

Charles Bentley Grows Online Sales 20X with ChannelAdvisor

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CASE STUDY



CHARLES BENTLEY
EST. 1860

Marketplace Sales
Up 1900%

Location: Loughborough, Leicestershire

URL: www.charlesbentley.com

Industry: Home and Garden

COMPANY OVERVIEW

To say things have changed over the course of Charles Bentley's history would be a vast understatement. Then again, the family business was established way back in 1860. Plenty has happened in the 150+ years that followed: product lines grew, manufacturing facilities got bigger, and the company's hallmark wooden brooms started sharing shelf space with industrial cleaning supplies and garden sheds.

Yet even after all that growth, the biggest changes have occurred within the past couple of decades. An explosion of online sales led the once-small operation to acquire more than 300,000 square feet of manufacturing and warehousing facilities — plus factories in Sri Lanka and China. Today, Charles Bentley reports the ever-expanding e-commerce division processes over 15,000 orders a week during peak seasons.

"As a business, we changed beyond recognition," says E-Commerce Director Andrew Steel.

Charles Bentley had officially become a global brand. There were some growing pains along the way. But just as the company had reached countless other milestones throughout its long history, the team was determined to succeed at e-commerce, too.

THE SITUATION

For years, the e-commerce team at Charles Bentley struggled in two areas that tend to plague online sellers: keeping inventory updated, and staying ahead of some fierce competition.

"As online business grows and the world globalises further, we have a considerably higher level of competition," Steel explains. His division has responded by placing a high priority on sourcing quality products, keeping prices competitive and offering outstanding customer service.

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THE SITUATION (continued)

Still, it means there's a lot to manage — especially with such a vast array of inventory sold direct-to-consumer. Because Charles Bentley relies on drop shipping to make 2,000+ products available for next-day delivery on marketplaces, stock levels change constantly.

“One of the key challenges with so many marketplaces and drop-ship partners is stock management, especially with a majority of our stock being manufactured in the Far East,” Steel says.

He just needed to find the right solution.

THE SOLUTION

“I still remember clearly wanting to start selling on Amazon in 2009 after reaching £500,000 sales on eBay,” says Steel. “I knew we couldn't retype all the product listings again, and we had a pretty useless enterprise resource planning (ERP) system when it came to managing product data.”

After reviewing other e-commerce solution providers, Steel felt ChannelAdvisor was “the perfect partner to help us with long-term inventory and feed management.”

That partnership, according to Charles Bentley, helped the company to grow its eBay and Amazon business with ease — and expand to additional channels, too. Cdiscount, ManoMano and Fruugo are all now part of the company's widening marketplace portfolio.

“Fruugo has helped us sell to non-marketplace countries in the European Union,” Steel says. “It's a six-figure account for us and has seen significant growth within the past two years.”

The company credits ChannelAdvisor for other equally exciting breakthroughs on other e-commerce channels, including some surprises.

“I was never sure about the [ManoMano] platform and wondered how other startup marketplaces would ever compete with eBay and Amazon,” Steel notes. “But niche marketplaces have seen great growth, and ChannelAdvisor has always been great at introducing us to new opportunities.”

With robust features to support marketplace expansion — data feeds, business rules, inventory management and more — ChannelAdvisor's marketplace solution and services have become a core pillar of Charles Bentley's success, allowing Charles Bentley to sell to a growing global audience.

THE RESULTS

The Charles Bentley team says it has had to overcome some significant inventory challenges over the years, and there have been many lessons learned along the way. In the end, however, Steel believes turning to a strong e-commerce platform was exactly what Charles Bentley needed to keep online sales strong.

Charles Bentley reports annual online sales have swelled to £10 million — 20 times higher than what the company had been achieving a decade ago.

“ChannelAdvisor is the market-leading tool for inventory management and feeds,” says Steel. “The insights we've gotten from the team over the years have kept us up-to-date with e-commerce trends worldwide. Without ChannelAdvisor, life would be more complicated!”

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— ANDREW STEEL,
E-Commerce Director
Charles Bentley