



Salt and Pepper

Monmouth-based highstreet retailer with a network of shops and an e-commerce platform

50% Time-Saving Achieved by Redesigning Content Management System

Evergreen's time-saving recipe enhances Salt and Pepper Cookshop's online presence

Monmouth, UK-based cook shop Salt and Pepper started business in 2000, stocking everything from, to quote founder Brenda Elmore, 'teaspoons to Kitchen Aid food mixers'. As the business grew, an e-commerce website became a key complement to a growing network of shops.

However, the limitations of the original website eventually prompted Salt and Pepper to look for a new online partner. Evergreen, based just across the Severn Estuary in Gloucestershire, took up the baton – or perhaps more appropriately, 'donned the metaphorical chef's whites' and embarked on what has become a long-running partnership with the retailers. Alison Williams, Salt and Pepper's online marketing manager, shares the secret ingredients for the 11-year partnership's success...

'When we first took the business online,' she explains, 'we went with a local web design company. In hindsight, they were definitely stronger on design, rather than databases and content management systems. It speaks volumes for their original design that we've retained this, even after a decade working with Evergreen on the website's administrative back-end.'

Positive initial impressions

Appropriately enough, Salt and Pepper found Evergreen online: 'We were looking for another small company to work with – we like small companies like ours. They were one of several firms that we approached. What stood out was their willingness to work with what we had, particularly the site's visual design. Other businesses tried shoehorning us into their solution. What really impressed when we met Andrew [Cope] was his understanding of our needs and constraints as a small business – not least with budget.'

Changing with an evolving business

Salt and Pepper (a multiple 'Gift Shop of The Year' winner in Wales) – and its website – has changed enormously as a mini-empire of shops including a coffee shop has evolved.

Alison Williams again: 'Since going live for Christmas 2007, like many SMEs, we constantly juggle the importance of a good website with the fact that it isn't always our top investment priority. Evergreen understands this and works with us – they also respect our knowledge of the business and what we need.'

The partnership began with Evergreen taking over the original, established, website design. 'It wasn't a standard e-commerce set-up,' says Williams.

'Evergreen had to work around a site that, from a back-end content management perspective, had evolved with various bolt-on add-ons. It wasn't easy to add products, general maintenance was difficult, and it was just, well, clunky. We weren't running a recognised off-the-shelf content management system (CMS) because Evergreen's predecessor's strength was in design, rather than e-commerce practicality; therefore, Andrew's team had its work cut out.'

Time for a new CMS

Later, in 2017, Evergreen's earlier work put them in a strong position to give Salt and Pepper a completely new CMS.

'We got to where we knew we had to bite the bullet,' says Alison. 'The original CMS was an over-complex hotchpotch of multiple screens, order and customer systems that didn't relate. As a matter of sound commercial practice, we approached several prospective suppliers as well as asking Evergreen to pitch. Their biggest advantage was knowing us and our systems.'

What's more, unlike some of our suitors, they didn't try selling us something that they thought was right, even when it differed from what I, the manager who'd worked with the site for a decade, said I needed.'

Huge admin time savings

So, nearly a decade after entering Salt and Pepper's world, Evergreen landed the complete redesign of the CMS. Their solution was based on a proven, auto-secured, framework with custom-built libraries and WorldPay integration – and substantial import of legacy data. How much did Evergreen's input change Alison's life as website manager?

'Time-saving has been the biggest benefit,' she explains, 'easily by 50 per cent. That's incredibly important given that the website is only one of my responsibilities.'

According to Alison, the new CMS is 'a smooth, intuitive, fluid, easy-to-use tool'. It allows her to focus on how she's using the technology for the business, not on its foibles.

'It's like going from a car that needs a starting handle, to one with an electric pushbutton starter. The transformation really was that noticeable.'

As ever, we ask about teething troubles, about the web development equivalents of getting a new kitchen working just as you want it to be. Were there hiccups or glitches?

No major teething troubles

'Nothing major,' says Alison. 'The new CMS isn't linked to our stock control system and we had a minor issue getting our established intermediary program to 'play nicely' with it. Once mentioned, Martin and Luke quickly and efficiently applied fixes. Apart from that, we had a few minor hitches, for instance with imperfectly aligned PDFs, or the odd database glitch that pulls data from a wrong field. Again, these were quickly put right.'

Talking with Alison, it's clear that she and her colleagues over in Monmouth are delighted with the new CMS and Evergreen's ongoing support.

'They've learned what we need and I know what Martin needs from me. Then, it's just a quick call or email and occasional issues are sorted.'

When asked if website visitors comment positively on the site, Alison is quick to point out that what most people see is the design that's remained generally unchanged for years.

'Evergreen's input is most apparent to us,' she says. 'Site visitors see the design. But, quite rightly, they take a smooth, trouble-free buying experience for granted. That's what Evergreen, not least with the new CMS, delivers. It's not something most visitors would even consider. That reflects the quality of Evergreen's work.'

The CMS is the 'Wow!' moment

Asked whether there was a single stand out moment in the relationship, Alison thinks carefully, then declares that the 'Wow!' moment was when she realised what a difference the new CMS made. 'Evergreen's CMS was so intuitive and smooth-working, and it constantly surprises you in good ways, when a function that you need, or a time-saving link is just there when you need it. That is the mark of a professional web development business. The 'Wow!' factor is the whole CMS and the effect it has had on my work.'

Have Alison and her Salt and Pepper colleagues been able to recommend Evergreen to anyone else?

'Not yet, but that's no reflection on Evergreen. When the opportunity arises, we'll do so without hesitation. Evergreen is a company that works for its customer, and with its customer, to enhance their business. What they have provided goes to the heart of our online presence – and my ability to work more effectively. In turn, that benefits our retail customers and gives them a great experience. Increasingly, it prompts them to visit us in Monmouth as well as just buying online.'

Vital to the Salt and Pepper experience

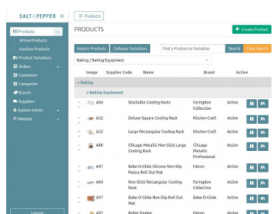
Whether the website encourages Salt and Pepper's customers to buy online, or visit the company's stores and coffee shop in Monmouth, Evergreen has played a key role in their experience. And, by saving Alison Williams so much time, they may even have made it easier for her to take a break and enjoy a cup of Salt and Pepper's acclaimed coffee.

Click here to visit
www.saltandpepper.co.uk

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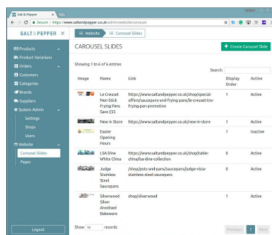
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