



How to thrive as a profitable ecommerce business

SPINDOGS

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Start here...

Ecommerce is BIG business. What with the industry growing rapidly and more customers purchasing online, ecommerce is a safe market to enter. Not only that, but an ecommerce business is fairly straightforward to get up and running, providing that you have the tools and know the tricks to make it viable.

Whether you're considering implementing an ecommerce arm to your business or want to know more about developing your ecommerce website, this informative guide provides all you need to know about making it a success. Read on for tips on how to thrive in the industry as a profitable ecommerce business and ensure you're giving your customers exactly what they expect when shopping online.

The rise of ecommerce

There's no denying that ecommerce is taking over the retail industry. A little over 20 years ago, ecommerce was in its infancy. eBay and Amazon had just launched, with many other retailers following suit.

Fast forward to the present, and ecommerce is dominating the retail sector. According to Statista, ecommerce sales accounted for 18 per cent of all retail sales worldwide in 2020, with the figure expected to reach 21.8% in 2024.

Ecommerce has experienced accelerated growth in the last decade. In 2020, Retail Research reported that ecommerce is the fastest-growing segment of the retail market in the UK, Europe and North America. Retail businesses have become more aware that their customers' shopping habits have changed. No longer are businesses confined to their bricks and mortar stores to sell their products - ecommerce gives them an opportunity to tap into a much wider audience online.

Tips for starting an ecommerce project

While there is room for everyone to carve their space in the ecommerce industry, the increasingly competitive nature of the market means that you must be equipped with the tools and expertise to grow your empire and outperform your competitors.

Here are a few key points to consider when starting an ecommerce project and getting your website off the ground:

1. Consider your ecommerce goals

Whether you are a small business or a large business, the key to a successful ecommerce project is to define your ecommerce goals. Consider why you want to enter the ecommerce market, what are the benefits of having an ecommerce website for your business, and how does an online store align with your overall business goals.

Your reasons for starting an ecommerce business may be to give you a competitive advantage, elevate your existing offering, or to keep up with your competition. Perhaps you want to create an ecommerce website to lower overhead costs or to increase your revenue and number of customers. Whatever the reason, make sure that you define your reasons and goals, so you know what you need to achieve throughout the process.

2. Think about your audience

Once you have defined your ecommerce goals, you will need to identify your audience's needs. After all, your ecommerce business will only be successful if it suits your customers and meets their requirements.

Understanding what your customers want and need from your website, what experience they expect when they're shopping on your website and the type of products they want to buy, will help ensure that you're creating a website that centres around your customers and meets their needs and solves their problems.

3. Don't forget about your branding

If you want to build an ecommerce business that lasts, you still need to invest in your brand. While you may not have the branding and décor to rely on from a bricks and mortar store, remember that your customers still want to experience a brand online.

When setting up an ecommerce business, don't get lost in the selling and remember that the brand identity you have created and developed a reputation for, needs to translate to your website. Your branding should reflect the established core purpose, values and customer service that your business is renowned for. After all, your audience needs to feel a connection with you if they are going to make a purchase from you, which is why you shouldn't neglect your branding.

4. Choose an ecommerce hosting platform

Choosing an ecommerce hosting platform is a crucial part of creating an ecommerce website project. There are many platforms available that promise to offer flexibility in functionality and design, and allow you to scale your business across the UK or worldwide. Different platforms require different levels of expertise and budgets to use.

A few of the platforms to consider are:

- WordPress - WooCommerce
- Umbraco - Vendr.net
- Kentico - Xperience

Some of the factors to consider are the size of your business, your selling channels, and the support you need to build your website project.

As experts in web development, we have the full package of front and back end developers who are equipped in building ecommerce website using WordPress, Umbraco and Kentico. From the offset, our business development team will offer a discovery workshop and consultation to understand your ecommerce goals and find the most suitable hosting platform solution that meets your business objectives.

5. Prepare your content

As part of your ecommerce project, you will need to populate your website with products and content. Check that you have images of your products and compelling product descriptions. An effective site structure will also help you to organise your products into categories and sub-categories so that your customers can shop with ease.

At Spindogs, we have an experienced digital marketing team with the expertise to drive traffic and see results with an optimised website.

6. Invest in excellent customer service

Quality customer service is essential for making sure your ecommerce business is a success. There are several ecommerce customer service tools, apps and software available to create an omnichannel customer journey and ensure the customer receives a consistent user experience across all devices and channels. These include live chat functionality, automated responses, customer service helpdesks and personalised email campaigns.

7. Turn traffic into sales

It's one thing getting users to visit your website, but what about turning those users into customers? That's the challenge, which is why digital marketing is so important to support your ecommerce website. There are a range of digital marketing tactics, such as email marketing, social media advertising and content marketing, that you can use to turn traffic into sales and ensure your ecommerce business is a winning success. Read more about the need for digital marketing when managing an ecommerce project later on.



The fundamentals of UX

Your customer needs to be at the centre of your business model. According to Oberlo, the average conversion rate across ecommerce businesses between 2020 and July 2021 was 1.81%. That means your website needs to work hard to ensure you're delivering the best customer experience to encourage them to convert.

User experience (UX) and customer journey go hand in hand. If your customer journey isn't considered, then your user experience will fall short too. There are different ways you can enhance your website's user experience and make the buying process as seamless as possible for your customers. We've listed a few key points to consider below:



Responsive design

Considering that a large part of shopping is now done on mobile (one-third of all shopping made in the UK in 2020 was via mobile, according to Statista), your website needs to be mobile responsive, meaning the layout and content adapt based on the size of the device.

Ensure that your website is mobile-friendly by using plugins on your website that are mobile responsive. Your website should be optimised for mobile users, so they can complete transactions with ease and enjoy a seamless experience online from any device.



Clear website design

There's a reason why a clear website design equals a successful ecommerce website. A flat and clean website featuring minimal decorations and texture, with plenty of white space and a compelling call to action, offers the user a focused user experience without any distractions. It also helps to showcase your photography and keep all eyes on the product.



Easy-to-use navigation

The navigation is a key UX feature on your website. Without it, the user wouldn't know where to go or how to shop on your website. Your ecommerce website should feature an easy-to-use, streamlined navigation that's organised correctly and categorised with appropriate category names so that it's easy for the user to find the products they're looking for – if they can't find it, they can't buy it!



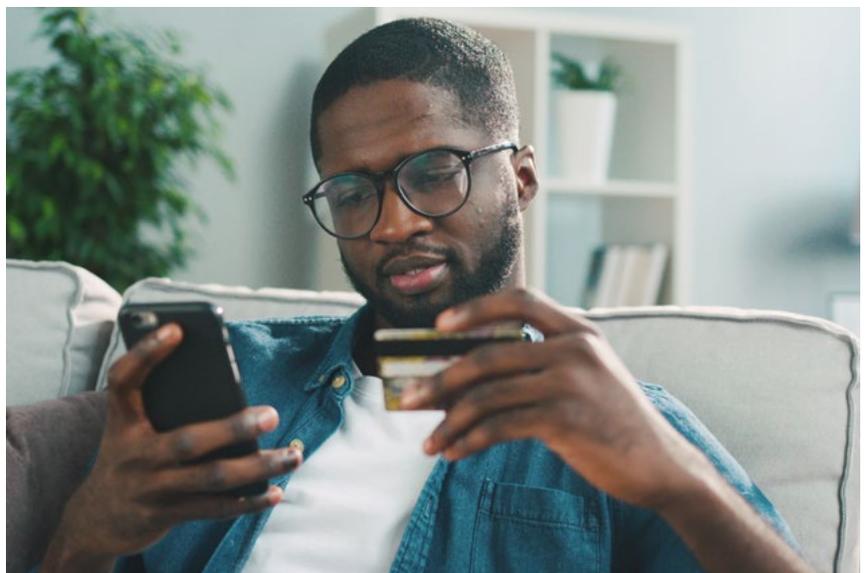
Considered product pages

As one of the most important pages in an ecommerce website, a considered product page is the difference between a user converting and a user leaving the website completely. Your product pages should make it as easy as possible for the user to get all the information they need about the product and complete the transaction in a few steps. With that said, the product page needs to include clear product imagery showcasing the product from different angles, an informative product description, and a visible CTA button that tells the user to add the product to their basket.



Seamless checkout process

The checkout is a fundamental part of the conversion funnel. Users expect to be able to complete their transactions as quick and easy as possible. So, a seamless and fast checkout process is essential for making sure users convert when they're on your website. That's why you must consider things like providing different payment methods, offering guest checkout experiences and limiting the number of fields users have to complete at the checkout stage.



Unlocking the value of customer data

Using your data is key to understanding your customers' shopping habits and behaviour on your ecommerce website. Data gives you an insight into what your customers want, the products they need, and helps you create a seamless user experience to persuade them to convert.

Even if you have already established relationships with your customers and had the chance to learn more about them, it's still worth investing in data analysis to understand what works for your customers on your website, how they behave on your website, and what changes you need to make to enhance their user experience.

As part of your data analysis, you can:

1. Track and measure your customer's journey

Tracking and monitoring your customer journeys is crucial for ecommerce businesses. Fortunately there are many tools available to help you to build a rich data picture. Tools such as Google Analytics and heat mapping tools like Hotjar and Mouseflow, allow you to:

- Analyse where your customers have come from
- See where they land on your website
- Know what CTAs they have clicked
- Know which pages they visit
- Understand what content they engage with before making a purchase.

They even tell you where your customers drop off the website, so you know what improvements to make to encourage them to convert.

2. Understand your audience

Website analytics can help you to learn more about your customers. While you may already have this customer data from other areas of the business, your online customers may be of a different age range and demographic. You can also learn where they are shopping from and what device they use to visit your website, helping you to make the necessary changes to accommodate your online customer persona.

3. Know what your customer wants

If you're a bricks and mortar store, it's easy to talk to your customers about what they are looking for and why they choose to shop with you. But how do you know what your customers want online? Using data analytics can give an insight into what your customers demand when they are on your website. Whether it's a faster checkout process, more payment options or an easier way to find products, implementing data tools like exit surveys and customer reviews allow customers to tell you what they really think of your website and why they are leaving and not shopping with you.

4. Spot customer trends

Analysing your website's data will help you to spot any behavioural patterns and trends on your website. For example, analysing behavioural metrics and following user journeys during key retail periods will help understand users' behaviour and forecast future buying trends.

5. Identify problematic pages

Data analytics tools help to identify any problematic pages. They help pinpoint issues in the user journey, such as 404 pages or broken links on pages, so you can work to resolve them quickly.

6. Improve user experience

Overall, data gives you a better understanding of your customers' behaviour on your website. Key metrics like conversion rate, bounce rate and average time spent on the page will give insight into page performance and indicate what to improve to influence the user so that they take specific actions and convert.



Planning an ecommerce strategy

The future of your business is in ecommerce. But, the key to it being a success is that it has to be customer-centric. If you're branching out into the ecommerce world, then having an ecommerce strategy will help all activities align with your overall business goals and meet the needs of your audience.

Here are a few key areas to consider when planning your ecommerce strategy:

1. Plan and set your business goals

Identifying your goals and objectives is the first step to creating an ecommerce strategy. Ask yourself, what do you want your ecommerce business to achieve and what online selling opportunities are out there for your business? It may be to expand your product offering, reach a wider audience or increase your revenue. Whatever it is, be sure to define your ecommerce goals in your strategy and make sure they align with your overall business objectives.

2. Identify your target market

Your ecommerce strategy should include a section on your target customer. Age, demographic, location and insights about their lifestyle, will help build a persona. But, you should also include information like what challenges your audience faces and how your products aim to solve them. Including this information will help you stay focused and ensure you provide a website and ecommerce business that caters to your market.

3. Define how you're going to reach your customers

Once you have set your business goals and identified your products, it's time to think about how and where you're going to sell online. This means considering what online sales channels you are going to use to sell your products to your customers. Whether it's direct to customer on your website or through marketplace services (other businesses' websites to sell your products such as Amazon, Etsy etc.), you need to identify what platform you're going to sell your products on and include it in your ecommerce strategy.

A lot of your ecommerce strategy requires digital marketing to ensure customers reach your website, engage, and most importantly, convert. Will you reach your audience and potential new customers through social media or pay per click (PPC)? Will you retain customers through email marketing? These all make up your ecommerce strategy.

The need for digital marketing

Digital marketing plays a big part in your ecommerce business. It's key for reaching a wider audience and engaging with existing and new customers, and it ensures you're supporting them during each stage of the sales funnel too. Digital marketing is also essential if your goal is to increase your sales and conversion rate, get a better return on investment (ROI) and achieve exponential growth.

We've outlined below how to use digital marketing to:



Promote your products online



Reach new customers



Build customer loyalty



Stand out from competitors



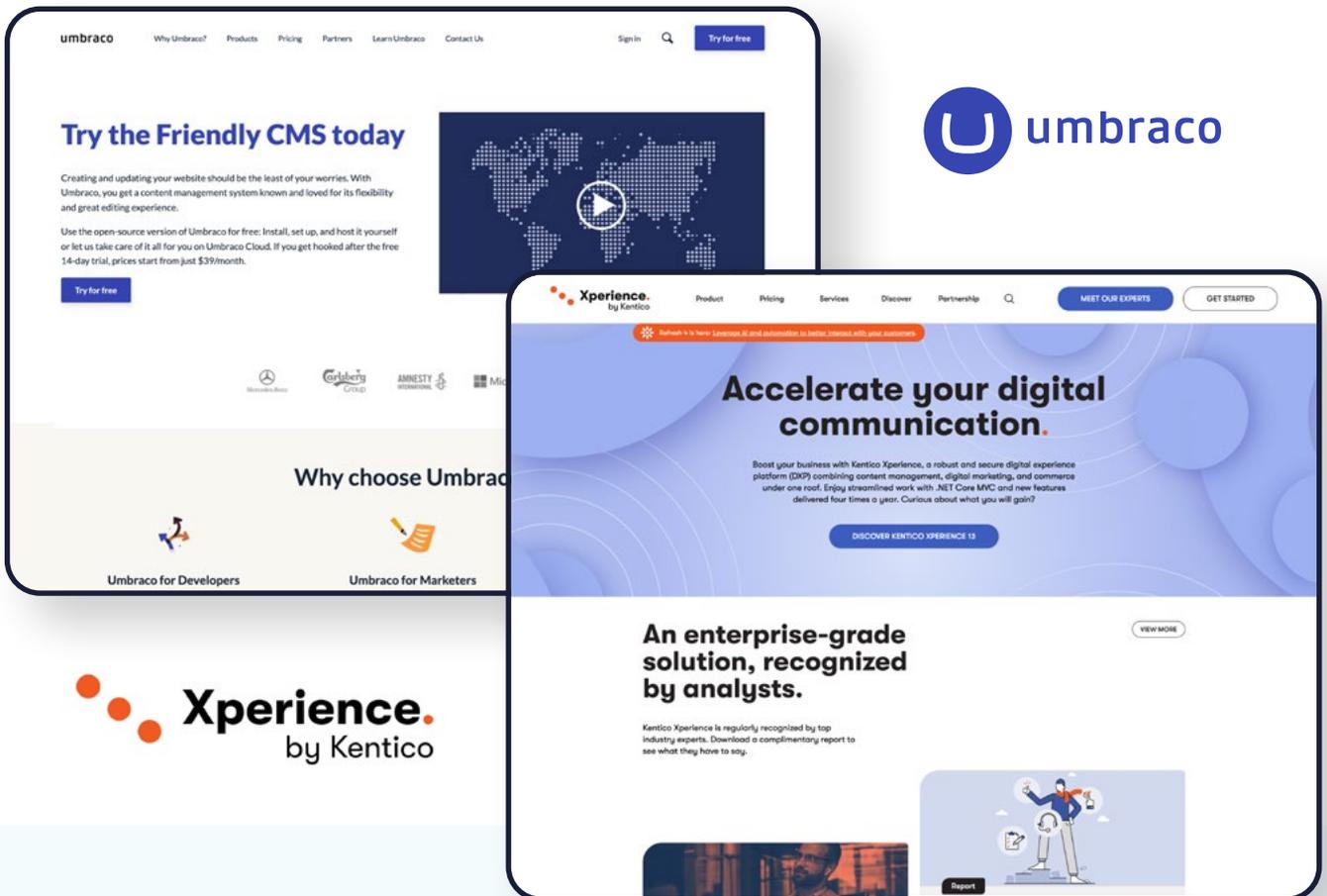
Influence buying decisions



Increase your sales

There are several digital marketing practices you can use to support and grow your ecommerce business. However, the tactics you choose will depend on your goals and what you want to achieve. For example, if your goal is to attract new customers, then you may want to look at optimising your web pages or investing in social media advertising or PPC to increase your reach. Alternatively, your goal may be to grow your customer retention, so email marketing may be a useful way to keep your customers engaged and your brand at the forefront of their minds.

Several hosting platforms, such as Umbraco and Kentico Xperience, allow you to integrate your marketing with the platform. The benefits of this are that it streamlines your marketing processes, improves efficiency by giving you a space to do your marketing from one place, and provide a better, seamless experience for your customers. Integrating your marketing with your CMS also allows you to run email campaigns straight from the platform, aggregate customer data and carry out A/B testing marketing to see which campaigns perform the best.



At Spindogs, we have a team of digital marketing enthusiasts who are experts in delivering a range of marketing best practices to create brand awareness and increase conversion rates and customer engagement across your ecommerce website. Whether you need to increase traffic to your website or optimise your website's SEO, we're here to collaborate with you and create an ecommerce strategy that aligns with your business goals.



Our experience of ecommerce website projects

The key to a successful ecommerce business is levelling up your expertise in ecommerce and digital marketing to ensure you stay ahead of your competitors and continue to meet the needs of your customers.

The team at Spindogs develop functional yet user-friendly and visually engaging websites for a range of businesses that are new to ecommerce and those who are already established but have the appetite for more. Read some of our success stories below.

Topstak

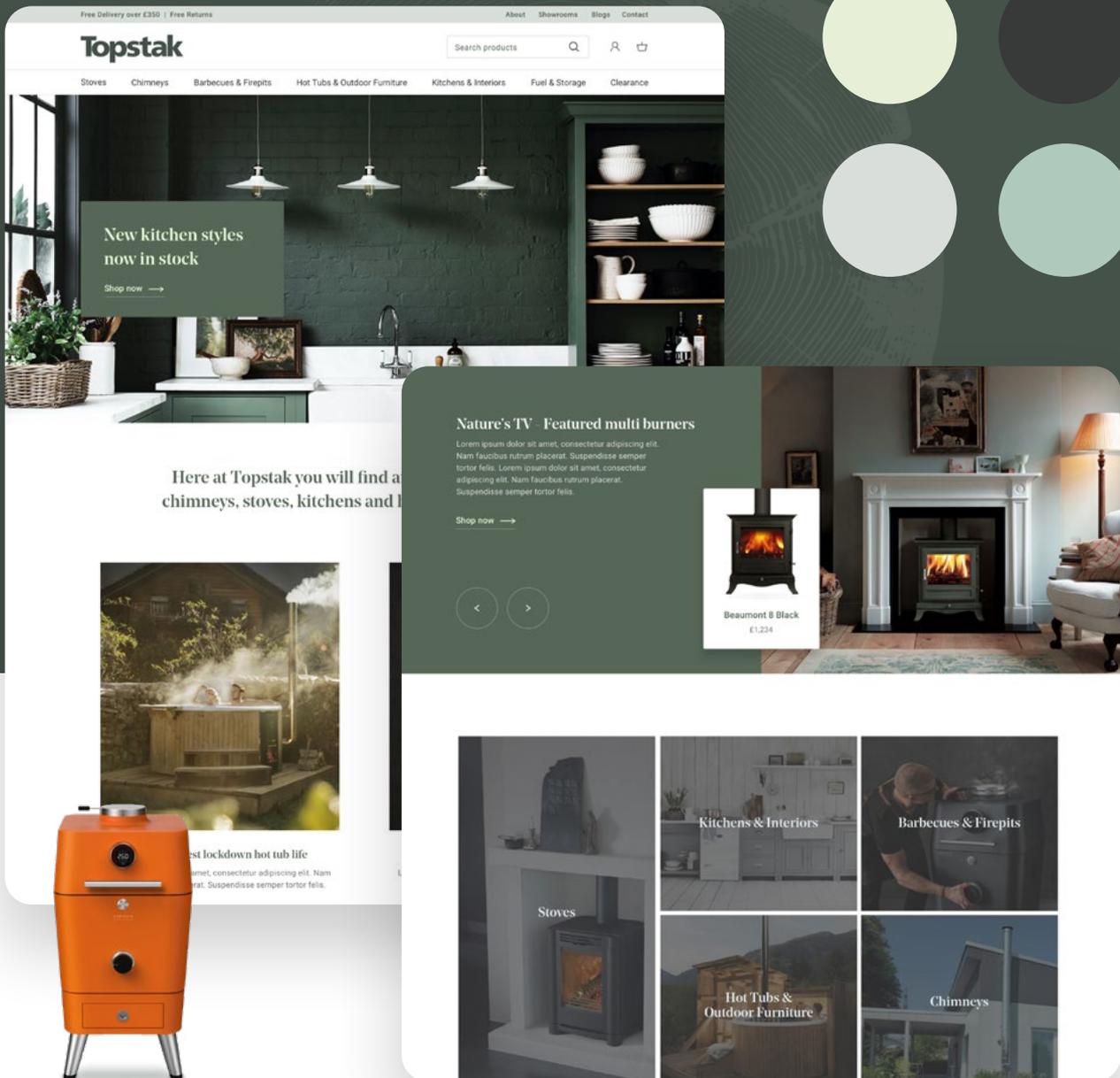
Topstak is a leading supplier in many industries. They have more than 20 years of experience offering an unrivalled selection of stoves, barbecues, kitchens and chimneys for your home. With an abundance of knowledge and an impressive product range, Topstak also provides exceptional service and advice to its customers, helping them choose the right product to suit their needs.



The challenge

Topstak already had a website to showcase its product ranges. However, the website's overall design and poorly organised content failed to meet the business' expectations and the customers' needs.

As experts in designing and developing ecommerce websites for various partners, we were on board to create a new, organised, accessible and visually appealing website that would improve the user experience on the website.



The process

Topstak wanted to create a website that reflected the vision of the brand and its identity. The business also wanted the website to function in a way that met their needs, supported the different customer groups and offered considered and seamless user journeys for each of them. The website had to showcase the wide range of categories and products that Topstak offers too.

The user journey is the most important element to consider when building a website, especially an ecommerce website. From browsing to buying on the website, the user journey needs to be seamless

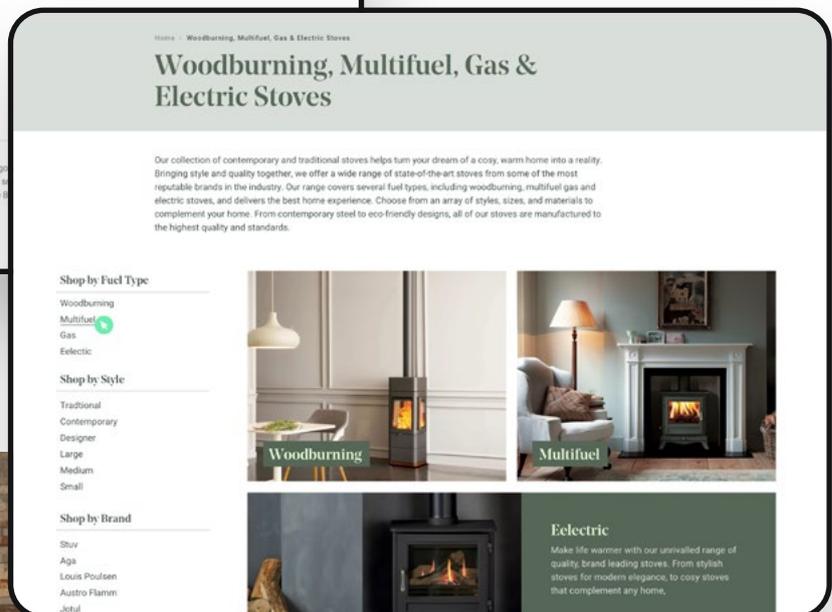
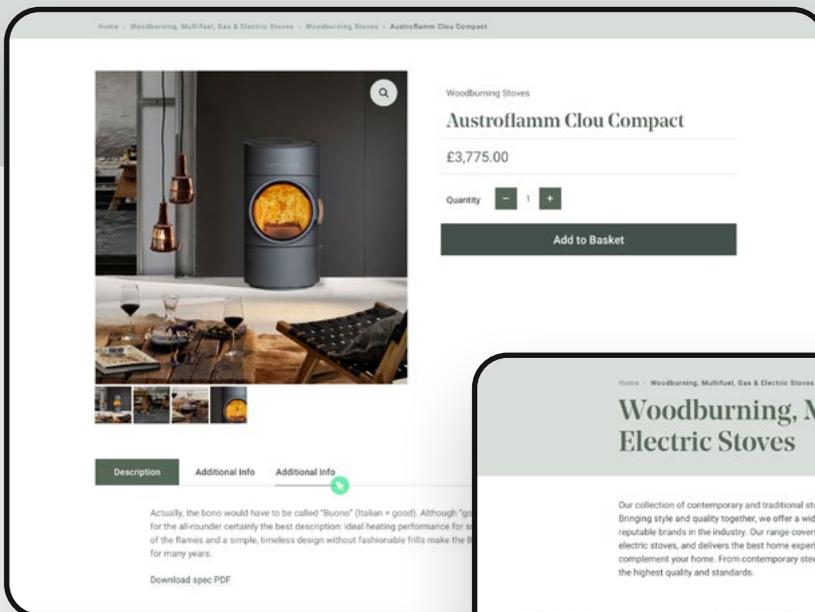
so that customers can find what they are looking for with ease. They need to be confident in completing their transactions and converting on the website. With Topstak, the website needed to serve multiple customer groups. The website needed to recognise traders and wholesalers and give them access to different discount levels.

As part of the ecommerce project, Topstak wanted to make sure the new website reflected their branding and that the content management system (CMS) allowed them to create and update pages when needed.

The solution

Topstak's previous website lacked a clear navigation, and poor search functionality made it hard for users to navigate around the site. To combat this in the new design, we kickstarted the project by creating a clear sitemap with parent categories, sub-categories and even sub-sub-categories to organise Topstak's large selection of products. We also spent time designing the user journeys for traders, wholesalers and members of the public. We had to ensure that customers could find products and check out as seamlessly as possible.

We used WordPress to develop Topstak's website. After creating a clear sitemap and defining the user journeys, we used the CMS to create a visually appealing website enhanced by the brand's photography. We were also able to integrate the Wholesaler WooCommerce package that was previously used to allow users to sign up as traders. This enabled them to access discounts and have a unique user experience. Flexible product page templates also allowed Topstak to create unique content for the site for different customer groups.

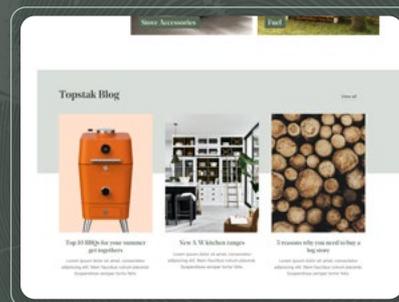
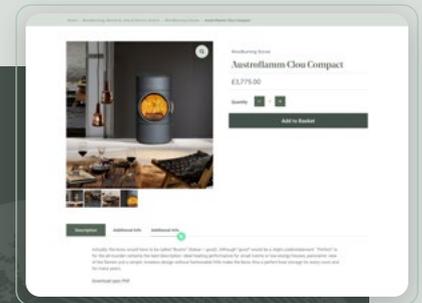
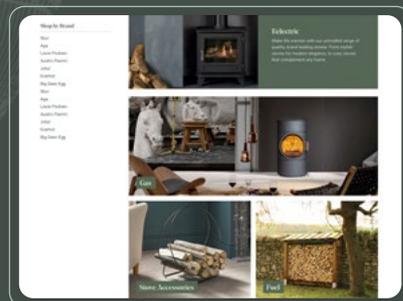


The result

WordPress enabled us to build a refreshing new website that allowed Topstak to take full control of its content and create seamless user journeys for its customers. The fully flexible page layouts and design enable Topstak to easily adjust the design of their site around the needs of their users, supporting them on their website journey, and increasing engagement with their customers.

Since launching the new website and implementing a social media and SEO strategy, Topstak's customer engagement is at an all-time high.

We wrote over
200 pages
of content for the website,
helping to position Topstak
as experts in their field.



We migrated
1500
products



You can read more about the work we did and continue to do to enhance Topstak's user experience in our tenth issue of BARK [here](#).



Direct Tile Warehouse

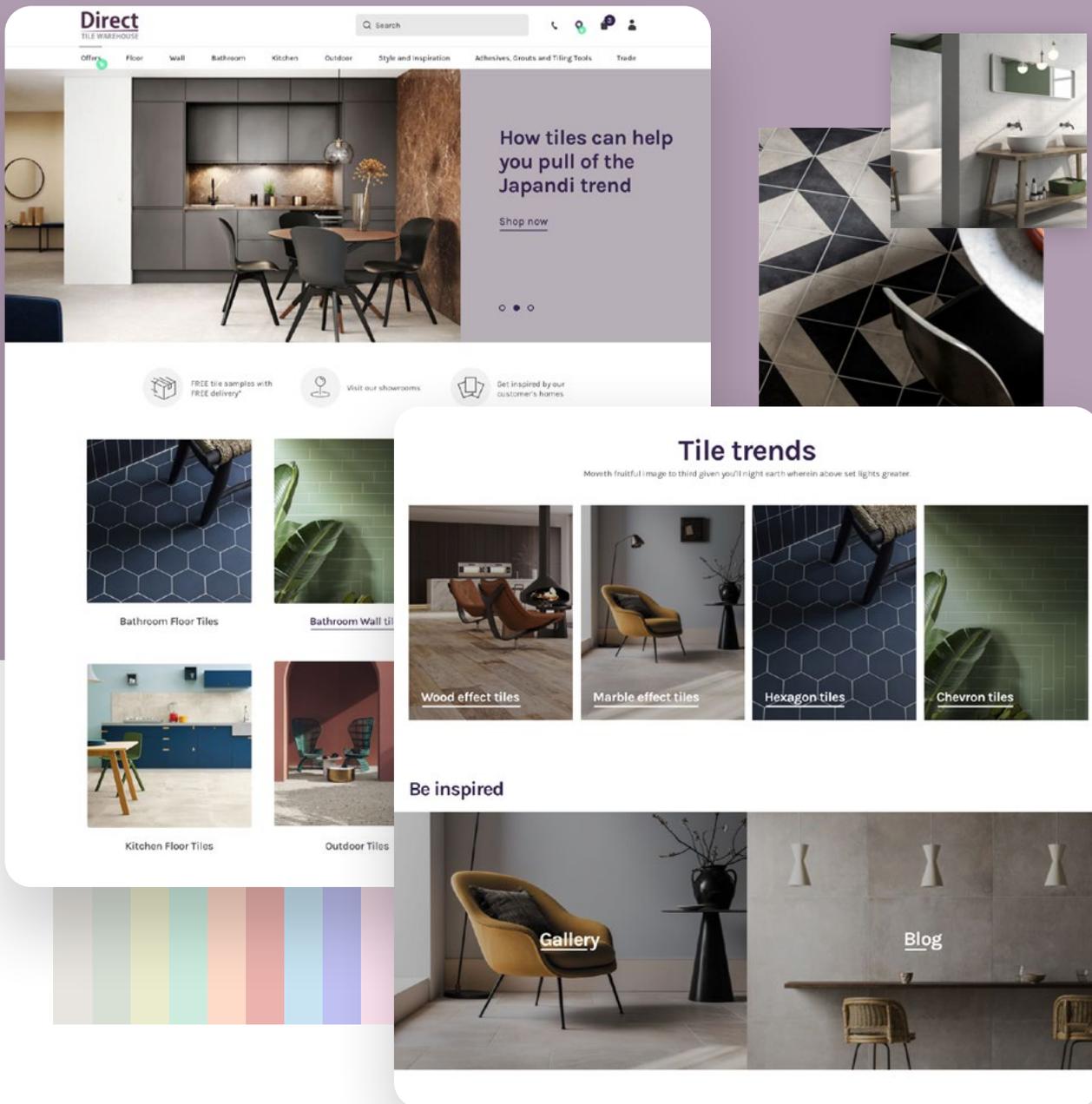
Direct Tile Warehouse is an online tile store offering an extensive range of high-quality tiles to trade and retail customers at competitive prices. The company has supplied wall and floor tiles from leading and global manufacturers for more than 40 years. During this time, Direct Tile Warehouse has built a reputation for providing unrivalled customer service, delivering professional advice and offering free tile estimates and samples on request.



The challenge

As with most big ecommerce stores, Direct Tile Warehouse has a large product and category range. The challenge was, how do they get the entire product catalogue in front of its target audience? Of course, an easy-to-use navigation and seamless user journey will help direct users to the products they are looking for, but what about increasing the visibility of products to new customers that aren't aware of Direct Tile Warehouse yet?

We worked collaboratively with Direct Tile Warehouse to look for optimisation opportunities and devise an SEO strategy that aimed to increase the website's existing rankings and improve the position of other product ranges in search engine results pages (SERPs). The goal was to attract a much wider audience and get ALL of the store's product range in front of potential new customers.



The process

Before starting the optimisation work, we had to make sure the website was in good shape to ensure the SEO work would be successful. We carried out a technical SEO audit on the website to identify any broken links and pages, and assess the current state of the website. The SEO audit highlighted that there wasn't any structured data on the site, which is a crucial element for an ecommerce website. Structured data is fundamental for optimising a site for SEO, as it allows businesses to label the name of a product, service, etc., for search engines to understand the content on the page.

We implemented custom structured data on every web page to increase their search visibility and prepare the website for the optimisation work we were about to do.

Keyword research was also a large part of the preparation stage. The research gave us an insight into what users were searching for, what keywords competitors were ranking for, and what opportunities we could take to target and reach new customers and increase the website's conversion rate.

The solution

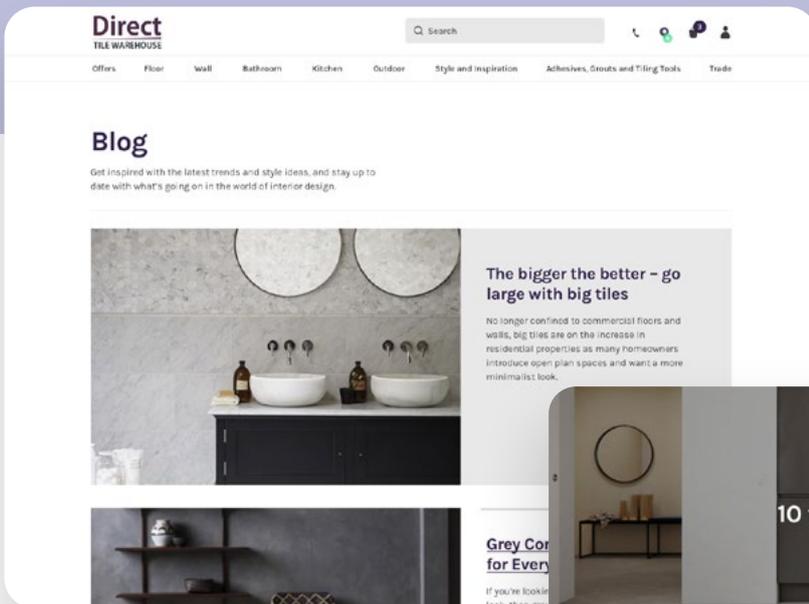
At Spindogs, our work is informed by strategic research. We took the time to analyse the website's data and identify which areas of the website were ranking well and which categories and product ranges could be optimised to increase their visibility.

Once we knew which pages needed our attention, we used keyword mapping to plan out what keywords we would target on each page. As with any large ecommerce site like Direct Tile Warehouse with an extensive range of products and pages, there is always the risk of keywords competing against each other.

We used the relevant keywords to create content on the category pages. We included long-form

and in-depth content on the use and benefits of the products to show search engines Direct Tile Warehouse's expertise and help improve the page visibility.

As part of the SEO strategy, we also optimised the ecommerce site by reviewing the internal links. Internal linking helps users to navigate a website and provides search engines with a structure of a website and link equity (ranking power) across a site. We included links to product pages from related blogs and news articles to help improve the user experience and increase the rankings of the product pages.



NEW



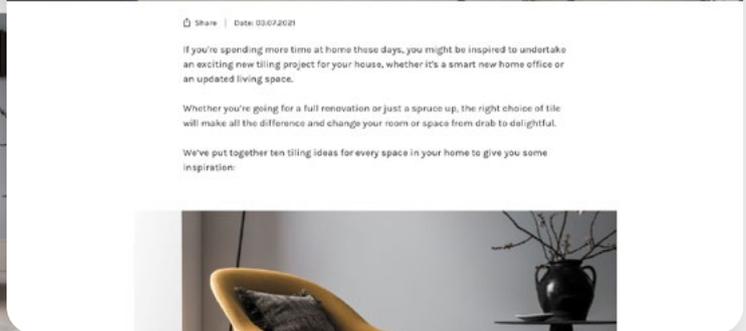
20 rooms that pull off the pattern clash trend

Getting the balance of patterns just right is key to a room's success. Despite their differences, geometric and organic patterns work together in harmony to make the statement your home deserves.



How tiles can help you pull off the Japandi trend

Japandi is one of those interior trends that sticks around. Two years after we first started seeing this minimalist look, it is still influencing designers around the globe.



The result

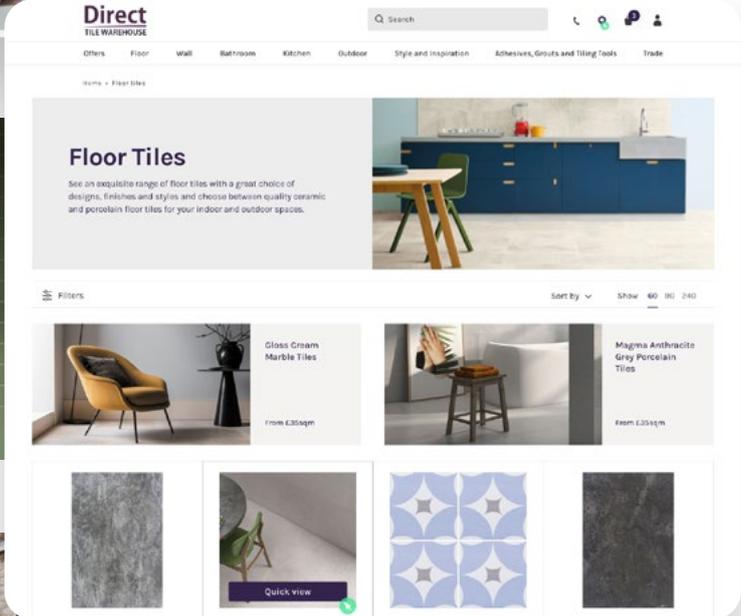
Our optimisation work has had a positive impact on the business. As a result of implementing an SEO strategy, not only did we increase the ecommerce business' conversion rate, but we doubled Direct Tile Warehouse's internet revenue by the end of their financial year. We also increased sales from organic traffic and doubled the number of sample requests the company received year on year. These results prove that digital marketing is definitely needed to make your ecommerce website project a success.

Case studies



Dave's rustic dining room
Your choice of flooring can make all the difference to your home, and we were extra impressed that customer Dave wouldn't settle for anything less in his new home.

[Read more](#)



Direct TILE WAREHOUSE

Offers Floor Wall Bathroom Kitchen Outdoor Style and Inspiration Adhesives, Grouts and Tiling Tools Trade

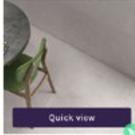
Home > Floor tiles

Floor Tiles

See an exquisite range of floor tiles with a great choice of designs, finishes and styles and choose between quality ceramic and porcelain floor tiles for your indoor and outdoor spaces.

Filters Sort by Show 60 90 240

- Gloss Cream Marble Tiles From £35sqm
- Magma Anthracite Grey Porcelain Tiles From £35sqm



Quick view



Summer sale now on!
Savings up to 25%

[Shop now](#)

Markes International

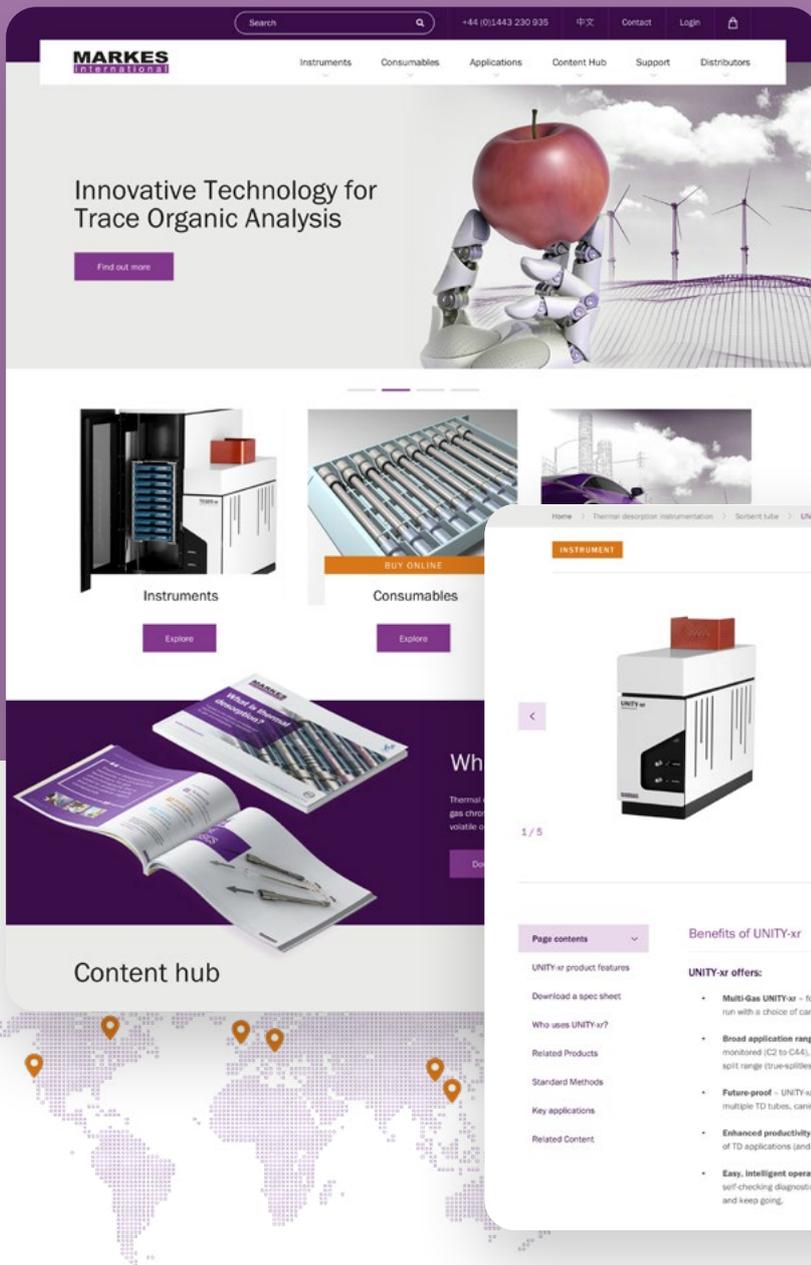
Markes International is a global manufacturer and supplier of thermal desorption and sample preparation equipment. Established in 1997, Markes International is an industry leader that provides instrumentation, accessories and supplies to analysts worldwide. Markes International's products help analysts to push boundaries of what is possible in analytical science and detect trace-level volatile and semi-volatile organic compounds in solids, liquids and gases.



The challenge

Markes International felt that its website no longer served the business. The website hadn't had an update since 2013. The website's structure coupled with complex navigation and poor search functionality, made it hard for users to find what they were looking for with ease. The overwhelming amount of content on the site was also time-consuming and difficult for staff to manage.

Not only did the structure of the site fall short, but Markes International wanted their customers to be able to browse their product selection online and purchase from the website. The website needed to have a clear division of the product offering available and a seamless user journey that guided the user through discovering the product, learning about it and buying it. Markes also wanted a modern design that reflected the business' position as a leader in the industry.



The process

With plenty of experience in developing intuitive ecommerce sites, we set out to uncover the issues Markes International had with their current site and began developing a new ecommerce site that served the business and the customers.

Navigation and content organisation were some of the main issues on the website. We needed to get underneath the current website to understand how it was structured, how content was organised and how users were using it. Markes International had more than one customer group that they catered for, including end-users of the business' products,

prospective customers and resellers and distributors of their products. As part of our preparation work, we needed to ensure that each customer group journey was defined, from browsing and finding the product to checkout and converting on the website.

We worked rigorously with the Markes team to define the user journeys, create a sitemap and an ecommerce shop that not only enhanced the user experience and make it easier for staff to manage content on the site, but help drive conversion too.

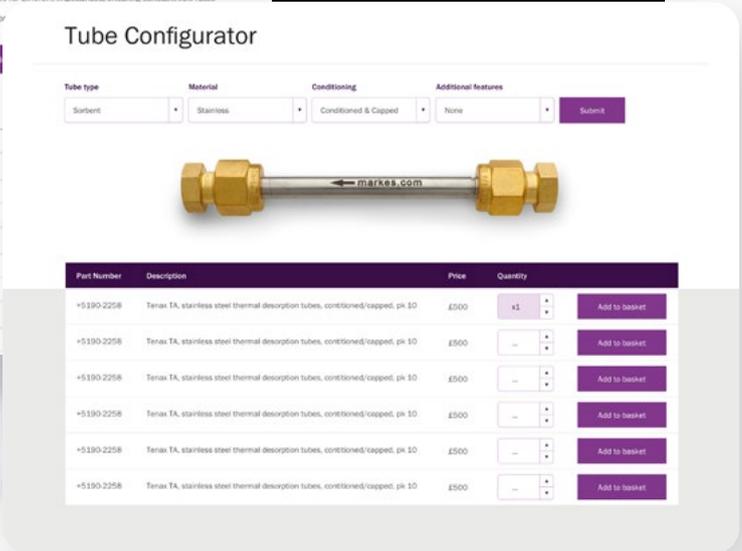
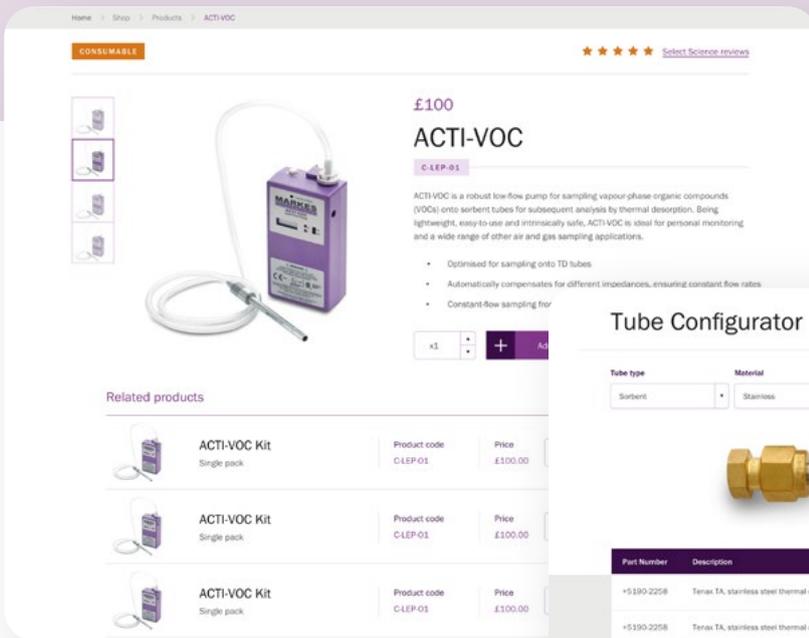
The solution

Choosing the most suitable CMS for your ecommerce shop is a fundamental part of the process of developing a new website. As part of Markes' requirements, the new website needed to be a brochure site that educated customers and have an ecommerce capability that integrated with the current site and allowed customers to log in, view prices and have an optimised checkout experience. It also needed to be simple and easy for staff to create new pages, populate the site with content and make amends if needed.

As Umbraco Gold Partners, we designed and developed the brochure website using Umbraco. The team proposed several designs that positioned

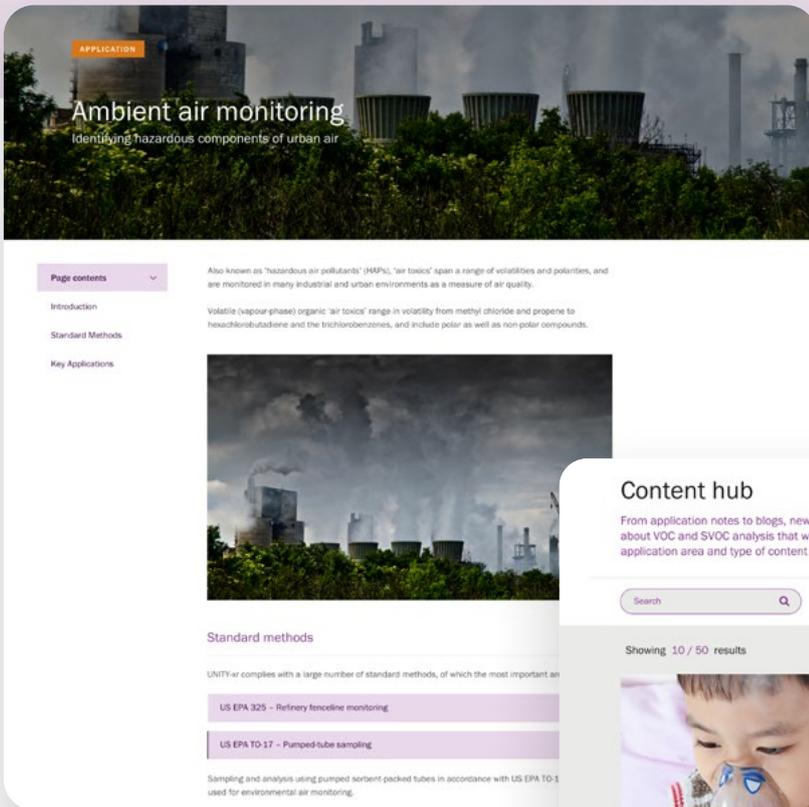
Markes International as a thought leader in their space. The brochure website was designed to educate and advise visitors, and allow them to browse and navigate the website and product offering with ease, following the user journeys we defined during the process.

To complete the ecommerce shop, the team chose Vendr as an ecommerce solution that integrates seamlessly with existing platforms, including Umbraco. Vendr has the same level of flexibility that Umbraco is renowned for and can be tailored to fit business needs and be managed with ease. It's also fully customisable and has several payment providers to implement and offer customers various payment options.

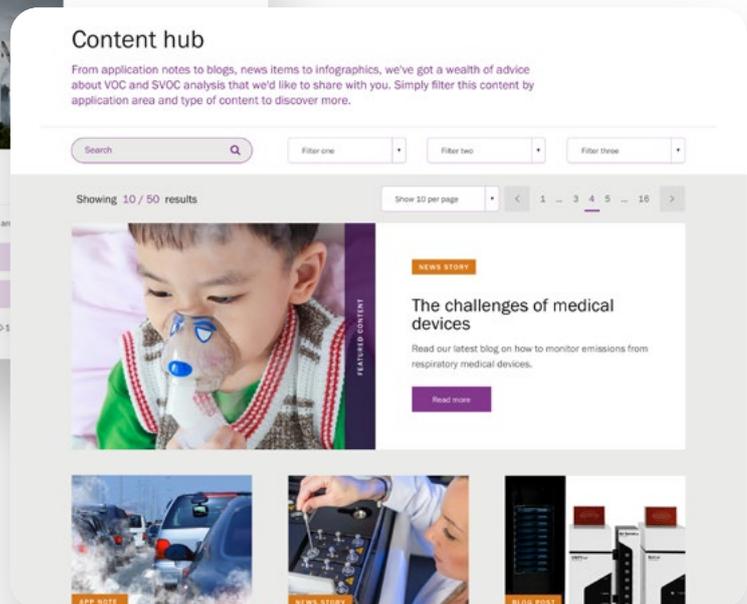


The result

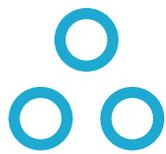
The design and development of a brochure website and the setup and integration of the ecommerce shop have enabled Markes International to maintain its position as an industry leader. The new intuitive website with a clear structure and simple navigation has helped users navigate the site with ease, and registered users to find out more about the products and make a purchase in one journey.



Discover more



Deliver more



Ready to start your ecommerce project?

If you've been considering venturing into the ecommerce or branching out your business to include an online store, then why not discuss your ideas with us? We will work with you to understand your goals and objectives and discuss what opportunities there are for you to make your mark in ecommerce.

We will talk through the different platforms to use and the digital marketing support we offer to support your ecommerce journey.

To find out more about how we can support your ecommerce journey, contact us on:

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