



Couple's Cookie Business on Track for a Quarter Million Dollars in 2011 Revenue

Founded in 2001, Karen's Cookies is an educational website about making and decorating cookies that doubles as an online store for cookie-making resources and tools. Based in Idaho Falls, Idaho, Karen and Mike Summers started Karen's Cookies in order to help novice and experienced cookie-makers out with tips, how-tos and other resources. After the site expanded to sell cookie-making kits, Karen's Cookies quickly became a one-stop shop for all things cookie-making.

Home-Grown Idaho Cookie Shop Seeks Stronger Shopping Cart

Mike Summers has worked as a web developer for his entire professional life. Seven years ago, Mike decided to start his own web development business. Around the same time, his wife Karen, a professional cake and cookie decorator, began to gain a large following on her website, a community for sharing resources related to cookie decorating. In 2007, the success of Karen's Cookies led Karen to start selling cookie decorating kits. To help supplement the business, Mike integrated CubeCart, a PHP-based self-install shopping cart, into the website.

"We were only getting about 1 or 2 sales a day, and we were only selling about 12 items total, so CubeCart seemed like a solid and inexpensive choice at the time," Mike remarks. "It was when we started getting a grocery list of requests from customers to carry more items that I decided the system wasn't cut out to handle our traffic."

"We had three main criteria for our new shopping cart," Mike elaborates. "The first criterion was a shopping cart that could integrate phone orders into the system easily. The searchability of the site was another crucial issue; because Karen's Cookies is stuffed with so much content, we needed a search feature that would crawl content in addition to products. Finally, we needed an extra element of professionalism. A shopping cart software that was hosted and offered reliable support resources would represent our final criterion."

Mike began an in-depth internet search, sifting through hundreds of product reviews to find a dynamic solution. The turning point came in September 2009, when Woman's Day Magazine approached Karen's Cookies about featuring some of the small shop's resources in their Christmas cookie issue. It was clear to Mike that their current shopping cart would not be able to handle the traffic, so he started searching for a new solution.

New Shopping Cart Helps Karen's Cookies Open Brick-and-Mortar Store

Mike's list eventually whittled down to three major ecommerce suites, among them 3dcart, a comprehensive shopping cart solution. "3dcart gave users the ability to post both positive and negative reviews of the software in an open, branded forum, and even though the reviews were overwhelmingly positive, that kind of transparency really set the company off from the competition," Mike claims.

After downloading a free one-month trial, Mike set to work configuring the software. 3dcart's out-of-the-box setup gave him the ability to customize quickly and easily without losing any design cues from the original website. On the backend, he was able to import all his data in a matter of hours—a task that would have taken much longer if he had to input everything manually.

"Phone orders were simple to integrate, the searchability was there and support and hosting through 3dcart are excellent," Mike says. "It fulfilled our basic criteria and was extremely feature-rich, giving us the ability to add features to our own storefront as we explored them."

Shortly after switching to 3dcart, the business (previously based out the couple's basement) expanded into a warehouse.

To bolster their brand in the community and supplement costs, Karen's cookies opened a brick-and-mortar shop out of the new facility. Business was going so well that Mike closed his successful web development company to focus on Karen's Cookies full-time.

The screenshot displays the Karen's Cookies website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for 'Cookie Cutters', 'Sugar Cookie Decorating', 'Cookie Decorating Ideas & Resources', 'Cut-out Cookie Recipes', 'Instruction, Tips & Tutorials', and 'Decorate Cookies Like a Pro'. A search bar is on the left, and customer service information (1-800-934-3997) is on the right. The main header features a sunflower logo and the text 'Karen's Cookies COOKIE DECORATING Simplified'. Below the header is a navigation menu with links for 'Shop Store', 'Tutorials', 'Videos', 'Recipes', 'Community', 'Ideas', 'F.A.Q.', 'About Us', and 'Español'. The main content area includes a 'Shopping Cart' section with a total of \$0.00, a 'Got a Question?' section, and a 'Shop our Online Store!' section with a shopping cart icon. There are several promotional banners: one for '\$6.95 FLAT RATE SHIPPING ON U.S. ORDERS OVER \$50', another for 'FREE SHIPPING ON U.S. ORDERS OVER \$75', and a 'NEW! see our latest products' banner. A 'Join the Cookie Community' banner is also present. The bottom section features a 'check out NEW Karen's Cookie Blog' banner and a 'We love our customers!' section with a testimonial from Karen.

Karen's Cookies Does More than \$30,000 in March 2011 Sales

According to Mike, Karen's Cookies averaged \$3-5 thousand in sales prior to switching to 3dcart. In 2010, the business averaged \$14-15 thousand monthly. In March 2011, Karen's Cookies did more than \$30,000 in sales. "That's just plain old March—no major holidays or anything—so we're hopeful for the rest of the year." He says that Karen's Cookies is projected to bring in around a quarter million dollars in sales for 2011.

Perhaps the 3dcart's biggest validation for Mike is the comparison of "average sale per customer" statistics. With 3dcart, Karen's Cookies averages nearly \$12 more per sale.

3dcart's support team has been a huge asset for Mike. He says that he's rarely farther back than third in queue, and he has never had to wait more than ten minutes to get someone on the line. In addition to support, Mike claims that SEO for the business improved tremendously with 3dcart.

"SEO definitely requires some work on the part of the business, but between 3dcart's built-in modules and our organic work, we are currently the first search result for the phrase 'cookie decorating,'" Mike elaborates.

On the backend, Mike says the analytics have been extremely helpful in growing the business. 3dcart's customer profiling helps ease the burdens of customer relationship management. Uploading product information in bulk is a snap. The "waiting list" feature notifies customers interested in an out-of-stock product when the product is back in stock.

Between 3dcart's newsletter tool and promotions manager, marketing has been a snap for Karen's Cookies. "Beyond the traditional use of promotions and coupons, we're able to make simple exceptions for bulk orders, even though we're not a wholesaler," he says.

"All we have to do is give the customer a coupon code, and they're able to take advantage of bulk discounts. It saves a lot of time around inputting new product information for a one-time sale."

Shipping can be a hassle for a small shop, but 3dcart's integration with Endicia puts everything at Mike and Karen's fingertips. "We do daily international business, so we need to have a robust shipping solution. 3dcart truly combines everything a small shop could need into a comprehensive, cost-effective package," Mike says.

About 3dcart

3dcart (<http://www.3dcart.com>), located in Tamarac, Florida, is a complete ecommerce software solution for merchants to build, promote and grow their online business. The company's services include the tools, advice, support, and technology to manage an entire online operation. Since 1997, 3DCart has been developing internet solutions for small to medium size businesses. Today, 3dcart is an Inc. 5000 company, a Visa PCI Certified provider and a pioneer in Mobile Commerce and Social Marketing.

