



Pictured: James Pennington (left) of the National B2B Centre with Shaun Derrick of Games For The World



Coventry firm hits back of the net!

Board game enthusiast Shaun Derrick decided to turn hobby into business when he created Games for the World in May 2006.

Shaun had accrued a solid knowledge of what a successful board game entails, having played for 30 years and owning a shop selling them. He decided to fulfil an ambition by turning one of his ideas into reality.

He created 'The World Cup Game', where players need skill, luck and strategy to succeed. Each version was based on the true events of a previous tournament, ranging from 1930 in Uruguay to 2002 in Japan and South Korea.

Once he produced the game, Shaun balanced his job as a travel executive at a Leamington agent with visits to exhibitions and events across Europe – and even travelled to US Games Expo a Las Vegas event to promote the brand.

And knowing how important the role of the web would be, he looked at how to best utilise the internet and e-business to gain sales and develop the company.

"I wanted to build a website as soon as I started Games for the World, and I was told by the Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce to contact the National B2B Centre," Shaun said.

"James Pennington visited me and talked about the various options and eventually I commissioned a Coventry company to help with the design.

"I was able to secure some advice from the Centre to launch the site and was taught how to make changes through Dreamweaver, which I find easier now that I have completed a web design course."

Search Engine Optimisation

"One key issue I talked about with James was search optimisation. Anyone who is selling a product needs to be as high as possible on search engine rankings but it seemed like a black art," Shaun said.

"But after learning about keywords and link strategies, and embedding them into the website, our products feature prominently in the relevant searches.

"If you search 'world cup board game' on Google.com, we are top – and even a search 'world cup game', which throws up over five million results, has us in the top ten."

The search optimisation has helped drive international sales and interest and, despite the weakness of the dollar, American sales are now on par with European sales, Shaun said.

"American buyers now account for around 20 per cent of sales, which is definitely a surprise considering the strength of their currency – making the game comparatively more costly. But we have actually seen the most sales come in the past six months.

"The internet provides around 40 per cent of our sales overall, and nearly all the foreign sales go through it."

Results

Shaun has nearly sold-out of his original game, which had a stock of 1,000, and as internet traffic increases, he is deciding whether to do another print-run or to dedicate his efforts to new titles.

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After the success of the original, he also produced three expansion packs – each covering different World Cups. The latest version includes this summer's Euro 2008 tournament – which he is hoping will continue to sell strongly in the run up to the championship.

And Shaun knows that any surge in orders can be dealt with effectively, because his website, www.gamesfortheworld.co.uk, has integrated the NoChex payment system, on the advice from the National B2B Centre.

The future

Shaun is in the process of designing two strategy games which he hopes to complete this year. The games will be a step away from the sports genre – with one focusing on the turbulent history of medieval Spain, and the other on colonial development before World War I.

The games are part of the future plan for the business – which Shaun believes has the right infrastructure to grow.

"I have been on a learning curve with this first set of games but with the online set-up we have and our presence in the search rankings, I think future releases will go well.

"At the moment I'm managing the entire process, aside from the printing, and so the development does take time. I want to make sure

that every game I produce is high-quality, and so it's important not to rush.

"One day I would love to be able to do this as a full-time job and if the business continues to grow and the next set of titles continue to sell well, there is no reason why it can't happen in the future."

James Pennington, of the National B2B Centre – the e-business centre of excellence for the West Midlands, said: "Any business which will rely on the internet to generate sales needs to have a well functioning website which is well-optimised.

"Shaun has made sure that his website contains the key components to move up the search engine rankings and he has worked to ensure listings on key, specialist websites and search directories such as dmoz.org.

"By doing this well, the online infrastructure is ready for the next products under the Games of the World banner which should continue the flow of worldwide sales."

Further Information

Do you want people to find your website internationally? Do you want to improve your search engine position?

If you would like advice on making your website content easier for search engines to find then contact the National B2B Centre using the details below.

Search Engine Optimisation Tips

- To ensure your website is visible in the major search engines, such as Google and MSN Live, populate it with keywords that match the terms clients will use to find your products and services
- Your website's keywords should be included in the page titles (the text that appears in the top left bar of your web browser), headings, link text and page text
- To differentiate from the competition you should use keyword phrases, as well as single words, to increase the chance of your website being found in search results
- To see how many pages of your website are ranked in Google or any other search engine type [site:www.yourdomainname.co.uk](http://www.yourdomainname.co.uk) into the search engine
- The Google Webmaster page provides further information on search engine optimisation, indexing and ranking www.google.co.uk/webmasters
- To see your website statistics, such as the number of visitors and the most popular pages, register to use the free Google Analytics tool at www.google.co.uk/analytics
- To assess your website's current search engine performance use the National B2B Centre's review tool at www.nb2bc.co.uk/seo.



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The National B2B Centre

Helping growing businesses make smart e-business decisions

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