers. Customers preparing to make a long-term investment in a piece of professional grade equipment can get assistance in comparing product features by dragging and dropping products into an ever-present “Compare” box. eZcommerce’s optimized checkout flow minimizes cart abandonment by making the process as simple as possible. The end result is a 200% increase in online sales, primarily consisting of orders by customers who had only placed phone orders before. These customers had simply been waiting for the Bishop Company to create an e-commerce site that was easy to use.

Informative Features: Mouse over zoom on high resolution product images, downloadable user guides, and video demonstrations imbedded on product detail pages provide a much richer way of interacting and learning about products. Customers have all the information they need available on each product detail page, much more than what they would find looking at a product on the shelf of a brick-and-mortar store. Bishop Company has seen a significant increase in sales from brand new customers thanks to eZcommerce’s product merchandising tools.

Intelligent Merchandising: eZcommerce gives Bishop the ability to customize the site to its different types of customers. Today authorized retailers see their wholesale price for all products once they have logged in. The platform also provides the capabilities to intelligently showcase products and special promotions that are most relevant to each customer segment. Imbedded analytics provide comprehensive traffic information to Bishop’s business managers, allowing them to track and improve on marketing campaigns.

“We are very pleased with the work that Zobrist has done.

While many contractors wanted just to build us a website, Zobrist took a whole package approach that provided us with the e-commerce store, access to technical expertise, a marketing plan to boost our online presence, and ongoing 24/7 support. Their ability to deliver on all of these areas was a major factor in our initial choice to work with them and why we continue our relationship with 24/7 support and maintenance.”

*–Keith McCormick,
President, Bishop Company*

Smarter retail, bigger profits

As Bishop Company continues to refine its flagship site, www.bishco.com, it expects that the e-commerce channel will play a central role in driving growth.

With over 2,500 different products in stock, Bishop Company's print catalog is extremely time consuming and costly to produce. When McCormick factors in the cost of the staff required to process catalog telephone orders, he anticipates substantial long-term cost savings enabled by the e-commerce channel. To McCormick, the tremendous response to the site redesign, from long-time catalog customers and brand new customers alike, is a sign that the company is moving in the right direction.

McCormick envisions a future in which the company has enabled its authorized dealers to promote their own branded versions of the Bishco.com as an alternative to turning customers away when an item is not carried in their brick-and-mortar store. The site would be branded for each dealer, with sales processed through the Bishco.com ecommerce system, issuing commissions to the dealer who referred the sale. With eZcommerce, the Bishop team is well-positioned to realize this vision, making their extensive product assortment widely available and easy to shop.

At the end of the day, it's about providing Bishop Company customers with the tools and world-class service that they need to be successful at what they do, whether it is professional landscape construction or managing their retail business.

About Zobrist Consulting Group

Zobrist Consulting Group is a Premier IBM Business Partner focusing on Online Retailing since 2001. Zobrist was recently recognized with the 2011 IBM IMPACT Best of Show Award and the 2011 IBM Beacon Award for "Best Industry Solution for Retail", for its Smart Merchandiser Solution. The consulting firm also received the IBM Leadership Award for "Best B2C Deployment" in 2008 for the successful launch of TheNorthFace.com.

To learn more about how Zobrist Consulting Group can help to transform your business

Visit us at:

zobristinc.com

Or email us at:

contactus@zobristinc.com

