

Solo Trading



A National Business to Business Centre Showcase

solo

Background

Solo Trading, distributors of high-end designer-led silver plated and leather giftware for promotional and retail markets, implemented an integrated e-business solution, resulting in a cost saving of 20% realised through time and staff resource reduction. Their chosen solution provides real time data processing with comprehensive management information, providing a real insight into the business.

Solo was started in 1991 and is owned by Tanya Ross and husband Kevin. The privately owned company, based in Stratford upon Avon, have an in-house engraving and embossing facility for engraving company logos and messages onto their goods.

Their total product range has over 350 items, which is refreshed each year. Solo sells almost half of its products through distributors and intermediaries based in the UK. The remainder of sales are split between retail, direct business to business sales, and single customers via their website.

Business Objective

At the beginning of 2004 the owners set an objective of achieving organic growth of 15% of turnover year on year using the website and retail channels as their target growth areas. However given the volatile nature of retail they envisaged the majority of growth occurring via their website, direct to customers where margins are greater.

In order to meet this objective Solo needed to review their website strategy and IT infrastructure, recognising that they were outgrowing their current systems.

Kevin approached the National Business to Business Centre, a DTI initiative providing free and impartial e-business support and advice, to carry out an e-business assessment. Implementing the recommendations resulted in a quick win for Solo and extended the life of their current system for another 18 months, saving both time and resources.

The company then entered a period of business strategy planning and supported by the Centre developed an e-business strategy to support the new business strategy. Together with the Centre's consultants they reviewed their existing situation and recognised that in order to progress the company they needed to streamline their business processes, at the same time, integrating their on-line presence and CRM requirements with a new business management system.

E-commerce

At that time, Solo were considering the purchase of a website company. NB2BC helped Solo evaluate this business opportunity concentrating on the website's suitability, the nature of its current web marketing, and how Solo would manage this new part of their business once the sale had completed. The purchase and subsequent internal infrastructure has been the key to Solo's growth over the past 18

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The benefits of the new system include:

- ★ Cost savings, realised through time and staff resource reduction in the order of 20% which should further reduce once integrated website ordering has been implemented
- ★ Solo now have the ability to plan for more aggressive growth and believe they will achieve their target of 15%pa organic growth with ease
- ★ A powerful Business Management System that links sales, fulfilment, CRM, accounting and the website, providing greater efficiency throughout the business
- ★ Very cost effective solution with an extremely high level of functionality
- ★ Improved customer service with greater order tracking and traceability
- ★ Enhanced marketing opportunities through better integration of CRM capability and more effective data capture
- ★ Real time data processing with comprehensive management information, providing a real insight into the business
- ★ Accurate stock information enabling efficient stock control and management
- ★ Greater order tracking and traceability

months, and has now formed the bedrock of Solo's future strategy.

Their current systems were poor at managing data and data flow and presenting it as management information. A new system, managing data flow automatically, would remove data duplication, reduce manual intervention hence resource requirements and ultimately lower costs at the same time making management easier through better information.

Solo recognised the sales potential of the internet and already had a successful e-commerce website. However this was inefficient in terms of the amount of resource required to manage multiple sites and did not provide real time information directly into the other systems.

Solo worked with the B2B Centre to specify the requirements of a new integrated business system and produced a request for quotation that was given to several vendors. They then selected the most appropriate one, a hosted solution; Navision.

Issues & Benefits

When asked if they had any problems during implementation Kevin comments "there were constraints with the system as it was an ASP hosted solution that had limited scope for tailoring, however for lower costs and reduced business disruption we were getting a system that can be scaled in line with our expansion plans and now

have improved and comprehensive information, easily accessible, providing greater visibility across all of our business functions." Kevin perceives longer term benefits to include:

- ★ The ability to manage multiple websites from one data source
- ★ A competitive edge; developing the websites further to have "state of the art" functionality (including order tracking, favourites etc) which can be integrated with the back office
- ★ A system that allows their "traditional" markets to be brought up to 21st Century practices, giving increased efficiency, reduced costs, and a significant advantage against competitors.

If you would like to talk to Solo about their experience, or find out how your business can achieve what they did, contact the National Business to Business Centre now at www.nb2bc.co.uk. To see how companies like yours have addressed their e-business issues visit the showcase area of our website at www.nb2bc.co.uk/showcases



The National Business to Business Centre

Helping growing businesses make smart e-business decisions

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