



Pictured: Ross Keeling and Liz Beauchamp, from Red Planet Guitars, with James Pennington from the National B2B Centre.



Website pulls the strings

Liz Beauchamp set up left-handed guitar specialist store Red Planet Guitars with the help of her partner Ross Keeling, his son Richard and her daughter Libby in March 2007.

The idea behind the company, which is based in Cannock, was to provide left-handed guitarists with instruments catered to their specific needs.

A shortage of left-handed instruments in the marketplace inspired Liz and her partner to set up the business which initially began as an online store with www.redplanetguitars.co.uk.

Since that time the company has opened shop premises at the Hawks Green Business Park and now also deals in right-handed instruments with the emphasis remaining on left-handed product ranges.

"Myself, my partner and his son are all left-handed and the idea was born when Ross was unable to get the style of guitar he wanted," said Liz.

"There are a very limited number of left-handed guitars in the marketplace, and they are all of a very similar type and colour, so we wanted to change that."

Website Assessment

The National B2B Centre became involved after Liz sought help increasing visitors to the company website.

The centre carried out a website assessment which helped generate more web traffic. In addition it was able to supply expert advice which assisted Liz with essential IT purchases.

As the company's main marketing tool, it was essential for the website to attract large visitor numbers as efficiently as possible.

Unusually for a business, Red Planet Guitars began life as a web only seller making it even more important to attract customers to its website.

The specialist nature of the products on sale at Red Planet Guitars means they appeal to a worldwide consumer base.

However, only through the internet can a business maximise the potential for international trade.

"We were well aware that we needed to be easy to find as possible through web search engines and so on," said Liz.

"The layout of the site and the technical aspects of it all needed to be addressed in order to direct as many people to the site as possible."

Results

Just months after the technical assistance from the National B2B Centre the company sales figures rocketed all over the world.

"The impact of changes to the website has been phenomenal and has undoubtedly helped us to grow," said Liz.

"Before the changes we would sell between two and three guitars a week but now we regularly sell at least seven or eight."

It was not just the quantity of business that increased for Red Planet Guitars but the international level on which it was taking place. The company now regularly receives orders from countries as far afield as Australia, Slovenia, Sweden, Italy and the USA.

In fact Red Planet Guitars has proved so popular that Liz has been able to give up her other job and concentrate solely on running the business.

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"I think it is fair to say that without the support of the National B2B Centre we would not be where we are now," she added.

The Future

Now that Red Planet Guitars has discovered a winning formula, Liz aims to continue to attracting business from all over the globe and maximising business potential through electronic means.

The introduction of a physical store has increased the amount of storage space available to the business and with about 100 guitars in stock at any one time the company will be able to deal with orders quickly and effectively.

James Pennington, of the National B2B Centre – the e-business centre of excellence for the West Midlands, said:

"While Red Planet Guitars has a very specialist business, many of the practices used to maximise their online business can be transferred to other companies.

"A good website can be the key to success in business so the easier it is to find and navigate the easier it is to attract potential customers and sell to them."

Further Information

Do you want more people to find your website? Do you want to promote your website to the right audience?

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.



Tips for Search Engine Optimisation

- To ensure your website is visible in the major search engines, such as Google and MSN Live, you should populate it with keywords and phrases that match the search terms clients will use to find your products and services.
- The keywords are those words that the search engines read, including page titles (the text that appears in the top left bar of your web browser), headings, link text and page text.
- To see how many pages of your website are ranked in Google or any other search engine type in site: www.yourdomainname.co.uk into the search engine.
- Search engines review the number and quality of links to your website from other sites. It is very helpful to sign up with reputable internet directories and social networking sites, to comment on forums and post on blogs (your own or, say, the B2B Centre Blog <http://blogs.warwick.ac.uk/b2bcentre/>)
- To assess your website's current search engine performance use the National B2B Centre's new SEO tool at <http://www.nb2bc.co.uk/seo>
- The Google Webmaster page provides further information on search engine optimisation, indexing and ranking <http://www.google.co.uk/webmasters>