

nChannel Case Study

Trouts Fly Fishing

nChannel AppSuite Reels in Customers and Nets New Profits for Multichannel Sports Retailer

Overview

Country or Region

USA

Industry

Trouts Fly Fishing sells in-store and online through Amazon, eBay, and Magento.

Customer Profile

Trouts Fly Fishing average order size is 11 items and \$110 per sale. They serve both the inexperienced fisher and the expert angler.

Business Situation

Trout Fly Fishing's online business grew by 69% last year. While at first they attempted to manually update Magento with RMS exports, they couldn't justify the hours they spent getting just the bare minimum done.

Solution

nChannel was chosen because only nChannel had a consistent real-time inventory solution with all the expandability needed, fast support, and the ability to hit the ground running.

Benefits

- Several hours of manual work eliminated
- Accurate minimum pricing is pushed from RMS to all points
- Easily turn specials on and off at all touchpoints, even schedule future specials
- Keep accurate real-time inventory at all customer touchpoints

Trouts Fly Fishing Thrives

Fly-fishing devotees praise the tranquility of their sport. But in Denver, Colorado, Trouts Fly Fishing thrives on fast service, instant product availability, and high-speed data. The company matches 250 web or store customers daily to its 10,000 SKUs. A drill-down Magento web site and Amazon and eBay portals sell 5,000 specialty items from fishhooks to waders and fishing expeditions. Marketing partners include Google and AvantLink Affiliate Network.

Revenues increase 20 to 50 percent annually and online revenues jumped 69 percent last year. Besides the complexities of matrix management for clothing and footwear, Trouts deals with a surge in June-September seasonality, ever-escalating customer expectations for availability and delivery, multiple-attribute products, and verifying compliance with manufacturers' minimum advertised prices (MAP).

Trouts sends complex product fields, stock levels, transaction data, customer records and financial information coursing through its multi-vendor network bound together by nChannel AppSuite and Connectors. nChannel software and services translate and standardize transactions averaging 11 items and \$110 per sale.

The company energetically pushes marketing with its newsletter, a blog, gift cards and an Anglers Rewards Program. The site is content-rich with instructional articles, fishing reports, links to

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fishing trips, guides, classes, specialty services and equipment maintenance.

Because all of Trouts' eight to ten staff avidly fly-cast for recreation, they know the product tradeoffs in their immense inventory, fishing styles and fishing holes well enough to advise customers in-store, on the phone, online and by email.

Owner Tucker Ladd is the first retailer elected Chairman of the Board of Directors for the American Fly Fishing Trade Association. Kevin Cooke, eCommerce Manager, is responsible for the sharp uptrend in web sales. He brings online marketing expertise from Toyota Trail Teams and Run.com, where he managed 43 sites. Kyle Wilkinson generates content for the company blog, social media and email marketing. Yet they still banter over the right fly rod for a rainbow trout hiding in the lee of a boulder.

How Does it All Happen?

According to Cooke, "nChannel AppSuite connects, translates, standardizes and streamlines customer, product and financial data into and out of Microsoft Dynamics Retail Management System (RMS)—our master inventory/POS solution. Then to Magento for web sales, and ShipStation to expedite complex shipping steps. RMS was installed in 2005, Magento in 2008, then we installed nChannel in January 2014 to snug all the parts together."

Earlier Knots and Tangles

In the years before nChannel, waters weren't as smooth. Cooke says, "We were always coping with

out-of-sync inventory on our website, so customer experience was spotty. We either couldn't answer or had to stop and research everyday customer questions that deserved fast answers. 'When will you get it? What's a good substitute? When did you ship? When do I get it?' Before nChannel, we were too often quick-stepping through reactive customer relationships, not building friendships."

He adds, "More basically, we needed solutions for operational and efficiency reasons. Order processing and shipping took staff three to four hours a day between assembling all the right information, typing it in, choosing a carrier, and then doing the pick-pack-and-label dance.

First Tries

"Every retailer at first tries to single-hand it. We did. Our earliest solutions were standard import-export procedures using text files. We'd download from RMS with item lookup codes, then import into Magento. Ironically, using manual files wasn't time-consuming. Their information was so bare bones, no one could justify the time to do it! Tasks went undone because that nearly manual approach took hours to get right. You needed ten data points but had three."

Ladd began assessing the field for an automated solution. "We tried other software but it didn't work out. So we pored over Internet research, read reviews, and absorbed case studies where we could find them. Only nChannel had a consistent real-time inventory solution with all the expandability we needed, fast support, the ability to hit the ground running—all at a very sane price. Other solutions looked costly and time-

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consuming to tailor and get our desired results. Some required us to buy and learn a new POS or webstore program!

“Our initial phone interview with nChannel verified they had lots of successful, highly relevant installations. That meant fast business results for us with few hiccups. Cost was only one parameter because others didn’t plug, play and integrate all the parts like nChannel AppSuite. It’s been shaking hands with RMS and Magento for years.”

Installation

Cooke says, “nChannel led the charge. They got the listeners installed and then took the lead on organizing the information. We hit a few detours where we needed to get our company data in order. But nChannel maneuvered around those to ensure we could ship without difficulty.

“This is where we first saw how awesomely Tony at nChannel handles support. They’re very responsive. Laura our account manager is always available for questions and guarantees we are taken care of. At any phase, we email nChannel and get good response, sometimes in minutes.”

Benefits Spread through the Company

“Almost every corner of this business is simpler, faster and more error-free with nChannel AppSuite syncing all the parts together,” says Ladd. “Including benefits we hadn’t planned on.”

Cooke steps through their business benefits from nChannel AppSuite:

- Order Processing and multi-step fulfillment have dropped from several hours a day to one hour. An order that took us four to five minutes is now 30 or 40 seconds. ShipStation’s one-screen interface is a big help, but it’s nChannel providing filling all the fields it needs to work. This reduces staff hours—and boredom.
- Accurate real time inventory pervades every customer touch point. Physical store and Magento transactions instantly decrement inventory levels in RMS. Then nChannel sends new numbers to webstore and portals, so customers see what’s in stock and what’s on order.
- We keep products available and ship same-day 99.9 percent of the time. We don’t rely on dropships from manufacturers. Happy customers tell tales and send friends.
- Accurate Minimum Advertised Pricing is pushed from RMS to all points. No more cranky suppliers from our mistake or a sale special that overreached.
- We retained and leveraged our sunk cost and learning time in RMS and Magento.
- We turn specials on and off at will throughout all touch points, and even schedule them for the future.
- With inventory and fulfillment automated, we have more time to continue innovating in-store and online marketing.
- Very low software overhead combined with nChannel’s instant maintenance when needed.

nChannel Reels in New Revenue

Cooke and others are putting their newly available time to good use. “We spiffed up our product presentation in the store and online, and have set

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up an online virtual tour of our store that's very impressive. We made our product info more SEO-friendly. We put out our own magazine and blog.

"nChannel hands us new hours we use to market. We reach out to more partners and affiliates. Using Yellow Dog to run our fishing expeditions guarantees a high-quality experience—from getting visas, to the right equipment, guides, boats and staff.

"We receive a ton of customer compliments about our tip-of-the-tongue answers. Even in today's automated world, they say we're unique in being on top of their needs, having their contact data, and sending out same-day shipments. Sometimes we can ship in minutes. That floors them."

Cooke reports a 75 percent reduction in credit card fraud. "Seeing different billing and shipping addresses on a credit card transaction triggers touching base with the cardholder. Losses of thousands of dollars in Christmas 2013 dropped to a few hundred in 2014. And that money goes straight to a company's bottom line."

Plans and Advice

Trouts hopes to increase nChannel's deliverables through the developer's Product Information

Management (PIM) solution. It will expand product details to Magento and portals.

Cooke offers these ideas to retailers who seriously want to expand online sales: "If you don't automate all online sales functions, the added detail will eat you alive. Plan it out. Early in my career I learned 'Always automate so you have time to innovate!' Make sure you have scalable systems from an eager, innovative company. nChannel is your best bet.

Retailers should compare providers' speed of in-hand, delivered results, overall costs, and level of support. You go through a proposal cycle, of course, but also informally gauge their staff's ease of communication. Is it days, hours, minutes? Can you reach a technologist or just a salesperson? All this factored into our selecting nChannel."

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