



High-Performance E-commerce

Activewear retailer Sweaty Betty amps up web presence

by FIONA SOLTES

For women's activewear retailer Sweaty Betty, keeping pace with e-commerce wasn't the challenge.

It was more that the company had seen such strong growth in recent years that the website couldn't keep pace with the bricks-and-mortar stores. As Sweaty Betty considers itself "the authority on women's sport" in the United Kingdom — with its sights set on the same in the United States — the hope was for an e-commerce site every bit as engaging, informative and compelling as the in-store experience.

Granted, it was a lot to hope for. The company's nearly 40 boutiques feature in-store Pilates, yoga and other classes; community events; apparel for sports ranging from running to dance; and an emphasis on high-quality, high-tech fabrics. The e-commerce website, then, had to be content-rich, empowering and fresh.

In short, it had to perform.

FLEXIBLE AND FAST

Enter Ampliance. The cloud merchandising and marketing solutions

provider has worked with companies like Anthropologie, L.K.Bennett and Marks & Spencer, dramatically impacting conversion rates and media production costs. Ampliance Adaptive Media Platform solutions are designed to put control back in-house through easy-to-use, "drag-and-drop" interfaces, reducing costs and allowing clients to respond to market opportunities more quickly.

"It becomes an immensely flexible and very fast way of creating content," says Max Childs, Ampliance marketing director. He notes that the large area of real estate between the top and bottom navigation bars on the Sweaty Betty website can have content updated as simply as "logging in, deleting the image you want to remove and inserting the new one."

Moving deeper within the site, each picture of an athlete in the midst of practicing her sport includes several rollover touchpoints with more information on various products, and the opportunity to buy each one with a swift click. The result? Increases in engagement, time on the site, click-

throughs and conversion. Typically retailers employing the Ampliance platform see a 20-30 percent increase in conversion, Childs says; some have seen their rates double.

Aalish Yorke-Long, Sweaty Betty's head of e-commerce, says the U.S. website has seen conversion uplift of approximately 20 percent. In the U.K., conversions rose 8 percent with the Ampliance platform. Overall, the company is on track to see a 200 percent growth in U.S. revenue for the 2013 fiscal year.

"Ampliance has allowed us to make the experience on the U.S. site a lot richer," Yorke-Long says. "We've been able to create a lot more content with the same size team, and it's so easy to use."

In addition to conversion rates "above and beyond our expectations," Yorke-Long notes that there's been an increase in units per transaction and average order size on the Ampliance pages. And bounce rates have dropped by 28 percent.

Even the community aspect of Sweaty Betty has made its way online with the new platform. The month-

long “Get Fit 4 Free” campaign included not only blogs and photos, but also fitness classes live-streamed from the stores.

Overall, Yorke-Long says, the redesigned website has become “perfectly aligned” with the company’s goals and vision.

MOBILE OPTIMIZATION

The Amplience platform “hasn’t required that much extra training at all,” Yorke-Long says. “It’s pretty intuitive.” Clients simply install a plug-in that links to the Amplience module. Amplience does provide some initial training, but it was designed to be a self-serve platform.

The platform also is optimized for tablet use, and for good reason, Childs says. “More than half of Sweaty Betty’s traffic comes from mobile requests. That’s a frequent template that we see, especially with retailers more in the luxury or slightly higher end of the market. ... The consumer journey has become very much a multi-device experience.... It’s absolutely vital that retailers are able to serve up engaging content across all of those devices.”

With the adaptive media platform, the ability to deliver the multi-layered experience across different devices is greatly simplified. Solutions like resolution and dynamic imaging, in which one master image can be served on demand at any size, certainly help.

“Really good retailers want to engage people, and not just sell in a ‘pile it high and sell it cheap’ way,” Childs says. “When you’re looking at Boohoo, Alexander Wang, Jimmy Choo or our clients in the U.S., for them it’s very much about the brand experience. What Amplience is trying to help them do is get the results they want in a very effective, seamless way without having to outsource the content creation, which can be incredibly expensive.”

Amplience clients have recognized cost savings of 80 to 90 percent in content management, yet still compete at the top of their games.

Sweaty Betty’s closest competitors stateside are likely lululemon Athletica and Athleta. Yorke-Long won’t comment on either, but one thing is certain: Those brands and others like them have helped prep the U.S. market for the “lifestyle experience” that Sweaty Betty offers.

The customer “knows exactly what she wants,” Yorke-Long says. “She buys into statement ranges She will walk in and say, ‘I want this and that and that,’ and knows exactly what it all is.”

Amplience is hoping to continue learning from the U.S. market, as well. The company already has worked with retailers from small to large, though fashion is the sweet spot. That’s a market where “the visual end of the sale is absolutely vital,” Childs says. **STORES**

Fiona Soltes, a freelancer based near Nashville, Tenn., loves a good bargain almost as much as she loves a good story.