



Marketing all boils down to the same question: How can I best win a lot of customers for my online shop?

PROGRAMMED FOR SUCCESS

With software specially developed for fashion and lifestyle brands and its full range of services, Hermes NexTec is setting new standards for online shops



How wonderful the web is; it's a global market place, open 24/7. Thousands, hundreds of thousands and even millions of potential customers are only a click away. What an opportunity!

And what a problem. How can these customers be won? How can their needs be satisfied? What will fill the shopping carts and check-outs?

With a regular shop, it's clear. With a good location, a well-dressed window, competent sales staff and good products at a fair price, not much can actually go wrong. But how do you sell a fine silk blouse in the virtual world, where you can't touch it or try it on? How are customers supposed to pay for, or exchange goods? And how does an online shop stay ahead of the competition?

Many questions. And there's not much time left to answer them – hardware, software and business models around the internet develop and change quickly. Only one thing is certain: no trading company can do without e-commerce and an attractive online platform if it wants to achieve a certain size. In order to rise

to the ever more complex challenges facing them, companies seek out specialists whose skills cover the entire spectrum of e-commerce.

This is Hermes NexTec's very strength. This company, founded in the autumn of 2010 and based in Hamburg, is a wholly owned subsidiary of Hermes Fulfilment GmbH. Peter Hofmann, one of two NexTec managing directors, outlines its range of services: "We specialise in the development and operation of online shops in the areas of fashion, beauty and lifestyle. If the customer so desires, we offer a 360-degree service: from conception, implementation and day-to-day running of the online shop, to marketing and even customer service. If that's not enough, other services are available via our partner Hermes Fulfilment, such as goods storage, return management and delivery right to the customer's front door."

The all-round, carefree package

A one-stop shop therefore: the first customer to accept this offer of "360-degree e-commerce" was the

lifestyle brand ARQUEONAUTAS. In September 2011, www.arqueonautas.de went online, offering an extensive and sophisticated shop.

The fact that NexTec was already presenting a customer on the internet not even a year after it had been created is a respectable achievement which pleases but does not surprise managing director Holger Lendner. "Our staff is experienced in all areas of e-commerce, and many employees previously developed or designed web shops for large fashion companies. We therefore know what it's about – and what can be done a little better."

Dajana Römer is responsible for content management on www.arqueonautas.de. Her job is to dress the shop window, its home page. In a real shop, she would probably be handling mannequins, but here she is arranging photos on the screen taken at a fashion shoot with Kevin Costner. The American actor, director and producer, who won several Oscars for his film "Dancing with Wolves", is the face of ARQUEONAUTAS.

"Essentially, designing the content of an online shop is about creating a

shopping experience on the internet," says Römer. Photos and text are intended to inform but also to convey emotions and create a desire for the brand. This is, for example, why there is an ARQUEONAUTAS magazine. The web magazine *Von Abenteurern für Abenteurer* (By Adventurers for Adventurers) describes the underwater world of ARQUEONAUTAS with reports and portraits. The lifestyle brand is actually named after a Portuguese marine archaeology company which rescues treasures such as Chinese porcelain from the Ming Dynasty from shipwrecks in order to protect them as the world's maritime heritage.

Creative and intuitive

Because the fashion collection evokes the world of seafarers and treasure hunters with its printing and appliqué, Römer gives the online shop a maritime feel. Waves can be seen on its pages, as can harbour views, wooden planks and thick ropes.

"The pages are intended to be varied," says Römer. "But they shouldn't be so cheerful that they distract customer from buying." Once

"We offer our customers a 360 degree service – from the conception of the online shop right up to marketing."

PETER HOFMANN

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HOLGER LENDNER





a week – or more often in the event of special promotions or special occasions such as Christmas – new or different products are displayed.

However not every shirt sold in the shop is suited to being sold online. “Colours are displayed differently from one computer to another,” says Römer. “What you might think is a greenish turquoise will come out on some screens as a bluish turquoise – and might later give rise to customer complaints.”

However, the first commandment of any creative design is that the shop must be simple and both intuitive and user-friendly – and above all quick. Nick Hartmann is responsible for ensuring that this is the case. He is the shop manager of arqueonautas.de and sits opposite his colleague Dajana Römer. NexTec has designed its own shop software which can be adapted to the specific needs of corporate customers – irrespective of whether they have a large or small collection or whether they send out 200 or 5,000 items a day. Every single item can be

viewed at a single page level – there is no need to switch back and forth between different page levels.

“The shop system is divided into modules,” explains Hartmann. “In this way we are able to react quickly, flexibly and cheaply if changes or updates are necessary.” Another advantage is that managing the shop is easier and more comfortable – an important aspect for NexTec customers who wish to operate their shop themselves with little staff.

With the aid of numerous measuring programs, Nick Hartmann is also able to analyse how a customer uses the website. What does he first look at? What does he put in his shopping cart? Why is the shopping process interrupted? These data, recorded daily, help improve what the shop has to offer. If a blouse is bought a lot but size S is later returned more than would be expected, this is useful information for future production. It obviously means that the size has been wrongly chosen.

It is not just a question of gathering data but of processing results which

have practical relevance. “We first think, then act and finally we measure,” says Hartmann laconically. “There is always something we can improve on.”

The world is getting smaller

Which is of course because the competition is not sleeping, the customer’s expectations are rising and the world of e-commerce is turning ever faster. Social media services such as Facebook are changing communication between customers and companies, and tablet computers such as the iPad are ideal for mobile shopping.

For many, being able to compare prices on your mobile, find bargains and order them while you’re out shopping is taken for granted. All you need to do is hold your smartphone against a QR code (quick response barcode) and it will automatically connect to the company’s website or even directly to the offer. Holger Lendner is in no doubt: “The new applications will revolutionise shopping behaviour”.

In order for things to run smoothly, however, software programmers must still overcome a number of hurdles. NexTec has created an app for ARQUEONAUTAS which presents the online shop even on the relatively small tablet computer. Typing here and expanding a window there opens up the underwater world in all its beauty.

NexTec is now working on making the shop software available in Brazil and China – countries which offer great potential for e-commerce. Of course the languages are different, and the software interfaces must therefore be adapted or changed. “But we are not dealing with two separate worlds,” says Holger Lendner. “China and Germany are one world as far as e-commerce is concerned.” And also a very promising business. ■



Michael Otto and Kevin Costner. The American actor is a partner of the maritime fashion brand ARQUEONAUTAS

Hermes NexTec

Founded in 2010 as a subsidiary of Hermes Fulfilment, this full-service e-commerce supplier offers all online-shop-related services to fashion and lifestyle companies on a one-stop-shop basis. Its online shops operate on the basis of its own modular e-commerce software. The Integrated Management System (IMS) of its software manages administration, maintenance and the implementation of shop content and online marketing. Shop management includes, for example, search engine optimisation and visitor analysis, while content management covers services such as product descriptions tailored to target groups and brands, newsletters and individual product photography.