Butlers boosts competitive advantage with omni-channel experience

BUSINESS
Butlers is a leading retail company for home accessories, furniture and gifts. The company has approximately 1,000 employees and more than 150 local shops in nine European countries.

CHALLENGE
With significant growth predicted for online sales, Butlers needed an ecommerce platform that not only could cope with higher transaction volumes across multiple geographies, but also enabled the retailer to deliver on its omni-channel strategy.

SOLUTION
Using the Demandware Commerce platform, Butlers established a user-friendly experience for its customers to select, order and pay for merchandise via online marketplaces, in-store devices, and its websites.

RESULTS
With a stable platform in place to meet peaks in demand and future growth, Butlers can focus on improving the customer experience with ecommerce enhancements that make shopping more interactive, emotional, interesting and engaging. Online sales volumes have doubled from 2011 to 2012.
“We can now focus on ecommerce enhancements that make the online shopping experience more interactive and engaging.”

–Jörg Arndt
Managing Director
Butlers

BUSINESS
HELPING CREATE THE PERFECT HOME
Butlers is a great retail success story. In just over a decade, the company has grown from one store in Germany to more than 150 across Europe. And it is still expanding, with an annual revenue growth rate of 20 percent, according to the company.

The company sells home accessories, furniture and gifts to millions of consumers in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Spain, the UK and other European countries. In line with its slogan ‘Made for your home’, the iconic brand from Cologne is constantly updating its portfolio of approximately 3,000 products. Butlers has always had a strong focus on providing customers with an exciting and unique shopping experience. For example, at the launch of its first store in 1999, 100 butlers were available to carry home customers’ purchases. In 2007 Butlers implemented its first online shopping site and is now one of Europe’s leading online sellers of homeware and lifestyle products.

CHALLENGE
MAXIMIZING ONLINE OPPORTUNITIES
eCommerce has become a vital tool in propelling the growth of Butlers. In addition to providing a complementary sales channel for customers who frequent its shops, Butlers’ websites also enable the company to extend its customer base to regions without local stores.

At the start of 2013, 14 percent of the company’s turnover is generated online, and this percentage is expected to increase to 50 percent within eight to 10 years*.

To take full advantage of the increasingly important online revenue stream and optimize growth rates, Butlers developed a comprehensive omni-channel business strategy.

Jörg Arndt, Managing Director at Butlers, comments: “Ensuring a consistent and seamless customer experience across multiple channels can be very difficult. We needed to establish streamlined and efficient sales processes, but also wanted the freedom to develop innovative services that enhance the shopping experience.”

Butlers recognized that its legacy open source ecommerce solution would be unable to cope with the predicted increase in transaction volumes or allow them to move quickly into new geographies and channels.

“To increase our competitive advantage, we wanted to be able to offer a more personalized experience for online shoppers, but this just wasn’t possible with our existing solution,” explains Arndt. “We needed a platform that offered greater scalability, reliable performance and advanced functionality to support customer service enhancements.”

Case Study: Butlers
SOLUTION

AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO ECOMMERCE

To realize its ecommerce ambitions, Butlers decided to deploy an on-demand digital commerce solution from Demandware. “The software-as-a-service model meant that we didn’t have to invest in new infrastructure and has freed up our internal IT team to focus on more strategic initiatives,” comments Arndt.

The new platform took less than six months to develop and deploy – going live in September 2011 with help from specialist partner Javengo.

Butlers now provides customers with a consistently high quality online shopping experience in English, German and Spanish. Customers have a choice of multiple payment methods including credit card, debit card, bank transfer, Amazon Payments, PayPal and gift card. Arndt comments: “It is important to ensure that online shopping is as simple as possible for our customers, so we offer localized sites for the UK, Germany, Austria and Spain and a wide variety of payment methods.”

This focus on making online processes as easy as possible for the user extends to Butlers stores. For example, if a product is out of stock in a local store, store employees can place an order via the website at the click of a button via a new quick-order system. This enables stores to meet customer demands more easily and provide a better level of service.

As Butlers’ omni-channel strategy also encompasses external online marketplaces, the ecommerce platform integrates with Amazon, eBay and the Otto Group, which is one of the world’s largest mail order companies. Using these additional sales channels enables Butlers to increase visibility and sales among customers who may be unfamiliar with its brand.

RESULTS

A FEATURE-RICH AND ENGAGING ONLINE SHOPPING EXPERIENCE

Butlers is now in a better position to deliver on its business strategy and achieve its predicted online growth rate. Throughout 2012, more than 140,000 orders were generated via the new ecommerce platform, which is an increase of 100 percent compared to 2011. Of these orders:

- 60 percent were placed directly online
- 20 percent were placed via the quick-order system in local stores
- 20 percent were placed via external marketplaces.

“We needed to establish streamlined and efficient sales processes, but also wanted the freedom to develop innovative services.”

–Jörg Arndt
Managing Director
Butlers

Butlers
THE BOTTOM LINE

> A more engaging online shopping experience
> Ability to cope with peaks in demand
> Support for predicted growth rates
> Simplifies expansion into new geographies
> Alignment to omni-channel business strategy

Regardless of the sales channel, Butlers now has the scalability it needs to meet peaks in demand without any concerns about transaction speeds or performance. This is particularly important as approximately 35 percent of the company’s annual turnover is generated in the critical holiday period between October and December.

“With a stable foundation in place to meet current and future demand, we can now focus on ecommerce enhancements that make the online shopping experience more interactive, more interesting and more engaging,” comments Arndt.

For example, Butlers uses a custom configurator to provide customers with a more personalized experience. The retailer has also developed an augmented reality application that enables customers to view a piece of furniture in their own home and in three dimensions. “Furniture is our fastest growing department and the top selling product group online,” explains Arndt. “By enabling customers to get a better feel for items of furniture and how they might look in their own environment, we can help customers make better purchasing decisions.”

Thanks to the ecommerce platform’s reliability, scalability and flexibility, Butlers is able to continuously improve the shopping experience for customers, which will help it maintain its position as one of Europe’s leading online homeware stores.

* Online turnover expected to increase to 50 percent of overall turnover by 2023, according to Butlers

ABOUT DEMANDWARE

Demandware, a leader in digital commerce, enables the world’s premier retailers to move faster and grow faster in the changing face of retail. Demandware’s enterprise cloud platform minimizes the costs and complexities of running global, omni-channel commerce operations, and empowers retailers to respond with speed and agility to new market opportunities and continually evolving consumer expectations.

For more information, visit demandware.com, call +1-888-553-9216 or email info@demandware.com.

ABOUT JAVENGO

Javengo specializes in implementing and integrating Demandware’s E-commerce platform. For many years, its experienced and certified development team has been supporting Jochen Schweizer GmbH in Munich, Germany, as well as Butlers GmbH & Co KG in Cologne, Germany, among others. In addition to consulting, design and implementation, Javengo offers supplementary modules that complement Demandware’s standard features. These include applications for global coupon management, marketplace connection and mobile commerce. www.javengo.com