

# Speeding up the Weekly Shopping for a Better Online Experience



Progressive Enterprises Ltd knew that the proportion of online visitors who became customers would increase if their shopping experience was quick, easy, and customer friendly; so they called for Olympic's help with development and redesign.

## Customer Overview

Progressive Enterprises Ltd, owner of the Foodtown and Woolworths supermarket chains, is the country's second largest supermarket player with a market share of 45%. Progressive is also the only New Zealand supermarket owner to manage the unique challenges of online grocery shopping, and has been running a successful grocery website since 1998.

A major factor behind Progressive's online success is their recognition that a more usable and user-friendly site will help visitors decide to buy. This understanding has underpinned their approach to website development: user feedback is genuinely sought, and then acted upon as quickly as possible.

Andrew Dixon, Progressive's Divisional Manager – Online Business, explains his organisation's focus. "Customer feedback is critical. We have feedback mechanisms on the site itself, and we make a point of contacting first time and lapsed users, as well as logging details of all calls to our Customer Service Centre. Unless we clearly understand our customers' issues, we can't do anything to fix them."

## The Challenge

At its foundation, e-commerce success is primarily about two things: attracting potential customers to a website, and convincing them to buy once they arrive. A good first-time experience with the site – where a user quickly finds each item they are seeking – is critical if visitors are to become customers.

Unfortunately, grocery shopping is slow because it often involves large numbers of small items in each session. If a user has to search for each item individually, their overall shopping experience can easily take far longer than they are willing to spend.

Progressive's websites already incorporated smart functionality that "learned" from users' previous shopping choices, building up a history that ensured customers found what they were looking for more quickly and easily with every visit. Unfortunately, this didn't help the first-time customers that they needed to impress the most.

## The Solution

The answer was surprisingly simple. Most first-time online customers already had a shopping history, created when they used their Onecards (Progressive's loyalty card) in bricks-and-mortar supermarkets. If this real-world history could be linked with their online account, first-time users could find familiar products far more quickly and easily.

Progressive asked long-term partner, Olympic, to custom engineer this link – along with several other enhancements. "While our primary objective was making things easier for first-time users," remembers Dixon, "we also took the opportunity to improve the

website's look and feel, refreshing our online brand. Additionally we improved search functionality, offered item-level substitution, and even allowed our customers to reserve particular delivery times before they order."

## Implementation

Standard software engineering methodology involves a sequence of gathering requirements, design, development, stabilisation and finally, implementation. "For a project on Progressive's scale," comments Olympic's Solution Architect, Simon Chapman, "this would have taken far too long, so we needed a more agile methodology".

Chapman describes how Olympic broke down this model into a series of smaller chunks, allowing software engineers to test and stabilise small sections while others were still being created. Progressive team members also took part in unit testing, which not only kept them informed about project status, but also let Olympic seek and incorporate their feedback into the design "on the fly".

## The Results

Progressive's website enhancements created a faster, more user-friendly shopping experience for first-time customers, leading to a wealth of positive customer feedback. Dixon also reports a noticeable shift in the number of visitors taking the time to browse the site, rather than simply arriving at the homepage and heading off.

Perhaps the most significant result, however, was the marked reduction in calls to the Customer Service Centre from visitors needing help. "We noticed a considerable drop in complaint calls," observes Dixon. "The site enhancements we made with Olympic have helped us to grow our business and respond to our customers' ever-changing needs."

## Highlights

- Progressive Enterprises Ltd wanted to improve their online customers' shopping experiences. Single shopping sessions for first-time users could easily take hours due to the high-volume/low-item value nature of grocery shopping.
- The existing website could gradually 'learn' from online shoppers' previous history, but it couldn't help speed up first-time customers' experiences.
- Olympic's enhancements allowed the website to learn from customers' real-life as well as online shopping history; and made other usability, search and design improvements.
- The enhancements resulted in immense positive feedback, along with more users choosing to browse the site, and a noticeable drop in complaint calls.

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