

Squab Storage



A National Business to Business Centre Showcase



Background

SQUAB Storage, a domestic and commercial storage company, needed to develop their website to a full e-commerce capability including interactive online quotes, online payment facilities and integrated back office systems.

The company, owned by Emlyn Evans, is based near Leamington Spa, Warwickshire and is part of the SQUAB Group. Emlyn intends to expand the brand to include SQUAB Shredding, SQUAB Removals and SQUAB Supplies.

The mission for the storage arm of the business is to be the number one local choice for short and medium term storage requirements within Leamington, Warwick, Kenilworth and the surrounding area. They have the ambition to double the size of their business over the next two years and haven't ruled out the possibility of franchising the business model.

The company have both commercial and domestic customers. Their main competitors are long established removal firms, national self access storage firms and independent operators. However they believe their key differentiators are cost, flexibility, quality of storage and their central location. The model adopted by SQUAB also differentiates them from most of their competitors. They provide a neat 'Store to Door service' – bringing customers storage to their door and giving the customer control over their packing.

Business objectives

The company had a static website that did not include the full group offering; it was unable to fulfil online ordering and payment facilities and was not integrated with their back office system and their existing Sage accounting system.

One of their key business objectives was to achieve a 90% conversion rate on sales enquiries and to increase the volume of crates in store by 33% over the coming year.

Emlyn comments; "We recognised this was an ambitious target and in order to achieve it we needed to radically change our website to provide more information and give a professional, informative and eye-catching first impression to our potential customers. We also wanted to create an interactive site that allowed customers the opportunity to carry out transactions online and view their accounts. In addition we needed a solution that was scalable in line with our plans to extend the brand."

A fully integrated e-commerce system

SQUAB approached the National Business to Business Centre for support and guidance on the best approach to achieve this. The Centre carried out an e-business assessment based on their current IT infrastructure. Following this they recommended establishing a fully integrated web-enabled business management system that was capable of being packaged together as part of a franchise business model.

continued >

Integrated e-commerce system increases sales by 10% in two months



The benefits of working with the Centre included:

- ★ The direction and advice needed to move forward as an online business
- ★ A facility that enabled controlled payment of electronic invoices, i.e. as opposed to unidentifiable bank transfers as SQUAB had previously experienced
- ★ A 24-hour a day sales tool, providing backup to telephone enquiries and hard copy brochures
- ★ Increased sales; where previously no sales had come through the website now 10% of sales were received via the web, within two months
- ★ A positive company image as a result of an efficient online shop with payment handling system

Emlyn comments that the document provided by the B2B Centre was the key benefit of working with them, which was "excellent for the quotation and briefing stage."

One of the Centre's consultants worked with Emlyn to complete a Request for Quotation (RFQ) document that set out the functional requirements of the new website, so that a website developer could provide a quote for the design, development and implementation of the system. The document included a brief on planned content, broken down by each page together with the anticipated visitor action that would be carried out.

This document was put out to tender, mainly focussing on businesses within the Warwickshire area. After receiving quotations from several developers Emlyn selected Auburn who had the capacity to meet all of SQUAB's requirements.

Emlyn explains; "Because the RFQ was so comprehensive we were able to clearly brief potential suppliers and have a clear criterion for selection. The RFQ forced me to clearly plan and map our new site which saved precious time during the development phase. I needed to have minimal input once our developer was on board and only spent a couple of days of my time on the project before we went live."

The future

SQUAB's ambitious objective of a 90% conversion rate was not possible due to a dramatic increase in storage choice and competition with the area. Emlyn has now set a more realistic figure of 75% across all advertising mediums, but hopes to see the majority from the website.

"We were able to clearly brief potential suppliers and have a clear criterion for selection"

Now SQUAB have completed Phase One of their website development, and plans for the future include integrating the online payment facility directly into their Sage accounting system and having a secure online area for customers to manage their inventories. The company also aims to move all packaging product sales online from February 2006.

If you would like to talk to SQUAB 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

Warwick Manufacturing Group, International Manufacturing Centre, The University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 7AL

T 02476 574384 F 02476 574287 E info@nb2bc.co.uk W www.nb2bc.co.uk