



Top marks for school clothing retailer Banner: increased web sales and an improved user experience



IMPLEMENTING A CLICK AND COLLECT SERVICE TO SUPPORT SALES AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

When implementing a new click & collect solution, specialist school uniform retailer Banner Ltd was able to significantly enhance the customer experience. The result was to successfully drive increased web sales via this new route and boost its revenues during the crucial 'Back to School' trading period.

Antony Eden, Group Chief Information Officer at Banner Ltd, says the company operates wholesale and retail divisions including 40 stores, where trade is heavily skewed to the academic year: "From June to September it's like Easter, Christmas, Black Friday and the January Sales all rolled into one. As much as 80% of our sales are within that period."

Prior to Covid-19, the company generated a modest 15% of sales via the online channel, but with the various lockdowns it was pushed up to 50%. When stores reopened, Banner recognised the need to put in place a successful click and collect (C&C) proposition to replace its existing solution.

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“I have no doubt that PMC’s understanding of the customer experience has been instrumental in solving our previous issues, including customer communication throughout their C&C journey. The overall solution developed by PMC not only optimises the customer experience, it also enhances the operational experience for store colleagues managing multiple and split deliveries, thereby saving significant time.”

ANTHONY EDEN
GROUP CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER AT BANNER LTD



The challenge to deliver the C&C solution was given to PMC, who would leverage its customer experience transformation skills. PMC was presented with something of a challenge - to build and test this solution within a six-week timeframe in order to hit the peak trading. Banner realised the amount of work was enormous, and there was complexity inherent in the yet-to-be-defined nature of the interface for the C&C task, but they were confident PMC would take ownership and deliver at short-notice.

Delivering under pressure

“At this stage we had not yet defined our exact requirements as we were more focused on Back to School, but PMC were very good at understanding the time pressure. They recognised what we needed and the need to turn it around in a very productive manner. What they presented to us from the start was pretty close to what we ended up going live with,” says Antony Eden, adding that such was the success of the launch that, within a week, C&C accounted for a large increase in web sales - and the business encountered no glitches.

Antony acknowledged the quick turnaround of the project was helped by the hybrid model employed by PMC, with teams in the UK and India able to hand over work to ensure round the clock development work. This approach also helps with project scalability, by providing the option to tap into the necessary engineering capabilities and skill sets across the two locations.

Lack of customer order visibility was one of the key issues with the existing online ordering process at Banner and its former C&C solution.

“At the call centre, we had hundreds of parents asking - where’s my order? They had no visibility and were forced to call us. With the PMC solution, we give them information on their orders and nudges about when to collect. If they do not collect within two weeks then we tell them it will be returned to the warehouse,” says Antony Eden.

Customer services were delighted with the new solution and the earlier need for Banner to recruit additional people into the customer services department has been dropped, thereby saving the company a significant amount of money.

Steve Smart, Professional Services Director at PMC Retail, says: “Our retail domain knowledge is what allowed us to carry out this project within the tight deadlines. By combining our engineering capabilities, agile processes and strong customer engagement skills, we were able to enhance both the operator and customer experience significantly.”

Enhancing visibility of orders

One of the problems solved by the new click and collect solution was the inability to communicate the full details of orders to customers. This was especially problematic for partially filled orders being available for collection in-store.

“For example, if the full uniform was not yet available, but another element of the order was, say, just the blazer, and was sent to the store ready for collection, the customer would likely be very disappointed making a trip to the store just for that item. PMC therefore proposed a pragmatic solution of simply giving the customer the option of collecting a partial order or waiting to collect the full order at a later date,” says Antony Eden.

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