



Leading British Toy Shop regards its strong partnership with Rackspace & Conexus as being a key factor in its unprecedented success

The UK toy market is worth almost £3 billion. It's a competitive and demanding marketplace, but if there's one brand that stands head and shoulders above the rest, it's The Entertainer. Its mix of fair pricing, excellent customer service and multi-channel retailing is one of the biggest success stories of British commerce.

Founded in 1981 with a single toy shop in Buckinghamshire, The Entertainer is now the largest independent toy retailer in the UK, with 99 stores, over 1,000 employees and a 15% share of the market. It's still growing, with 15 more stores planned for 2015, along with a new distribution centre and an ever-expanding overseas franchise network.

Central to The Entertainer's success is its multi-channel shopping experience. To bring this to life they chose to work in partnership with Rackspace and Conexus.

MEETING THE MULTI-CHANNEL CHALLENGE

When The Entertainer started their journey, in-house servers worked just fine. As they expanded, they sought the services of a

hosting provider to support the launch of their website and grow online sales. But the world of retail is fast moving and increasingly high-tech. Despite having a good website

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Ian Pulsford

Head of IT Services at The Entertainer

and an extensive product catalogue, to really stand out from the crowd The Entertainer needed to rethink. Their site needed to be interactive, content rich, personalised and viewable on any device. It needed to link seamlessly to their back end systems to handle swift order processing and stock control, with the ability to offer Click and Collect services, and also connect to partner sites such as Amazon and eBay.

The Entertainer embarked on a multi-channel

AT-A-GLANCE

CUSTOMER'S BUSINESS:

Retail

CHALLENGES:

As The Entertainer expanded they needed a hosting provider to support an interactive website - content rich, personalised and viewable on any device. It needed to link seamlessly to their back end systems to handle swift order processing and stock control, with the ability to offer Click and Collect services.

RACKSPACE® SOLUTION:

Hybris multi-channel and Private Cloud

BUSINESS OUTCOME:

The Entertainer has an increased presence on a range of online selling platforms as well as highly successful Click and Collect functionality. They also now have quick partitioning of stock, with access to both store and web stock at all times - something that was not possible before.

strategy, but it quickly became apparent that their incumbent platform and underlying infrastructure were not up to the job. They employed Conexus to initiate a complete re-platforming programme, and the hybris multi-channel suite was selected as the best solution for the job. Providing an out-the-box solution, it gave the business a roadmap to support their multi-channel strategy, plus a wide range of business tools, and highly customisable add-on modules and extensions.

But investing in hybris would only pay off if the underlying infrastructure was architected and tuned to deliver optimised performance. For this, The Entertainer and Conexus turned to Rackspace for a Private Cloud solution.

Ian Pulsford, Head of IT Services at The Entertainer comments: *"Multi-channel offered the chance to transform our business. We knew it was going to be a challenge and for this we needed the right service providers. Our previous hosting provider was simply that - they did a good job, but anyone can host a few servers. We had outgrown both the solution and the host".*

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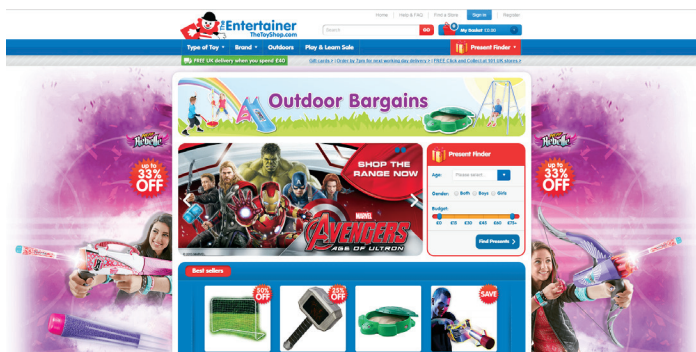
“Conexus and Rackspace came highly recommended, and it quickly became apparent why. They both have a deep knowledge of the hybrid platform and how to get the best out of it, plus a clear understanding and respect for each other’s businesses and ours. Rackspace does not only host our boxes, but delivers enormous technical input and advice, as well as an outstanding intensive service approach which includes a dedicated lead tech and 24/7/365 support.”

The three way connection between Conexus, Rackspace and hybrid is, we believe, the perfect formula for commerce success. They work seamlessly together to resolve the issues we face, and are the backbone upon which our multi-channel strategy sits.”

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND CAPACITY PLANNING

The Entertainer is a highly seasonal business, with a staggering 50% of its annual turnover coming during the last two months of the year in the run up to Christmas. As such they take performance management and capacity planning very seriously. This is where the collaborative approach really comes into its own.

Ian explains: *“All parties submit suggestions and solutions that are then fine-tuned to ensure we are prepared in time for October. We run synthetic customer journeys in test environments. Scalability and flexibility are key, and that is what we have. We could not afford to run a hosted solution at peak level all year round. We have a constantly developing system and a collaborative approach that ensures it is always fit for purpose.”*

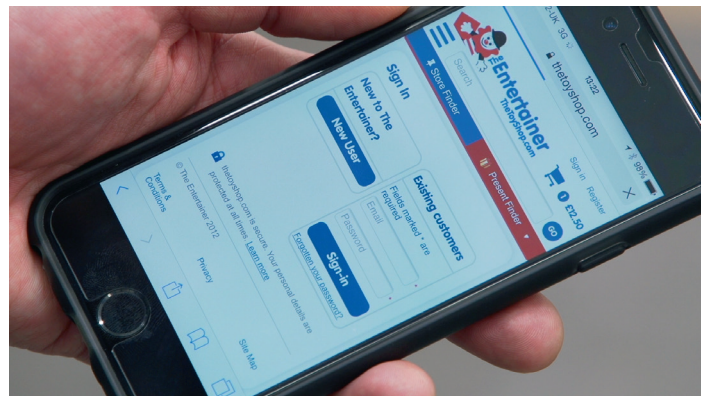


The Entertainer achieved 100% uptime throughout the Christmas season

Working in this collaborative way has paid off. During Christmas 2014 The Entertainer’s site did not crash once, even on Black Friday and Cyber Monday when so many others failed to support the huge

amounts of incoming traffic. As a result, The Entertainer recorded a 60% increase in sales compared to the previous year.

What’s more, the mobile website, which was introduced after the IT infrastructure had been rolled out, now represents a significant and fast growing portion of online purchases. These improvements are a result of The Entertainer’s increased presence on a range of online selling platforms and its Click and Collect tool, sales from which grew by 81.7% in the five weeks before Christmas compared to 2013.



An improved mobile presence represents a fast growing portion of online sales

But it’s not just planned peaks that The Entertainer has to deal with. For example, when the Loom Band craze took off in 2014, The Entertainer was not only the first to spot the trend, but the first to capitalise on it due to the flexibility and support of their service providers. This resulted in them taking a 90% share of the market.

Ian further comments, *“The loom band craze was just one of two or three examples where we have had a run on disk space. But with Rackspace this is not an issue. Rackspace go above and beyond and are always available. They do not tie us up with commercials, they do the work immediately and sort the paperwork out later. We think we are important and Rackspace do not contradict that, we are always made to feel like we are their only customer.”*

NEW FRONTIERS

With a new platform and infrastructure in place, The Entertainer has made some significant changes to the way they do business. They have implemented a Click and Collect option, with customers even able to collect from store within 30 minutes of placing an order, or receive delivery to their home within 90 minutes - an industry leading service

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Ian Pulsford, Head of IT Services at The Entertainer

level. This requires the highest levels of stock availability and seamless connectivity between the front and back end of their operation.

For The Entertainer, the world restarts at midnight. They have 17,000 different toys for sale in 99 stores and online. But by 4am the hybris platform knows the stock levels of every toy in every store and from then on it keeps track in real time, providing The Entertainer with up to the minute sales information. As a premium brand, the company cannot afford to oversell its products and so they now have quick partitioning of stock, with access to both store and web stock at all times - something that simply was not possible before employing the team of partners they have in place.

Click and Collect now accounts for 50% of all peak online orders placed and 25% of off-peak orders. The mobile-friendly site means that customers can purchase from them anywhere, anytime and always get the same level of service. This has resulted in significantly improved conversion rates.

TAKING MULTI-CHANNEL TO THE NEXT LEVEL

The Entertainer has exciting plans going forward, including white box operations for retailers such as Tesco and House of Fraser, with Click and Collect into their stores. Virtual online queuing will help cope with the future demands of the Black Friday era. Plus improvements in user experience, including customised product-specific pages in partnership with suppliers, a more personalised approach with dedicated customer pages, and loyalty schemes.

Ian concludes: *"As we continue to expand we know we have the right service providers behind us to take us to these new frontiers. We have solution synergy, all parties understand our needs and how to get the best out of our solution, and even more importantly we have the support we need to grow and innovate."*

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The Conexus logo consists of the word "conexus" in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font, centered within a solid purple rectangular background.The Hybris Software logo features a white icon of a person with arms raised inside a circle, followed by the text "hybris software" in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font. Below this, the text "AN SAP COMPANY" is written in a smaller, white, uppercase, sans-serif font. The entire logo is set against a solid blue rectangular background.

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