

Moosejaw Mountaineering reaches new heights of customer engagement through social commerce.

Overview

■ **Business Challenge**

To thrive in the highly competitive market for outdoor adventure gear, Moosejaw Mountaineering needed to create a customer experience that would engage a customer community whose appetite for extreme sports is matched by a hunger for communication and collaboration.

■ **Solution**

Moosejaw sought to make its site the go-to destination for young, hip high school and college students and for hard-core outdoor enthusiasts by embedding rich community features into its online commerce experience, thus becoming one of the first outdoor-adventure retailers to make multichannel “social commerce” the cornerstone of its growth strategy.



Based in Madison Heights, Michigan, Moosejaw Mountaineering, Inc. is one of the nation's leading outdoor-adventure retailers. With seven retail locations employing 250 in Michigan and Chicago, the company's online retail, Moosejaw.com, was rated a top 50 Web site according to Internet Retailer.

■ **Key Benefits**

- *Increased revenue from an expected increase in conversion rate (based on an initial increase to 50 percent)*
- *Expected increase in customer loyalty and word-of-mouth expansion through a more engaging and collaborative online retail experience*
- *Ability to deliver seamless messaging, programs and customer experience across all channels*
- *Expected increase in customer satisfaction through richer, more informative pre-purchase support (e.g., customer ratings)*

Online commerce has changed a lot in the decade since it entered into the cultural mainstream. Driven by relentlessly rising customer expectations, sites have become easier to use, merchandising has improved and, to put it simply, companies have gotten better at online commerce because they've come to understand its many nuances. In spite of these changes, however, the essential character of online retail—namely, the extension of traditional retail practices to the Internet channel—has remained largely unchanged. So, too, have some basic and long-held assumptions about the way consumers buy and what they are looking for from an online retailer.

Business Benefits

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- Ability to deliver seamless messaging, programs and customer experience across all channels
- Expected increase in customer satisfaction through richer, more informative pre-purchase support (e.g., customer ratings)
- Stronger brand through a more consistent multi-channel experience

“Our strategy has been to reinvent the way people shop for outdoor, surf, skate and snowboard apparel and equipment. IBM – through its technology and retail thought leadership – has been instrumental in helping us realize this vision.”

– Jeffrey Wolfe, COO,
Moosejaw Mountaineering

The traditional view of online transactions is anchored on the idea that online stores are first and foremost a venue for transactions, which, by and large, tend to be tightly structured interactions involving the buyer and the retailer. Within this interaction, the retailer's key job is to provide customers with the information they need to purchase – such as pricing, product descriptions and orderly merchandising – and to deliver all within the context of a superior customer experience. However, the way customers are seeking and processing this information is beginning to change, and that's expected to have a big impact on tomorrow's online experience.

The biggest reason is the sweeping impact of Web 2.0, a term that describes a paradigm shift in the way people use the Internet to interact with each other – and with information. The key earmark of Web 2.0 is the exploding popularity of user generated content, examples of which range from blogs, wikis and discussion groups to YouTube and MySpace. What each has in common is a decidedly “bottom-up,” approach to generating and sharing information that's heavy on collaboration and light on hierarchical structures. So how does this impact online retail? The answer, in large measure, lies in demographics and changing expectations.

Community meets commerce

When the younger consumers driving the Web 2.0 wave want to buy online, they'd prefer the same kind of collaborative, bottom-up information exchange in their shopping experience. This, in effect, resets the goals and parameters that retailers have to consider in configuring their online strategies. While issues like merchandising and navigation remain important, retailers also need to provide an environment that supports the interaction of customer communities, which are exerting more and more influence on buying behavior. This is especially true for products that reflect a lifestyle or a set of emotional values. That's why Moosejaw Mountaineering (www.moosejaw.com), a fast-growing retailer specializing in outdoor, surf, skate and snowboard equipment and apparel, is such a good example of how it can work. Relying on a host of retail solutions from IBM and IBM Business Partner CrossView, Moosejaw sought to make its site the go-to destination for young, hip high school and college students and for hard-core outdoor enthusiasts by embedding rich community features into its online commerce experience, thus becoming one of the first retailers to make “multi-channel, social commerce” the cornerstone of its growth strategy.

Now a fast-growing chain with seven stores and 250 employees, Moosejaw owes much of its success to a fiercely loyal customer base. The roots of this loyalty lay in the company's ability to make shopping fun, as well as its ability to provide the right product mix, strong product and technical support and a constant drive to develop unique, innovative ways to communicate with their customer. But with no shortage of competitors in the “outdoor adventure”

space—many large and well known—Moosejaw faces the ongoing challenge of making itself the destination of choice. Rising to this challenge, the company has introduced a steady stream of features that have resonated with customers, including over 50,000 customer reviews, texting of tracking numbers and promotions to mobile phones, and its Moosejaw Madness community, where customers post photos from their latest adventures, read the irreverent Daily Remark and immerse themselves in Moosejaw’s unique culture. While features like these have been highly successful, Chief Operating Officer Jeffrey Wolfe believes that Moosejaw has only scratched the surface of what it can do for its customers. “We are on the verge of truly blurring the lines between Web, retail, mobile, catalog, call center and kiosk, taking the best of each channel and making it possible across all channels.”

Moosejaw’s approach to multi-channel, social commerce was to implement a new solution from the ground up with help from IBM and IBM Business Partner CrossView. One of the key benefits of the solution is its ability to create a seamless, interactive, community shopping experience across every sales channel. For instance, by integrating IBM Lotus® Connections social networking software with its retail solution, Moosejaw is adding social commerce features like product level blogging, public facing customer profiles with photos, videos, adventure stories and gear lists for upcoming trips. Customers can interact with Moosejaw staff and with other customers on the Moosejaw Web site and then connect those threads on their mobile phones and when they come into the Moosejaw retail stores. Perhaps more valuably, it provides Moosejaw with a ready-made platform for integrating these social networking capabilities deeply into its commerce platform. Imagine, for example, a customer looking for a tent suitable to use at 20,000 feet and 20 below zero. Instead of simply searching through a catalog, customers can now search by a product’s rating, while also taking into account customer profiles that include product usage experience. Getting product feedback from someone who has actually used that tent on Mount Everest or K2 is a far cry from standard catalog information—and that’s exactly what Moosejaw is shooting for. Key to the realization of this vision is the company’s work with IBM Toronto Software Lab, which is working with Moosejaw to develop this breakthrough capability.

Moosejaw’s physical stores also figure prominently in its strategy. A standout feature of the new solution is its ability to provide truly seamless support to—and thus create a common, superior experience through—all of Moosejaw’s channels. Key to this capability is CrossView’s Point of Sale solution which extends the capabilities of IBM WebSphere® Commerce into retail stores with a solution that utilizes WebSphere Commerce as its engine at the enterprise and IBM WebSphere Remote Server in the stores. CrossView’s solution utilizes a common information platform based on IBM DB2® and validated for the IBM Retail Integration Framework, making it easy for Moosejaw to extend its

Key Components

Software

- IBM WebSphere Commerce
- IBM WebSphere Remote Server
- IBM DB2
- IBM Lotus Connections

Hardware

- IBM SurePOS™ 500 Express

Services

- IBM Toronto Software Lab
- IBM Global Technology Services
- IBM Retail Store Solutions

IBM Business Partner

- CrossView

Timeframe

- Core platform implementation: 9 months
 - Social commerce platform: 5 months
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Why it matters

Moosejaw Mountaineering is making itself one of the leading places to be for outdoor adventurers by leading the way in the integration of social networking capabilities like blogging, group discussion and customer product ratings across all of its retail channels.

online channel programs and tactics into its store environment. For instance, using IBM SurePOS 500 dual-screen point-of-sale terminals in-store customers are now able to buy, ship and pay with the exact same services they are familiar with online, and they will be offered the same targeted promotions and cross-sells while they read reviews, blogs and recommendations. With all this new technology, that same fun and irreverence that has been a part of the Moosejaw culture from the beginning will now be part of the in-store check-out process.

Multichannel benefits

To enable a consistent shopping experience for customers across channels, the Moosejaw solution integrates and registers orders and inventory changes for every channel, offering increased visibility and optimum resource allocation across channels. The multichannel capability also provides Moosejaw's in-store sales associates and call center agents with the tools they need to provide more interactive and insightful support to customers. It's seen in the small things, like being able to tell a customer how close they are to a reward point threshold or asking about their satisfaction with a recent purchase. But it's also seen in the bigger things, like the system's ability to see inventory in near real time so an associate can find just the right Patagonia coat for a customer—whether it's in the store, in the warehouse or at a supplier's warehouse—and send the order via XML straight to the other shop, warehouse or supplier for processing and fulfillment. It's seen in the way it enables call center agents to get a full profile of a customer and provide the most knowledgeable and comprehensive support.

Altogether, it's about providing the kind of customer experience that will continue to make Moosejaw the premier destination for the outdoor, surf, skate and snowboard community and in the process enable Moosejaw to sustain its high rate of growth. Wolfe sees the company's advanced social commerce capabilities playing an important role by strengthening loyalty, increasing the conversion, or "browse-to-buy," rate of the Moosejaw site and by building word-of-mouth support, which thus far has been one of the biggest factors in its growth. "Our strategy has been to reinvent the way people shop for outdoor, surf, skate and snowboard apparel and equipment," says Wolfe. "IBM—through its technology and retail thought leadership—has been instrumental in helping us realize this vision."

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