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TRENDS AND APPLICATIONS

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GranQuartz Builds Rock-Solid Website with Help of Kore Technologies

A modern-looking, highly functional eCommerce site was created with KommerceServer Suite.

The Challenge

GranQuartz, based in Atlanta, Ga., is the largest distributor of stone tools, equipment and supplies in the U.S., and also provides top quality products and services to the concrete polishing and tile markets. "We were looking to improve our online presence, which had become stagnant, and to increase revenue through our online channel," says Michael Hook, director of IT for GranQuartz.

When GranQuartz determined that it needed a major overhaul of its website, it spent 6 months searching for a company that could handle the project. In effect, the company needed to replace two sites—its corporate home page and the linked eCommerce site.

The existing eCommerce solution was integrated with Epicor (formerly Activant) Prelude, GranQuartz's ERP system, but the solution did not meet current web standards and maintaining the appearance and content was difficult and time-consuming.

Ultimately, GranQuartz chose Kore Technologies' KommerceServer webStoreFront, a feature-rich and cost-effective eCommerce storefront software solution.

Integrated Solution

A key advantage that Kore offered was its extensive knowledge of MultiValue database technology plus their ability to integrate with Prelude via their Kourier Integrator product, says Hook. "While there are many companies that offer eCommerce solutions, very, very few of them know anything about integrating those eCommerce solutions with an ERP system like ours."

Tight integration with the Prelude ERP system is important because customers expect web transactions to be an extension of all other interactions with GranQuartz, including consistent pricing for individual customers. "Sometimes they are going to call in an order, sometimes they are going to order online, but they want all of that information consolidated in one place so they can go

online and track the order they placed on the phone," Hook explains.

Key Features

In addition to customizing the look of the website for GranQuartz, Kore also added new features for the company. For example, when customers are ordering online for the first time, their orders are briefly put on hold to allow a sales administrator to check if they are already in the company's database, and if so, the online account is linked to the existing internal customer account. New accounts are identified and can be forwarded to GranQuartz's regional representatives for

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follow-up. The new website is also set up to prevent the shipment of products into geographic regions for which GranQuartz does not have distribution rights, and to alert customers when products must be ground-shipped because they contain hazardous substances.

Besides displaying the best customer price based on the many price matrices used in Prelude, webStoreFront also displays the optional part pricing if purchased in an alternative unit of measure. Grouping similar products (variants) together on one page is also supported, so if a customer wants to buy sandpaper, for example, they can choose from many grades without navigating to multiple pages.

There are also tremendous advantages in scalability and security with the new website, says Hook. "By going with KommerceServer, we got onto a standard platform for web services which means that it is easy for us to scale up. If we need better transaction-processing speed, we can use standard off-the-shelf technologies." And, because the website is built on modern standards, it doesn't have the security holes of the old

system. Credit card security improved as a result of webStoreFront's integration with Element Payment Services, a third-party vendor of credit card services. This enabled GranQuartz to become PCI compliant because it no longer stores credit card numbers in its own system.

Measurable Results

Other benefits have resulted from launching the new site, as well. "Almost immediately, we saw an improvement in our search engine placement for industry-standard product searches. That's because the structure of the new site is much easier for search engines to scan plus search engine optimization (SEO) tags are supported in the storefront's catalog," says Hook. The impact on website traffic and sales has been very noticeable, too. Within 8 weeks of launching the new site, GranQuartz's online sales grew 10%, total visits to the site went up 9.9%, customers' time on the site doubled, and the bounce rate dropped 14%. The time required to maintain the site has also decreased dramatically. For example, it only took about a minute to load a list of clearance products to the site. Product content maintenance takes about 20% of the time it used to take, he notes.

"Kore has been great to work with," says Hook. "They are always looking for things that they can add to the product to make it an even better system."

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