

How Homebase's content strategy is driving stronger customer engagement

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When developing and deploying compelling online content and ecommerce content there are more than a few "must-dos" and just as many "don'ts" — such as undertaking a "scorched earth" or rip-down approach regarding content creation and management.

As Glenn Conratt, global vice president for CoreMedia [told](#) Retail Customer Experience in a recent interview, retailers aiming to boost customer engagement and enhance e-commerce platforms with new content capabilities should reject any pressure to do a major re-platforming and replacement of existing technology investments.

That's because there are options that integrate and support today's wide range of content management systems powering the e-commerce consumer experience. One is the CoreMedia solution, which allows retailers to avoid the rip-and-replace and the costs and deployment of a new "all-in-one" option that many vendors are touting.

By integrating technology into existing systems a retailer can save money, time and get invaluable content to consumers in quick fashion and see results just as fast. That's why Conratt recommends an incremental approach and building on what's already in place. To illustrate the value of that strategy, CoreMedia provided insight on how brand name retailer Homebase is achieving deeper customer engagement and more robust ecommerce success.

The Homebase scenario

The U.K. and Ireland's top online home and general product retailer sells more than 38,000 products to more than 60 million customers and wanted to provide consumers with something more compelling than its online product catalog. It partnered with CoreMedia and deployed its LiveContext 2.0 solution, which is now driving a multi-channel, customized shopping experience.

The solution helps shoppers find what they need faster and better understand the products for sale. It also offers inspirational features regarding home decor and building out the garden environment.

"Accordingly, the online store needs to be more than just a platform for offers. In order to engage and inspire customers it must develop into a kind of journal with customized content that focuses on creative topics for a range of users. In order to differentiate them further in the market and enhance their customer satisfaction, Homebase wanted to be able to deliver these kinds of online experiences," said Conradt.

Homebase was initially looking for a brand new platform capable of handling future growth, and one that could be easily scaled based on order volume and product range, explained Rachel Jones, digital enterprise manager at Homebase.

Yet Homebase wanted it to happen quickly, but more than a few challenges lay ahead. One was inefficient processes that was driving extremely high administrative costs, preventing rapid innovations stagnating online traffic.

"The focus was on designing an entirely new online presence with content that would attract and inspire customers," Jones noted.

The goal was for the online store to provide the same level of inspiration as a carefully curated and personally staffed brick-and-mortar store.

The LiveContext 2.0. tool taps deep real-time integration with e-commerce systems to create immersive, product-aligned stories that inspire customers and motivate them to spend more time on the site and, ultimately, make more purchases.

Within two months Homebase had the new online story and all the new functionality up and running, and its marketing team had greater and deeper control of digital content creation and management.

For consumers and customers, the system now provides personalized and relevant content during the online interaction experience.

"These enhanced digital experiences elevate the online store from a basic product catalog to a comprehensive experience with exciting and regularly updated content. Customers now spend more time on the sites and return to the shop more frequently," said Conradt.

Homebase features pre-built integration with IBM WebSphere Commerce and that played a key role in the rapid implementation.

"Thanks to integration with IBM WebSphere Commerce, CoreMedia had already done most of the work for us," said Jones. "That saved us a great deal of time and stress," she noted. The Homebase team currently manages about 600 articles on the new website with the help of CoreMedia LiveContext 2.0.

Key benefits gained

Another key benefit in the customer experience, cited Jones, is the enhanced usability with the content management team being able to respond to evolving customer demands and shifting market requirements,

"Our entire team has undergone a transformation, and now our online and marketing staff can focus on their core competency again, which is creativity. They no longer waste time on a complex administrative structure," explained Jones.

Currently both Homebase's online site, as well as the mobile website and mobile app are being managed with the CoreMedia solution. This integration, said Jones, has given Homebase a dialog opportunity with customers across all touch points.

But that's just one winning benefit. Here are a few more noted by Jones:

- Average order amount in two target categories rose by 8 percent over the previous year.
- Efficiency and productivity showed significant improvement and time to web, (i.e. the production time for online content), was reduced by more than 75 percent.
- Homebase has registered 36 percent more traffic to its website.
- Multi-channel sales have also grown by 60 percent thanks to mobile optimization.

Going forward, Homebase intends to deploy CoreMedia as a centrally managed content hub, allowing it to integrate its experience-oriented content more fully into the mobile app and deliver these experiences more effectively across all channels.

Link: <http://www.retailcustomerexperience.com/articles/how-homebases-new-content-strategy-is-driving-stronger-customer-engagement/>