



UK Plumbing Supplies Distributor Grows from One-Man Band to Projected £15 Million Revenue in 2012

For more than 20 years, TradePlumbing has provided high-quality bathroom and kitchen plumbing and heating products for the UK market. Based in Essex, the company also runs brick-and-mortar locations and a series of specialized websites that offer more targeted plumbing products like hot water cylinders, heated towel rails warmers, combi boilers, designer bathroom hardware and more.

From Ad-Hoc, Third-Party Sales to His Own Company Website

Peter Clayton, owner of TradePlumbing, learned the tricks of the plumbing hardware distribution business from his father, who owns several brick-and-mortar stores in the UK. About eight years ago, he decided to take some of the business online to take advantage of the growing need for niche web stores.

Initially, the company got off the ground with a small shopping cart software and switched to Yahoo! Auctions when they started needing more functionality. Soon after, Yahoo! Auctions was bought out by eBay, and Clayton decided his company would need to set up their own custom-built website to support increased traffic.

"We needed a shopping cart that would give us enough tools and features to run a small one-person shop as efficiently as possible," remarks Clayton. "From the beginning, we were drop-shipping most of our stock instead of storing it onsite, so we would need flexible shipping functionality. Scalability was another key factor; I wanted to grow the business organically, and that would require the ability to level-up as we continued to grow."

Clayton wouldn't have to look long; an old business relationship would eventually lead him to the shopping cart he needed and a strong friendship that's lasted through the years.

Overseas Partnership Sets TradePlumbing Up for Success

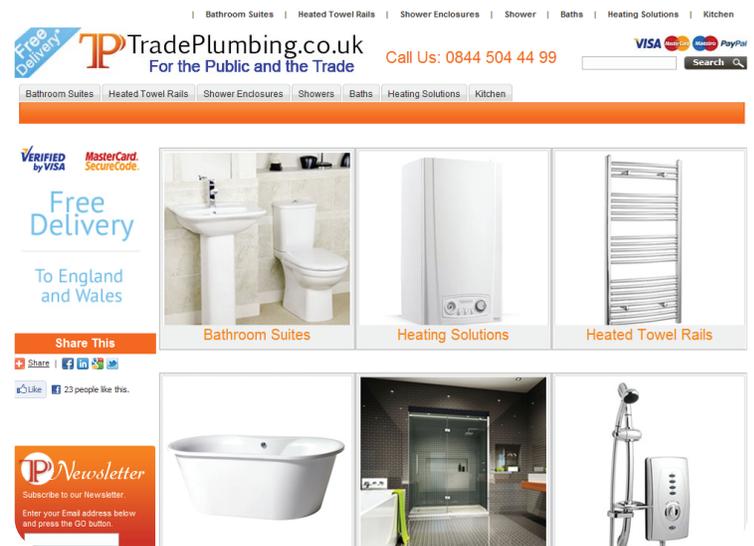
The initial shopping cart TradePlumbing had used was created by Gonzalo Gil, and while Clayton had been busy building his business, Gil had spent countless hours on his own project: 3dcart, a comprehensive shopping cart software suite. "We'd looked at osCommerce, but it just wasn't built out well enough at that point in the company's existence," Clayton says.

"3dcart was on the up-and-up. Gonzalo and the 3dcart team were more than willing to work with us on special modules to handle some of our more complicated international tax issues—and that kind of flexibility was a big selling point for us."

The time difference between the UK-based TradePlumbing and US-based 3dcart proved difficult at first—but 3dcart's growing presence overseas eventually led the company to open up a 24/7 phone support line that helped facilitate collaboration between the two companies.

As the business grew, Clayton discovered the need for an in-house developer to enhance how his business worked online. 3dcart's customizability would empower Clayton's development team to work into the code and make changes that would help them optimize the platform for their industry.

In 2007, TradePlumbing brought in enough revenue that Clayton decided it was time to shift the company's focus from drop shipping to bringing in his own stock of products. The move led the business to open its first brick-and-mortar location in the UK.



TradePlumbing Tops £2 Million, Plans for £15 Million in 2012

It wasn't long before Clayton's business was booming. "After we expanded our staff to four people, we ended up logging more than £2 million revenue in a single year," Clayton says. "Now, we have a staff of 12 people and the potential to make leaps and bounds more revenue over the course of this year."

Managing nearly a hundred different sites effectively with a small team requires deep analytical insight into how each of the sites is performing. Clayton points to the fact that 3dcart's reporting capabilities are so extensive that they get a lot of the functionality of an expensive enterprise business intelligence system in an inexpensive shopping cart platform.

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.

But Clayton's positive experience with 3dcart extends beyond the numbers. He's built personal relationships with members of the 3dcart team that have lasted through the years. 3dcart is the kind of company that cares about its customers, and that speaks volumes in a market where the majority of shopping cart providers don't even offer 24/7 support," Clayton says. "They're the sort of company you can rely on."

With 3dcart, Clayton mentions that he started as "one man in a spare room" and grew to a twelve-person operation with the potential to do £15 million worth of business in 2012. 3dcart was one of the main driving forces that helped me create a business and a livelihood, and you can't put a price on that."