

Driven: Ecommerce at Work.

## **Episode #25 Transcript: COMMUNICATION is the Key to Choose Your Next Agency Partner [Ryan Van Hoozer]**

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### **Shiva:**

Hi, You're listening to Driven Ecommerce at Work, the podcast where we bring in conversations with the e-commerce experts to talk about their processes and lessons learned in creating an impact on their online business. And I'm your host, Shiva Kumar, head of digital strategy at DCKAP.

Hey what's up everybody, Thank you for tuning in to another episode of driven ecommerce at work. So this episode is actually a recording from one of our sessions that happened recently. So we conduct session every month, if you wanted to register for the upcoming session or upcoming events, and to see the previous events, go check 'em out at [dckap.com/events](https://dckap.com/events). So, this, this is not actually a conversation.

We brought in one of the interesting personality in the distribution space. And we actually want him to present us and walk us through about their digital transformation journey. So our guest today is Ryan Van Hoozer, Ryan is the Vice President of Operations for Marysville Marine, a wholesale and e-commerce supplier of boating parts and accessories for over 17 years, Ryan has led the marketing and e-commerce efforts for Marysville Marine, overseeing the growth and vision for both Marysville marine and its retail counterpart marine parts source. Ryan also oversees the purchasing inventory and product management for the company, ensuring that all parts tie together seamlessly.

So Ryan is gonna give us a 40 minute presentation, and the video version of this episode is actually available in DCKAP's YouTube channel. I'm going to get that on the podcast description, go check 'em out if you want. Other than that, let's get on to the episode.

### **Ryan:**

All right, so we did recently complete our transformation with DCKAP's help this year migrating from our old website platform on Magento 1 to our new platform. And I just wanted to talk today and kind of go through what that journey was like for us to give you a little bit of background on Marysville Marine.

We are a wholesale distributor of boating equipment, not so much the type of equipment you might find in a sporting goods store. We don't sell life jackets and inflatables and that sort of thing. We do sell the parts and accessories that really make the boat operate

everything from, you know, the boat, the engine parts, the steering components, plumbing, electrical pieces, that type of thing, anything that makes the boat work is what we sell.

We operate out of five distribution centers across the United States. And we've been in business since 1973. And we've been selling online since 2002, which for the Marine industry was pretty advanced at the time. It was a pretty new concept to even just expose our live inventory to our customers to have product images and descriptions at the time.

So kind of early to that scene. And then we also at the same time added our eCommerce portion of the business called Marine parts source. And we operate in the back end behind the scenes with an ERP system called Prophet 21. It's made by a company called Epicor. If you're a wholesale distributor, it's probably a piece of software that you're familiar with or have at least heard about.

As I mentioned in addition to the distribution side of our business, the wholesale side, we do have an eCommerce direct to consumer business called Marine Parts Source where we target to do it yourself first. The people that are going to take repairs and maintenance into their own hands this has become a pretty significant portion of our business over the years. We also reach out to those customers through our own eBay store as well. We've been doing that for a number of years as well.

So we're operating those two sites as well as the eBay store out of five different locations across the country. And so last year during the summer, and we started to really contemplate the idea of maybe we need to migrate platforms from where we were.

We had been on Magento version one for about five years and it had been good for us. It was a little bit of a rocky transition initially, but once we got onto the platform, it kind of got things figured out. It had been a really good growth vehicle for us.

And so, you know, after five years we started to take a look at you know, where we were and what were the next steps, and one of the big motivators on why we thought we needed to maybe migrate platform was because Magento did announce last year end of life for Magento version one. They announced that it would be in June, 2020 of this year. And so that was something that we really took into strong consideration about, you know, how is that going to affect us? We started to look at, can we operate past end of life on Magento 1?

And we determined pretty quickly that it was something we didn't want to do for security purposes, just we didn't want to be out of support and on our own to fend off any kind of attacks. We wanted to make sure that we were within PCI compliance. So this was the big, main reason why we made that change.

And or we decided to make that change. And so we'd start to look at what our options were after that. Some of the other big reasons that we wanted to make that migration, one was to improve the speed and performance of the site.

Magento one was a pretty complex program with a lot of bells and whistles, but one thing it was not known for was its performance, particularly when you add a bunch of additional extensions onto it, to get it to where you want it to perform. So one of the things we really wanted to target as if we were going to make this move was to make our sites more user friendly, have a better speed and performance for our customers.

Another big piece of this point we wanted to attack with this migration was to improve the B2B capabilities of our site. As I mentioned back in 2002, when we first started to sell online, just showing inventory and having a way to place orders for our wholesale customers was a pretty big deal for the boating industry.

And you know that was something that kind of set us apart. But 18 years later, I think that a customer's expectations have changed dramatically.

You know, now the B2B customer really has an expectation level that the shopping experience for them is just as seamless as if they were shopping in a B2C environment, shopping on Amazon or something of that nature. They want all of the performance and features that they're used to, but in addition, they want some features that are specific to that B2B experience, such as being able to manage multiple users on their account, being able to see their account balance, see past invoices and issue returns and that sort of thing.

So we wanted to dive deeper into those capabilities and see what we could do to expand that experience for our B2B customers. And then another thing that we really wanted to try and improve upon with this transformation was a better integration with our ERP system Prophet 21. We had some basic integration.

With our magento 1 site's orders we're importing into that ERP. We were able to do some basic customer updates and inventory updates, but we really wanted to tighten that integration up and automate a lot more of the transfer of data that's going back and forth between the two systems. So that was a major point for us to address as we got into this project.

Just because we were on version one of Magento didn't necessarily mean we were going to immediately jump to Magento 2. We wanted to take a look at our options. Magento 2 is a completely new platform from version one. It's not just a simple upgrade. They basically started from scratch and rebuilt the whole platform.

So it is a true migration. So with that in mind, we did decide to look at different possibilities for what would be the best fit for us. We looked at Shopify Plus, BigCommerce. We looked at OroCommerce, which is an eCommerce platform that is specifically designed and targeted more to the wholesale distributor.

And of course we looked at Magento version two as well, and we looked at some other pieces of software too. Ultimately we did come down to deciding to go with Magento and there were some specific reasons why it stood out and was a better fit for us. One of the main reasons was it just comes with a lot of features compared to some of the other options that are out there.

One of the things, as I mentioned before, that we wanted to try and avoid as a lot of additional extensions because they really weighed down. You're a platform that can really affect the performance negatively. So finding a piece of software that had as many of the features that we were looking for out of the box was important because we felt like it was going to perform better and more seamlessly.

Then if we had to put a bunch of extensions together to make it to where we wanted it to be. So that was important. We also, it was critical that the piece of software that we went with could support multiple sites running off the one installation, since we did have both marysvillemarine.com and marinepartssource.com, and it was important that we had support for multi location, or multi-source basically that it could handle understanding that we had five locations of inventory.

We're shipping from different areas, depending on where the customer is. You may want to use a different location for the source of the order. You know that was something that we just wanted to make sure that software could support. Another big selling point for Magento. And we went with the commerce cloud version of Magento. And the reason why is because the cloud version offers a lot of B2B features.

They have a whole set of B2B features and tools that the regular version of Magento and then other eCommerce platforms just did not have. And there's a lot of work being done in this space, as far as BigCommerce, Shopify, they're all salesforce. They're all aiming towards trying to add this type of functionality to their platforms. At the time that we were looking at it a year ago, Magento just seemed like they were a step ahead.

I haven't looked to see what the comparison is like today, but certainly a year ago, Magento seemed like they were further down the road with B2B features than some of the other platforms that were out there. And then I'm not going to lie, transition, having an easy transition between the two systems was important, even though it is completely rebuilt from scratch.

Magento 2 is a lot of the language and organization of data that is used is the same as what was on Magento 1. So we felt like there was going to be a little bit less of a learning curve with going with that platform versus if we jumped completely something new. And then finally, what was really important for me was making sure that there was a strong developer community around.

The software, eCommerce environment is always changing. The expectations of the customers are always changing and it seems like it's just accelerating the need for change every year it seems like there's just so much more to know and keep up with. So we really wanted to make sure that we were partnering with a software package that there was a lot of investment in its growth and that there was a developer community around it that was going to continue to thrive so that we would have flexibility as we went into the future.

You don't want to be stuck on a platform that's going nowhere, that's not adding up new features as they develop, that's not paying attention to the direction that the industry is going. And so we felt like with Magento that there's a really strong support community around it, that we were going to have options as we go into the future, we're going to be able to find developers who could help to steer us in the right direction and add the functionality we need as we discover it.

So then another one of the more critical pieces of the beginnings of this project is choosing a developer partner to help guide us through the migration. And there's a lot of different factors to consider when you're looking at a developer, who to pick. and I've tried to list all of those different factors here.

I hope that I've covered them all. First of all, you definitely want to find somebody who can communicate effectively. And second, it's really important that they can communicate really well. And third, it's just so important that they have really good communication skills. And I don't know if I mentioned this before, did I mention communication?

I think then I'm a little bit traumatized from previous projects and we've migrated pre before we had developer partners who just weren't responsive or when they did respond, it was really delayed, or it was a very vague response and it took several interactions back and forth to really get clear answers from them.

You know it's just so important to find a partner that you can depend upon to respond quickly, to be concise and clear and honest. And that's not always the easiest thing to find. And even when you were in the initial stages of interviewing a developer, it's tough to know what you're really going to get when you start the project, because everybody's on their best behavior when they're first being interviewed for the job right?

So everybody is responsive and doing all the right things, crossing the T's and dotting the I's. And you really don't know who you're working with until you sign on those papers and you start the project, but there are some clues and tips I think you can pick up on through that initial interview process that I think helps to give you an indication of what to expect later.

Obviously communication is not the only thing that is the most important thing for me, when we were choosing the developer, there were other factors as well. And most of those centered around the fact that we wanted to make sure that the partner we chose was going to be capable of pulling off the project.

We know that we offer a lot of complexity to what we were needing. And so it was important that we had someone who's really capable and who had experience with those types of complex projects before. So, one of the first things that we did was we reached out to Magento directly and got their recommendations. And we told them what we were needing, as far as the multisite, multi locations that we were wanting to integrate with Prophet 21.

They gave us a short, the list of developers that they were familiar with and comfortable recommending for that type of project. All of them were Magento certified and that was really the first checkbox that had to be checked off was that the developer had all of the credentials and was familiar with the software. And then second, we wanted to make sure that they were capable of the integration with Prophet 21. Were they familiar with that piece of software? Did they have the talent on staff to be able to understand it and integrate it with Magento?

And in previous projects, we've had to hire multiple developers, one for handling the integration part and then another to handle the frontend web development. And that can get messy. If you've got two and three developers working on the same project, when something doesn't work.

Everybody's first response is to say, Oh, it must be the other person's code that's creating the issue. So it was a really appealing idea for us to find a partner who could do everything from beginning to end, who understood the entire project, both the backend and the frontend parts of it and how they work together.

That's not an easy thing to find either. Another piece we wanted to look for was that the developer had experience with similar types of customers as us, other wholesale distributors doing B2B web interfaces. Have they dealt with doing multiple sites? Have they dealt with doing multiple sources of inventory?

Have they dealt with Prophet 21 before? Have they dealt with Magento before? Could we see similar types of projects in their history to us? So that was something that we looked for. And then of course, you can't go on Amazon and just read customer reviews of your developer. But there are sites out there, like Clutch where you can review coders and developers and programmers.

So we definitely checked those. And of course, with everybody that we were interviewing, we asked for references. And we interviewed those customers to see what their experience was like to see if it was similar to ours. And if they had any major issues

working with those developers. Now, obviously because I'm speaking today, you guys know that I did choose DCKAP as our partner for this project.

They really just checked all of those boxes that we were talking about. They came in with multiple Magento certifications. They were familiar with Prophet 21, having done that type of integration with Magento before. They had done similar projects as to what we were asking for previously, had similar types of customers to us and the reviews and the testimonials that we were able to find about DCKAP were all really positive, but more than anything else, their communication through that initial phase of investigation of different developers, everything was just top notch that really stood out in the fact that they provided feedback quickly, they were very responsive to our questions, they were clear about what they could do with limitations there might be for what we were looking for.

So I just can't say enough about all of that really was a good hint to how they were going to operate during the project. They really had great communication. And, I'm happy to say that as we've gotten into the project and now, gone through to completion with launch, that has held true throughout the entire process.

It did really come down to DCKAP and one other company, who also had high grades on all of these issues. They also had certifications and could do the integration, had similar customers, but one thing that really beyond all of this, that made DCKAP stand out for us was this piece of software called Cloras, which I do feel is a game changing piece of middleware that we're using to connect Magento with Prophet 21.

Now a lot of times when you do integrations between two systems, it's just a couple of APIs. It's a bunch of code. And if you're like me, maybe you're just a layman and you wouldn't understand what all that code means. The great thing about Cloras is it's a graphic interface that you log in and you can very easily see how the two systems connect together.

You can see that this field from P21 maps over to this field in Magento, and you can see the schedule for how often it's updating and you can see the direction. Does it update just from Prophet 21 to Magento or vice versa or do they update each other? And it's all customizable. So, I mean, it's a really fluid piece of software with an infinite number of integrations that you can create between two systems. And it's not just for those two pieces of software either it can integrate with other eCommerce platforms. It can integrate with other ERP systems.

I think it can integrate with Salesforce and HubSpot and other marketing types of systems as well. So there's a lot of functionality and ability with this software. And for us, it really stood out as a powerful piece to this project and was one of the big reasons why we decided to choose DCKAP as our partner and the other great thing about Cloras, it's got detailed logging, so it's very easy to see if something didn't work right or if you see

that an update and it happened when you expected it, you can go into those logs and pretty quickly find. What was the issue? Did you have some messy data? That's usually the case when you had bad data that didn't cost it to not update.

And, so you can find that and troubleshoot it pretty easily. So definitely if anybody was coming to me and was trying to go with through this same type of project, this is something I'd definitely recommend they take a strong look at. So beyond that developer being good at communication. It's really important for us that we were good communicators as well, particularly in the portion of the project, when you're defining the project scope, you've chosen your platform, you've chosen the developer you're going to work with.

Now. You've got to really explain to them everything that you're looking for in the project and, you know, a good developer partner. We'll guide you they'll ask the right questions as they know them to be, to try and step you through the process, but they're not going to know the nuances and the idiosyncrasies of your business.

And it's really the responsibility of the customer to communicate those to the developer. And we tried to over communicate our needs. I mean, just get really detailed. You can't communicate too much when it comes to this portion of the project, we tried to highlight the main priorities that were the most important to us.

Like I mentioned, at the beginning of the presentation, things like the performance of the ERP integration, working correctly the enhanced B2B functionality that we were looking for. And so they knew that those were the things we were going to be really measuring them on. But we also got really specific on things like design, we've got in house designer.

So we were able to put together mockups and hand them over to DCKAP. And they were very, we were very explicit about how we wanted the homepage and the product pages and the category pages to look. And they were able to match them almost exactly as DCKAP was. So that was terrific. And then for performance, we got very specific about the metrics we were looking for, what kind of page load times we were wanting.

I mean, we put numbers to give detailed expectations for them. And then also with functionality step-by-step processes of this is how we want the user experience to go and try not to miss or assume that DCKAP is going to know any piece of this.

Just really get specific on it. And that scope of work documents gotta be very detailed. It's hard to think of everything I would say that you're not going to, I know I didn't, but you try your best to cover all your base and again, just be very detailed about it when you sign off on it. Because later in the project, you want to avoid any surprises as much as possible.

And then one of the other things, once you're defining scope is you're going to be picking out what kind of integrations you're going to need to go along with the main web platform. I don't think there's an eCommerce site out there that can get by just out of the box.

Most everybody's going to need some sort of third party integration, even if it's just for shipping and payment, but, what you want to try and avoid is adding too many of those. I know there's a lot of really attractive integrations and extensions out there and you're like, Oh, that'd be neat to add to my site.

But, you start loading sites up with a bunch of those. And the next thing, you know, it's Frankenstein's website where you've got all these different pieces cobbled together to try and, and create the site that you want, but it ends up turning out to be a monster. And then your customers are charging after you with the torches and pitchforks.

And, we want to avoid that. So you don't want to have Frankenstein's website. You want to be very selective. What about the integrations that you're going to choose? Here are some of the main third party integrations we're using. We use ShipperHQ for a lot of our shipping functionality.

This is new to us and it's really been eye opening, the amount of functionality and options and how much we can enhance the user experience with that tool. We're using PayPal and PayFlow Pro for our payment integration. We've been using PayFlow Pro for many, many years. MailChimp has our email marketing tool, and then Trustpilot we use for our service and product ratings.

Then I've included a couple of developers of extensions down here, Amasty and Magefan. These are Magento extension developers that are really top notch. They've developed a lot of different extensions for Magento. Almost all of them are highly rated and that's the type of thing that you really want to look for with an extension developer, just like you would with a regular project developer.

Do they have high writings? Do they have good customer response? You can look at the Q&A, on a lot of these extensions pages to see are they responding to the customer questions? Are there regular updates of the extension? Is it live or has it been dormant for many months or years? You really want to try and only use extensions that are being made by reputable, certified developers, like Amasty and Magefan.

Another big piece of this project for us was it's a lesson I have to learn. Every time we get into a big project like this, and I try to be mindful of changing the way operations happen as a result of changes with the website. What I mean by that is that the website touches all aspects of the business, whether it be sales, customer, service, marketing, shipping, receiving, purchasing accounting, the things that you do and the choices you

make with it, the website, particularly when you're doing a big migration like this, it has ripple effects across the entire company.

So you change some piece of data, you change a process. You really need to test that change through to completion. It's not enough to just say, okay, we're changing this one field of piece of data on how orders are generated and it comes over to the ERP. So yeah, it works and that's not enough. You really need to see it, once it gets to the ERP.

How does that order process, how does your pick ticket look, when he goes to the warehouse, how does shipping have to deal with it? If you have to conduct a return on that order, what does that look like? Does the data affect any of those steps? Does it affect the daily or monthly accounting?

Yeah, I would love to say that I went into this project and our team thought of everything, but it's just not possible. But as you change these different pieces, from what they may have been previously, you just really want to test that through to completion.

One example would be like we have a field for the attribution of the sale of an order to a particular location. So let's say that we sold an item to a customer that's in Michigan and we would want to attribute that sale to our Michigan location, but at the time that they purchased it, maybe there weren't any in stock in Michigan. So it actually came out of Florida or something of that nature.

But that value that comes over to our system would be saying the sales is attributed to Michigan. So we had a session with our new sites where we neglected to inform DCKAP of how we wanted that data to come across, how we wanted those attributes, logic to work. And so everything was basically getting attributed to our Michigan locations.

They had a really good sales month in August. They looked great, but obviously that's not how we wanted to go. And it affected purchasing because now they're looking at the numbers and saying, well, we had this huge spike in sales in Michigan, and do reorder based on that it affected the accounting.

And so these are the things that just a small change for your web can make a big impact on the rest of the company. Some other operational changes that we made include, like we added PayPal express payments that wasn't something we had offered before we used to PayFlow Pro for our credit card processing, but never accepted PayPal payments before.

And you know, that created the situation where we had to adjust and add additional administrative tasks to be able to capture those funds and balance at the end of every day that we hadn't had to do previously, the process is different for those payments than it was for our regular credit card processing.

So it required creating a new process internally. We also added the new B2B customer management functionality on the side so that our wholesale customers would be able to add multiple users. Then they can remove them and set permissions and so fourth, and we realized quickly that was something we were going to need to educate those customers about really one-on-one.

Our customer base is not necessarily the most savvy of computer users that definitely excel in Marine mechanics, but they're not always the best on a keyboard and screen. So a lot of times you're trying to educate that customer on how to use this new functionality and make their account really work the best way possible over the phone.

So that was a challenge. We added regional delivery options. We'd had delivery options before, but we had never really offered them through the site. So that's a new aspect. And we had to make sure that we were prepared for how that order looks when it comes across from the site to our warehouses.

Thanks to ShipperHQ, we were able to add estimated delivery dates at checkout for our customers, which is a great improvement in the experience, but it also sets an expectation level for our customers and we accept back orders. So that kind of throws a wrinkle into that. And we had to make some adjustments to make sure that we weren't setting unreal expectations for our customers.

We were able to improve the shipping rate estimates again, thanks to ShipperHQ [00:34:00] that much more accurate estimates of shipping rates. We were also able to add a requisition or quick order form for our B2B customers, which is new because a lot of B2B customers already know what they want.

They know the part numbers, they don't need to do any kind of shopping experience where they're browsing around or clicking through categories. They can just open up a form, put in their part numbers and quantities and hit, submit and be done. And so, we wanted to give them that kind of functionality. And then just more integration with the ERP against one of our main goals for the project.

So more tight and integration of customer data, order data, product data. And so when you're pushing all that data around, you have to be really careful that it's correct, and it's going in the right fields, because if you do it again correctly, it could again have that ripple effect that affects beyond just the website.

I'll give another example of how an operational change can have some unintended consequences. So we're using ShipperHQ now, and I'm able to get more accurate rates, which is great and able to provide estimated delivery times, which again, great. These are two things that improve the user experience. This is what we're going for.

We want to continue to improve the user experience. The unintended consequence of this is that FedEx became a much more attractive option at checkout. The rights for FedEx ground are usually better than UPS ground for us. And also because the estimated delivery times, you know, FedEx delivers on Saturdays.

So particularly for orders that were later in the week our customers are seeing estimated delivery with FedEx. That's much quicker than UPS. These two things combined to make FedEx just a much more attractive option. Suddenly after launch, we see this huge spike in the number of orders we're processing using FedEx as the shipping method.

Previously UPS had been our main shipping method that most customers choose. So this was new to us. Where are our shipping departments prepared? No, not really. This was a surprise. You know, in each warehouse we've got areas designated for, we stage our UPS packages and where we stage FedEx packages.

All of the sudden the FedEx area isn't nearly as big enough as it needs to be. So we've got to do some thinking and rearrange, how are our staging areas or our design so that we have enough room for FedEx packages. Additionally, the processing of FedEx orders is a little bit more manual than ups has a couple of extra steps.

And again, so now you're slowing down the shipping department from what they were used to where it was a much quicker processing for a lot of packages. Now there's a number of packages that have that longer process. So again, we're in the busy part of our season in the summer, and that was a challenge.

And then, you know, even FedEx drivers were not prepared and were affected to buy this because all of a sudden these drivers are showing up every day and picking up three times as many packages as they were previously. Do they have room on the truck? You know, those are the questions that we didn't know.

We were going to have to ask when we started this, you know, all we wanted to do was just provide a better experience for our kids, customers at checkout, who knew that these types of ripples were going to happen. And again, that's why I say you really try to the best of your ability to test that through, to completion.

What does it look like when and anticipate what might happen when you make these changes smothered the challenges that we've run into with this project. And I think every web development project is probably run into this first one, which is the changing timeline. I can't name a web project ever that finished on time.

If you have ever been a part of one, then you should be the one giving the speech, not me, but you know, it's something that we try to stick to as best we could. We started to put this project together summer and fall, and we really were targeting April was our launch date, because as you can imagine, the boating season, this is busiest.

During the summer, June, July, August are just peak times. We wanted to try and launch before we got to that season. And it just wasn't something we were able to pull off. I mean, it was going to be a tight window to begin with, but then the pandemic happened. And again, one of those things in 2019. We couldn't have predicted, so that slowed down our operations.

It slowed down the ability of DCKAP to work on the project though. I will give them kudos. They were able to recover quickly. There were lockdowns in India where a lot of their developers are. That slowed things down, but they were able to facilitate remote working for their developers and get the project moving forward very quickly.

And that it wasn't too much of a speed bump and again, and for us as well, we had to navigate that during the April may timeframe and it slowed down the projects. So again, now we're having to do the launch during the busy season, because again, we have that deadline of Magento one end of life in June.

And so I would have loved to push this off to the winter when we were slower. It just wasn't a reasonable thing to do. So we had to navigate launch when we were at our busiest time, when the most eyes were honest, when the most customers were coming to us. So any issues just going to be amplified by 10 because of the amount of customers that we're dealing with during that time, another issue that we're still grappling with though, I think it's going to get better is the way we handle order allocation through our multiple warehouses.

Obviously we want to ship in the most efficient way possible that can become a pretty complex algorithm, particularly with us because we throw a lot of wacky stuff at DCKAP to try and make this work, including we allow ordering of out-of-stock items. we allow orders to be split into multiple shipments from multiple locations, just depending on where we have it in stock.

So particularly on the B2B side, when a customer can build a cart, that's 15, 20, 25 items long that can become a really cumbersome algorithm to try and figure out, and it can slow down that checkout process. So we're working through that issue to see how we can improve and make that a more efficient allocation of the order.

Another challenge for us is handling B2B customer pricing. Not every customer gets the same price on our B2B website. There are different levels. There are tiers certain customer segments make it a special price on certain brands, but then the standard price on other brands. So it's pretty complicated.

It's really had us. Go back to the drawing board and say, are we doing this right? Maybe we should rethink our whole pricing structure and make it simpler. And I think that's probably an approach we're going to take in order to navigate this challenge. And then,

as I mentioned before, just the challenge of educating and engaging our B2B customer, helping them to understand how the new site works.

I mean, it's a pretty intuitive and prototypical eCommerce experience for the most part, but that B2B part of it is different and not all customers are going to. Pick up on it right away. So taking the time to do that one on one education with them educating our sales force so that they can go out and work with the customer and help them to understand how it works.

It is important as well. And then another big challenge. And I think this is probably a pretty common one for a lot of companies. This is just dealing with messy data and we've been in business for over 40 years. And we've got, you know, a lot of data that we've collected, whether it be product or custom over the years.

And maybe we haven't always put it in the right spot or been consistent with how it's been entered and that can lead to issues, particularly when you're pushing around, pushing it to the website, you're setting up operations to depend on certain values. It's really important to try and get it consistent.

And, you know, you've got a company of X amount of people we've got 60 employees and everybody is maybe doing something the way they see to do it, and can mean 60 different variations of how that data is entered. So standardizing and making your data consistent is a really important thing to ensure that you don't run into issues later.

I read Amazon recently called it data hygiene. And I think that's a really good term for it. You really want to try and clean it up and make it consistent as much as possible. And another one of the big things to address those challenges. And I've mentioned it before and I wanted to mention it again is just the communication piece, communicate, and then communicate some more with that developer with your partners, then the project.

DCKAP was really great. They set up weekly communication calls with us every day. At the same day, every week, the same time every week, we were on a call with DCKAP, where they were able to go over what they had been working over for the previous week, what they had planned for the coming week, what they were going to be working on is an opportunity for them to ask questions, to share their screen and demonstrate different things to us and work through any issues that were coming up.

And there was a representative from Magento on the calls each week as well. So he was a resource for us to be able to ask technical questions and make sure that we were doing things to their standards and exercising best practices. We used a couple of communication tools as well throughout the project that were really valued base camp initially.

And then once we got into the testing phase of the project, we used Trello, which you have, if you haven't used it, it's a really nifty tool for, um, Basically just managing multiple tickets and we can move them around into different statuses. It's just a nice project management type of tool that we found very valuable.

And we're still continuing to use it after launch, as we addressed, you know, things that we see come up or, or it. Things that we want to implement. And then I know it's kind of an old technology, but screen captures were so valuable throughout the project, just to help in communicating what you're looking at, what you're wanting and particularly in testing, uh, you know, I'm of the philosophy that you get.

A lot of people involved in testing from, uh, all over the company. Uh, because, you know, again, the website is touching all kinds of jobs within the company. So getting those people involved to check out the processes that affect them and teaching them all how to do screen captures and making notes on those screenshot captures was really valuable, speeding up communication to help DCKAP understand what we were looking at.

You know, it seems basic, but it was just, it was really important for us. And the final thing I'll just say with our project that was really important was to measure results. You spend a lot of money on a platform migration. I spend a lot of time, a lot of effort, a lot of brain cells. And it's important that you're getting something for that.

We didn't want it to just be a lateral move because Magento one was, uh, nearing the end of life. And we had to make a move. We wanted to get something out of this. So, you know, for me, conversion rate is like the ultimate metric that really tells you whether your new website is performing better or worse than the old one, because it's no matter how big the audience it's telling you what that experience is like for the customer.

Are they? I'm converting to an order, which is ultimately what you want to see. Right? So I'm happy to report with our new sites. We've been launched for about five or six weeks. Now, conversion rate is up anywhere from 2535%, depending on the day, a week, uh, which is really exciting. And another thing that we're measuring was the page load times and that was one of our key priorities that we wanted to tackle with this project.

I'm happy to report that we've got page load times that we're up to 50% faster than our old sites. Again, I think a lot of that has to do with getting rid of a lot of those extensions, having the native features of Magento to, um, to do what we're wanting it to do in terms of the user experience.

And the bounce rate is lower by about 15% for our new sites, which is great. Bounce rate can be a feet sticking metric to measure by, it can be missed, but I'm in Texas taking it in context with some of these other things that we're seeing. And I think you can see it's a positive one.

And then the average session, time again, taken on its own. It may not tell you much. I mean, if, if session times are up, that could mean that the customers are struggling to find what they want or do. Do whatever action they're trying to do. But in this case, when you compare it with also conversion rate page, load times, and that sort of thing, I believe that this is a positive metric for us, that the sessions are lasting about 50% longer than they were on the old sites.

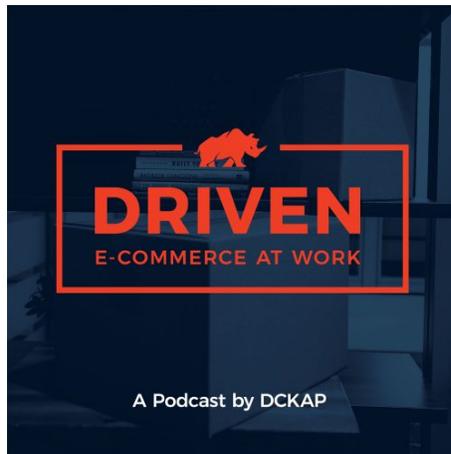
So all really good results. And, um, You know, we're excited about just how seamless this transition has been from our old sites to the new ones. And we're excited for the platform that we have and the partner that we have. We feel like there's a lot of opportunity to continue to grow as anybody who's been through a web migration will know it's never done. There's never a finish line.

You're continuing to be revising and improving to try and meet whatever new customer expectations there are. That's really all I have. And I appreciate all of you signing up and listening to the presentation. if you've got any questions, feel free to reach out to me on LinkedIn, or you can email me directly at ryanvanhoozer at marysvillemarine dot com I've enjoyed talking with you guys and, um, again, feel free to reach out to me. Be happy to discuss any of the questions that you have about the presentation with that.

**Shiva:**

All right. That was a great presentation from Ryan about their digital transformation journey. Thank you so much for listening to this episode of driven e commerce at work podcast. I hope you all enjoyed this episode. And this show is brought to you by DCKAP, the company well known for its eCommerce product suits for b2b distributors.

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