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## Top Right Helps CmdStore.com Increase Sales by Simplifying and Improving Email Marketing

Collectible and comics online retailer improves results 300%, reduces headaches, and grows mailing list by 28%

### Background

CmdStore.com traces its roots back to 1992 when owner David Mark traded his job for his passion, walking away from the world of accounting and into the world of selling comics, collectibles, toys, action figures, anime paraphenelia, and other related merchandise. He opened a small retail store - "Toys on Fire" - in Montreal and recruited his friend Thuan Nguyen to open a second store in Ottawa.

In 2003, they took the online plunge and launched CmdStore.com to reach American and International customers. Like many small retailers making the move from brick-and-mortar to online, they faced challenges that didn't always have obvious solutions.

"We're both smart guys and we're experts on the stuff we sell. That doesn't automatically make us experts in running an online store, though," said David. "There was a lot of trial and error."

They persevered and succeeded. They developed a professional-looking, well-functioning online store on the Yahoo! store platform. They used search engine optimization and pay-per-click advertising to drive traffic and build a solid customer base. They sent out email newsletters to stay in touch with their customers.

The online store grew to account for nearly half of their total yearly sales. As successful entrepreneurs, the partners kept looking for new ways to continue that growth.

### Challenges

"We'd been doing email marketing for a few years," said David. "I really didn't know if the emails were creating sales and getting emails out was a total hassle."

"There aren't a lot of useful email marketing tools made for online retailers like us. There are entry-level tools made for newsletter distribution, but they don't work well for us. And the more sophisticated tools are made and priced for the big guys. So we tried to force-fit the newsletter tools to work with our store, and it was just a nightmare."

"Why weren't we doing more to get our existing customers to buy from us more often?... it became clear that we needed to improve our email marketing."

—David Mark, CmdStore.com

### SUCCESS STORY

#### Company:

CmdStore.com

#### Founded:

1992 (retail store)

2003 (online store)

#### Headquarters:

Montreal, Canada

#### Specialty:

Comic books and collectibles

#### Owner:

David Mark

#### Primary Challenge:

Repeat sales were untapped as email marketing was efforts were sporadic due to tedious tasks and unknown impact

#### Solution:

Top Right connects Yahoo! store to email marketing: simplifying creation, automating message delivery and measuring results

“We spent a lot of time and money to get the customers we had, but our email tool wouldn’t let us reach them the way we wanted to. We couldn’t even add new customers to our list very easily because the email tool forced double opt-in or even blocked our imports sometimes.”

“Our emails weren’t going out on a regular basis like we wanted. Our web guy had his hands full running the site, so I was the one trying to create and send out our emails. I’m no HTML expert, and it took a lot more time and patience than I had.”

“Emails were sent sporadically, so new customers might not hear from us for several weeks after their purchase. It seemed as if they’d forget about us by the time they got their first email, so a lot of them were filing spam complaints against us.”

“We were ticking off our best customers, too. We were sending the same version of our emails to everybody, so a lot of people were getting announcements and offers about stuff they just didn’t care about. Here we were trying to get their business, and instead we were probably driving them away.”

### Top Right Solutions

When David decided to try out Top Right, the first thing he did was use the free customer dashboard to analyze the store’s order information. He was somewhat surprised at what he learned.

“We always knew that we had two sets of customers: casual shoppers who only buy from us once, and avid collectors who make repeat purchases,” said David. “What we didn’t know until we used the customer dashboard was how these two groups were split.”

He saw that about 85% of their customers were making only one purchase. The remaining 15% were the collectors, and they made up about 35% of CmdStore.com’s yearly sales. The customer dashboard segmented the group of collectors into several smaller buckets based on their purchasing history—some folks only bought Lord of the Rings items, for example, while others only bought the latest Marvel Comics releases.

“Once you learn who your customers really are, marketing to them is pretty straightforward,” said David.

His next step in reaching out to his customers was to use Top Right’s simple email creation tool to create customized, professional-looking emails in just a few minutes.

“The email creation tool lets me automatically move product information from our online store catalog into an email tem-

plate,” he said. “Now instead of copying, pasting and futzing with HTML, I just have to point and click.”

Once the emails have been created, the advanced email marketing tool lets him easily contact customers on a regular basis.

“Top Right connects our store to email marketing. It lets us automatically send welcome emails to new customers and give them a chance to unsubscribe from our mailing list,” he said. “The welcome email program runs in the background, so right away we’re keeping in touch without having to scramble to manually send out the emails. Spam complaints have been cut nearly in half and our list has grown by 28%.”

“We’ve seen that new customers who receive welcome mails make second purchases 3 times as often as the new customers who didn’t receive welcome mails with our old system.”

“The automation also helps us make repeat sales by automatically emailing customers 30, 45, and 60 days after their last purchase.”

Top Right’s customer segmentation tool makes it simple for David to reach the right group with the right message.

“We get new products in stock all the time,” he said. “Now that we’re able to group customers based on what they’ve bought before, I can make sure that the collectors are kept up to date on the things they care about, so our Star Wars fans aren’t getting announcements on the latest Webkinz releases, and vice versa. The targeted emails we’re sending now are getting ten times the response than the non-targeted emails we used to send out.”

David has also taken advantage of Top Right’s revenue reports, which allow him to track the impact that his emails are having on sales.

“Top Right’s reporting system is easy to use and shows me if our emails are generating sales,” he said. “I use it to figure out what’s working and what isn’t, so I can make adjustments.”

All in all, David is convinced that the move to Top Right was the best thing that ever happened to CmdStore.com’s email marketing. “The bottom line is that Top Right works,” said David. “It showed us who our customers really are. It helps us keep them happy by sending them only the offers they want to receive, and nothing else. And it automates a lot of the things that used to take me a ton of time and effort. The most important part is that I can see that email will generate 10% of our overall sales this year.”