

juliette's INTERIORS

Juliette Thomas with
Martin King-Turner



Juliette's a world wide success thanks to the world wide web

In August 2005, Juliette Thomas decided to establish her own business.

After a successful career in IT, she found herself as a single mother with four children under the age of six. Juliette was keen to start a company that would allow her to spend the majority of time working from her Stratford home.

Initially, Juliette's goals were much smaller than they are now. She used a UK wholesaler and bought a 'car full of stuff' that appealed to her taste – such as crystal glasses and a variety of accessories for around the home.

Her aim was to sell them for profit on eBay and if they failed to sell, Juliette consoled herself with the thought that she would have plenty of nice accessories around her home and a 'few years of Christmas presents for family and friends!'

But the products immediately took off and very soon, she had sold out.

Juliette began to experiment extending the range of products to items that had not been seen on eBay

before including designer and French furniture and it was clear that her business idea had great potential.

Objectives

Three months down the line and it was clear that the company, which now had the name Juliette's Interiors Limited, would benefit from its own website.

The competition on eBay was fierce and, although the business was still selling that way, it needed its own presence especially with the high end designer products which Juliette was now marketing through glossy home magazines.

Juliette said: "I was achieving success early on selling the designer high-end, high quality products and so needed to have a site of my own if I was going to increase turnover and gain credibility from the marketing strategy now in place."

But it wasn't going to be enough just to have a smart-looking site – it was crucial that potential customers would be able to find her easily and could then purchase goods via the web without having to call.

E-commerce and optimisation

By logging onto www.juliettesinteriors.co.uk, anyone can see the full extent of high-quality products being sold by the company.

They range from mirrors to beds and can all be purchased on the website thanks to an e-commerce facility.

This means that customers can log in securely and pay for goods using a credit card so Juliette does not necessarily have to be personally involved every time an order is made, although she is always ready to offer advice and help to customers.

But finding the site couldn't be easier either. The company is paying for web optimisation and that is helping to drive more traffic to the webpage.

It basically means that any potential customer who types say, 'French furniture', into search engines such as Google will see a link to Juliette's Interiors on the front page.

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And that has certainly helped to boost the number of orders taken by the business.

In the first year, the company was turning over around £4,000 per month now that has increased to nearly £20,000 per month.

Many customers find Juliette's Interiors on the web, search for the product they want and then buy there too.

Results

Juliette's Interiors, which has a virtual office at the TechnoCentre in Coventry, has expanded rapidly and is now working with interior designers as well as property developers looking to create a very sophisticated feel to their properties.

Juliette also travels across Europe looking for new products with the 'wow factor' although carries out much of her initial research on the web.

The firm is selling products all over the world – particularly to the USA, France and on the Algarve. Juliette's dream is



to move out to the Algarve and believes the internet could help her achieve it.

Juliette said: "A few years ago, people were probably afraid to buy on the web but that is certainly not the case now and without it I certainly couldn't have started the business and grown as I have."

The future

Every business wants to be top on a Google search as the benefits can be massive so it is vital to find ways of improving your business's standing and that is what Juliette will continue to do.

She currently intends to keep the eBay side of the company going too, as that generates substantial income but she also recognises the importance of her own site for future growth.

Martin King-Turner, of the National B2B Centre – the e-business centre of excellence for the West Midlands, said: "Juliette's Interiors is a classic example of how the internet has made it so much easier to launch a new business and gain customers all over the world much more quickly than you could a decade ago.

"It still takes a great deal of hard work and search engine optimisation is crucial for this type of business."

Do you want to discover the benefits of trading online? Do you want to reach new audiences with your products and services? If you would like advice on starting your online shop contact the National B2B Centre using the details below.

If you would like to know more about the National B2B Centre please contact us using the details below.

Setting up an online shop

- A website provides a company with another sales and marketing channel, capable of reaching a global marketplace
- To set up an eBay shop visit <http://pages.ebay.co.uk/storefronts/start.html> or if you are a professional seller of new items you could use eBay Express at <http://www.ebayexpress.co.uk/ps>
- An eBay shop should be complemented with an e-commerce facility on your own website selling your products; to help you do this you should engage a website developer or build it yourself using open source tools
- There are a range of open source e-commerce tools that can be used to develop your online shop free of charge; Zen Cart is one example and you can find more information at www.zencart.com
- The website content should be developed to reflect keyword phrases that enable search engines to find your website and online shop
- You should develop page descriptions that provide a call to action giving the searcher a reason to visit the website
- For help optimising your website for search engines use the tools found in the B2B Centre e-Marketing Toolbox http://www.nb2bc.co.uk/toolboxes/marketing_online/improve_my_website



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The National B2B Centre

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