



Glendale Heights, IL
Direct Sales
Home Decorating Products

Geographic Area Served
The US and Canada

Overall Challenge

All Signature Homestyles orders were processed by hand on paper, requiring two full-time shifts to accommodate sales. Homestyles asked Thatcher Technology Group to find a way to streamline orders to allow for growth and reduce staff, without alienating their sales force.

Sales Force Challenges

- Representative computer literacy needed.
- Possible representative pushback due to change.
- Sales team may perceive that it would be more work keying in orders versus writing them and dropping them in the mail.
- Perception that there may be less flexibility in promotions as sales team would have to live within the bounds of what was programmed.

Sales Force Solutions

- Mitigated risk by rolling out to a mixture of computer literate and computer illiterate representatives initially to assess ease of use.
- No pushback because order turnaround time was cut in half, so sales team was able to service customers faster and with more accuracy.
- Sales consultants know if they qualify for promotional items, discounts, host benefits prior to submission of orders.

Sales Force Embraces New Online Ordering Technology That Saves Time and Money at Signature Homestyles

Client Challenge

Until 2002, all Signature Homestyles' orders were mailed to the home office by their sales team members. In addition, all credit card orders were processed by hand. Order processing required Signature Homestyles to have two full-time shifts of order processors to accommodate their sales. Signature Homestyles' challenge to Thatcher Technology Group was to create a way to streamline order receipt and minimize handling of those orders, while looking for a solution to allow growth using technology so staffing could be reduced.

Thatcher Technology Solution

Thatcher Technology Group created an online order entry system that utilized the internet and created processes to automatically calculate and streamline the sales process. Thatcher Technology programmed with Microsoft architecture, including Commerce Server as the foundation for the new Homestyles website, with Microsoft SQL Server as the database backend. The online system included different levels of integration to the home office business management back office system to minimize the re-entry of data.

A few examples of how the order entry solution changed the everyday processing of orders include:

- Inventory SKUs are now maintained in the back office system and downloaded to the commerce site.
- Sales orders are captured on the Signature Homestyles commerce site and filled in the back office legacy system automatically.
- Sales tax processing can now be accessed directly from the back office system.
- Credit cards are cleared automatically in batches, saving time.

Thatcher Technology's solution allows Signature Homestyles to offer its independent sales force modern tools to streamline their business processes and better serve their customers. Additionally, math errors and policy violations are caught before submission.

Results: Success!

- Adoption rate was much higher than anticipated:
 - Over 50% first 3 months
 - Currently 98.2%
- Internal rate of return over 100%
- Order turnaround time has been cut by more than half.
- Cut customer service staff while growing the company due to dramatic reduction in problem orders since the calculation and business rules are automated.
- No pushback — sales representatives embraced the technology due to faster order turnaround times and faster and more accurate servicing of customers.
- Orders are balanced and checked for adherence to rules (promotional items, discounts, host benefits) prior to submission, saving time working through issues with consultants once submitted.