



Performance Bicycle

Attracting high-value traffic and boosting conversion by up to 20 percent with an online Learning Center

Overview

The need

To drive e-commerce sales, Performance Bicycle (PB) wanted to harness its employees' cycling knowledge to attract and inspire customers. How could it deliver this knowledge to customers in an engaging way?

The solution

PB created an interactive Learning Center seamlessly linked to its e-commerce site – enabling knowledgeable employees to share their tips, tricks and expertise with customers and visitors.

The benefit

The Learning Center attracted a 300 percent traffic increase by its fourth month online. By leading inspired visitors to the e-commerce site, the Center boosts conversion by up to 20 percent, driving sales.

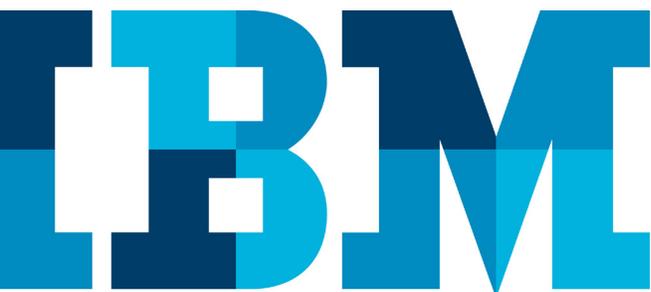
For specialist retailers, the talent, passion and insider knowledge of employees can be powerful tools to convert prospects into paying customers. How can retailers realize the full value of their untapped sales assets?

Performance Bicycle solved this challenge by launching a new Learning Center alongside its existing e-commerce platform. Driven by a tightly integrated set of IBM Digital Experience software designed to enhance the customer experience, the Center attracts and inspires up to 20 percent more visitors to become paying customers than traffic from other referrers.

Setting the scene

Founded in 1982 and headquartered in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, United States, Performance Bicycle is a leading retailer of cycling products. With 1,800 employees, a presence in 20 states and a comprehensive offering of more than 10,000 products, the company operates bricks-and-mortar stores, a printed catalog business and an e-commerce website.

Reputation can be one of the strongest sales drivers for specialist retailers. “Today, we have enhanced our ability to share our in-house expertise with our customers – enabling us to strengthen our reputation as a leading authority on cycling,” says Mike Starkey, Vice President of Information Systems at Performance Bicycle.



Solution components

Software

- IBM® WebSphere® Commerce
- IBM WebSphere Portal
- IBM Web Content Manager
- IBM Digital Analytics

IBM Business Partner

- Sirius Computer Solutions
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Increase engagement, boost sales

As part of its long-term growth strategy, Performance Bicycle wanted to build up its customer base via the online channel.

Mike Starkey, Vice President of Information Systems at Performance Bicycle, says: “We recognized that the online channel had great potential to increase our reach far beyond our existing network of retail stores – but to achieve that goal, we knew we had to offer more than just great products.

“If you took a walk through our headquarters, the first thing you’d notice is that all of our people are extremely passionate about cycling – most of them even have bikes in their offices or cubicles. We believed that our employees’ knowledge could help inspire and engage new customers, and reinforce our reputation as the leading authority on cycling, but we were unsure of the best way to share this knowledge.”

Creating a seamless retail experience

In addition to sharing knowledge with customers externally, Performance Bicycle aimed to help its departments to share information about customer interactions with other parts of the business.

“In the past, online, in-store and telephone orders were managed in different systems,” says Starkey. “This made it almost impossible to get a single view of every customer interaction, and limited our ability to deliver a seamless shopping experience across every channel.

“For example, it is impossible to stock every combination of products in the bricks-and-mortar stores. Previously, if their products were unavailable in-store, customers had to connect to a call center to place their orders. In addition to being a time-consuming process, this step increased the risk of disrupting the retail journey, frustrating customers and even losing their business.

“Furthermore, our contact center team was unable to draw on insight into customer activity on other channels, such as previous in-store purchases and abandoned online carts. We want to enable a comprehensive overview of every customer interaction – helping our contact center to meet every customer’s individual needs.”

“Compared to other online refers, visitors to our e-commerce site from the Learning Center convert up to 20 percent higher.”

— Mike Starkey, Vice President of Information Systems, Performance Bicycle

Selecting a tightly integrated solution

Performance Bicycle began searching for a vendor to help enable its transformation.

“For years now, we have relied on IBM® WebSphere® Commerce software to support our e-commerce platform, and IBM Digital Analytics software to monitor sales performance,” says Starkey. “Because IBM’s roadmap for Smarter Commerce continues to align so closely with our own objective for deeper customer engagement on every channel, we made a strategic decision to build on the success of our WebSphere platform.

“To broadcast our employees’ knowledge, we decided to enhance our website into a space for our employees to share their wisdom via videos, articles and how-to guides with customers: driving sales and attracting newcomers to cycling.”

To help create the new space – called the Learning Center – and allow its employees to manage content effectively, Performance Bicycle selected IBM WebSphere Portal software with IBM Web Content Manager.

Starkey says: “Because WebSphere Portal is so tightly integrated with WebSphere Commerce, it was the natural choice to enable a more seamless link between the Learning Center and the e-commerce site –ensuring that our customers can rapidly search and find the content they are interested in.”

Sharing in-house expertise with customers

Working with IBM Premier Business Partner Sirius Computer Solutions, Performance Bicycle implemented WebSphere Portal and Web Content Manager, and ran knowledge-transfer sessions to get business users up to speed rapidly.

Aaron Pickrell, Director of Online Systems at Performance Bicycle says: “Almost every one of our 1,800 employees now accesses one of the IBM solutions at some point in the working day, and adoption of the new solutions took off immediately. After a member of the team has written an article or produced a video guide, our editorial team reviews the multimedia content and publishes it to the Learning Center via IBM Web Content Manager.

“By utilizing the highly intuitive inline editing capability of Web Content Manager, non-technical users are able to easily create and deploy rich content.”

— Aaron Pickrell, Director of Online Systems,
Performance Bicycle

“The publication process in IBM Web Content Manager is highly intuitive, and it’s simple for the editorial team to link relevant content from the Learning Center to the e-commerce site and vice versa – enabling us to enrich our product descriptions with multimedia content.

“By utilizing the highly intuitive inline editing capability of Web Content Manager, non-technical users are able to easily create and deploy rich content and media to provide customers with the latest news, tips and product information.”

Enabling a complete view of customer activities

Starkey adds: “Our IBM solutions have mature integrations with the third-party retail systems that support our stores and contact center. Today, we can deliver full visibility of online customer activity to our helpdesk team, and we plan to integrate point-of-sale systems at retail stores with our e-commerce channel by the end of 2014. The aim is to deliver tailored content and offers based on our customers’ previous interactions with our brand across all channels.

“Moreover, by breaking down traditional barriers between channels we can enable our customers to browse online, in our catalog or in store, and rapidly complete their purchase via any channel they choose – eliminating the risk of disrupting their journeys.”

Establishing a market-leading reputation

Today, Performance Bicycle has achieved its goal of strengthening its reputation as a trusted authority on cycling.

“For many of our customers, cycling is a lifestyle – and nurturing that culture on the Learning Center is a great benefit for the business,” says Starkey. “We have created a resource that captures the imaginations of experienced cyclists, and informs newcomers who might otherwise be put off by the wide range of products available.

“Over the first four months of the Learning Center going live, we saw a 300 percent increase in web traffic. For example, customers can now watch a video how-to guide about a bike maintenance topic, and then click straight through to our e-commerce site to order the component featured in the video.

“Today, we can deliver positive, social experiences that convert casual visitors into committed customers.”

— Mike Starkey, Vice President of Information Systems, Performance Bicycle

“Thanks to our Digital Analytics solution, we can see that the Learning Center is now referring over 40 percent of all our direct online sales – 36 percent more than our largest social media page. Compared to other online refers, visitors to our e-commerce site from the Learning Center convert up to 20 percent higher. We can now prove with hard data what we believed from the start: inspired visitors are far more likely to become customers.”

Ready for the future

Following the early successes of its transformation project, Performance Bicycle is introducing new initiatives to improve the customer experience.

“One of the emerging trends we are seeing in our online data is the growing popularity of mobile devices,” says Starkey. “We can see that driving conversions via the mobile site is going to become even more important in years to come, and we are planning to optimize the Learning Center for mobile in the coming months.”

Starkey concludes: “Our IBM solutions are enabling us to share information inside and outside of the business more easily than ever before. Today, we can deliver positive, social experiences that convert casual visitors into committed customers.”

For more information

To learn more about IBM Smarter Commerce solutions, contact your IBM sales representative or visit: ibm.com/smartercommerce



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