



PowerReviews Helps Supercharge Building Materials Supplier Home Outlet's D2C Ecommerce Transformation

Retailer praises PowerReviews partnership as “truly the best after-sale relationship with any vendor”

Learn more at
powerreviews.com



About the company

Home Outlet is a building materials supplier that began its existence in 1885 as a general store selling lumber. Today, the company offers quality home improvement products at the guaranteed lowest price through its fleet of more than 100 brick & mortar retail outlets under the Home Outlet and Barton's Lumber with locations in 17 states from upstate New York to south Texas.



Renovating ecommerce

In business for 135 years, Home Outlet spurred its own retail renovation when it launched its Home Outlet ecommerce operation in 2018. The timing of the launch was ideal, positioning the company well as the COVID-19 pandemic took hold of the nation in 2020 and sheltering-in-place consumers ramped up their home renovation projects.

Working with PowerReviews, the company has been able to source user-generated content to showcase real-world consumer product experiences, which gives potential buyers greater confidence in their buying decisions.

This infusion of user-generated content, in combination with COVID's impact on shifting buying behaviors, has helped boost the company's online business; this year, the company expects to achieve a major milestone – the doubling of its ecommerce business year-over-year.

Highlights

The company:

Home Outlet

Industry:

Building materials

Challenge:

Expand ecommerce presence and grow consumer base.

Solution:

Incorporate UGC to enhance the customer experience through display of authentic customer feedback and images on product pages, and leverage insights to boost buyer confidence.

The Opportunity

In the Spring of 2020, home improvement retail outlets – while deemed “essential retailers” – were not immune from COVID constraints. Manufacturing shortages, supply chain disruptions, and shipping delays all made finding raw materials for home renovation projects challenging. Store shopper capacity limitations further complicated matters.



Fortunately, Home Outlet had made a series of smart moves to put a solid ecommerce foundation in place to respond to these challenges digitally. Its ecommerce operation enabled shoppers to research products, check inventory, make purchases and even reserve inventory for pick up weeks later in the store – enabling customers to continue to obtain all the tools and materials they needed for their home projects even in the midst of a global pandemic.

As part of this transition, the company had made an investment in a ratings and reviews program (powered by PowerReviews), with the goal of enhancing the customer experience through display of authentic customer feedback and images on its online building supply product pages.

“We have a very small ecommerce team,” said Jeffrey Chastain, Head of Ecommerce at Home Outlet. “Our goal was to crowdsource answers to questions that customer have and showcase the real-world shared experiences of our consumers – which in turn gives potential buyers far more confidence in making purchasing decisions. Adding this content is quick and inexpensive for us, removing the onus on our small team.

“We looked at several ratings and reviews vendors and polled our third-party website developer –who has an impressive roster of clients – and he recommended PowerReviews. **When we talked to PowerReviews, we got every answer we wanted and have found the solution easy to implement and maintain,**” he said.

Best Practice Recommendations Lead to More Reviews

Home Outlet went live with PowerReviews in January 2020. Following launch, the company was able to collect 195 reviews in the first 7 months with an average rating of 4.47 stars. By proactively sending customers emails post-purchase to solicit reviews, Home Outlet was able to add 151 reviews to the tally.



“PowerReviews reporting shows us exactly the level of interactions with user generated reviews and imagery, so we can see it absolutely is having a positive impact. I appreciate how the PowerReviews’ customer success team is always passing along best practices and recommendations to improve – almost always at no additional cost,” said Chastain. “We saw an immediate increase in the number of reviews coming in as a result of these recommendations, which has continued to enhance our return on investment.”

One of the recommendations was to offer reviewers entry into a sweepstakes to generate more review content in a cost-effective way. Sweepstakes are proven to improve review generation by up to 100% and PowerReviews makes the process of sweepstakes implementation easy; all PowerReviews customers are able to use the \$1,000 PowerReviews Sweepstakes program to incentivize customers (i.e. one prize for all participants from all brands and retailers). The cost is covered by PowerReviews and the prize is refreshed every six weeks. “We gave the sweepstakes a go and we love it,” said Chastain.



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JEFF CHASTAIN

ECOMMERCE COORDINATOR,
HOME OUTLET
(E.C. BARTON & COMPANY)

User-Generated Content Helping Propel Company Growth

At Home Outlet, user generated content is driving the entire business forward.



All 1-star and 5-star reviews are passed along to the company's Marketing, Customer Service and Purchasing teams. Highly-rated products are promoted in marketing communications, while poor reviews are evaluated to determine the root cause of dissatisfaction with the experience – such as a lack of consumer understanding about proper implementation, which may offer an opportunity to educate a frustrated customer, or to have them return the product for a refund.

If multiple reviews indicate a product doesn't meet customers' standards or expectations, the company's Purchasing department investigates and/or may opt to drop the product from the purchasing schedule.

By leveraging insights from user generated content, the company can safeguard customer and product satisfaction – key to supporting revenue growth. The combination of COVID influencing shifting buying behaviors and the addition of ratings and reviews is helping build the company's online business; this year the company expects to achieve a major milestone – the doubling of its online business year-over-year.

“We Have Not Had a Single Moment Where We Were Not Happy”

“Set up and implementation was flawless. We have no complaints whatsoever. In fact, we have not had a single moment where we were not happy,” said Chastain. “Support emails are answered rapidly and periodic follow-ups ensure we are getting the most bang for our buck. The whole team is vested in the stability of the platform when it comes to my experience. That’s what makes PowerReviews different.”



Moving forward, Home Outlet will work to implement SMS review collection. This was a PowerReviews recommendation since the company’s data shows that 63% of Home Outlet shoppers have used a mobile device to write a review. SMS is a powerful review collection method industry-wide, with **PowerReviews best practice methods resulting in a 98% open rate and a 45% conversion rate.**

As well, the company plans to implement PowerReviews’ Q&A software, which enables brands to showcase consumers’ frequently asked questions and answers right at the point of purchase. This function has been found to significantly increase conversion and drive traffic to product pages. On average, when a product goes from displaying 0 answers to at least one answer, brands and retailers see an **88% lift in traffic, and an 82% lift in conversion for that product.**

“We chose wisely. The relationship we have with PowerReviews feels very personal. I have a team I can rely on and this empowers us to allocate our internal resources to other areas of the business. We will be customers for a very long time.”



Working in Lockstep with Home Outlet to Bolster Success

“I’ve been elated with the level of service PowerReviews provides. Nothing I do in a normal working day is easy, except for working with the PowerReviews product and team,” said Chastain. “This is truly the best after-the-sale relationship I’ve had with any vendor.”

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