

## CASE STUDY

# Plow & Hearth

Plow & Hearth Puts It All Under One Roof with ShopVisible eCommerce Platform

### THE COMPANY

Plow & Hearth began as a small retail store in Virginia in 1980 and has grown to become a respected national catalog, retail and Internet company with more than 5 million customers. For over 30 years, the company has been a trusted source of unique, enduring products for the hearth, home, yard and garden. The Plow & Hearth Family of Brands also includes quality toys from HearthSong® and Magic Cabin®.

### THE CHALLENGE

Plow & Hearth had an enviable problem. Shifting its primary marketing focus from retail print catalogs to online marketing drove tons of traffic to its six “home and garden” websites. These unique, but related websites were flourishing, but its homegrown platform lacked stability, as well as the features and functions needed to grow their eCommerce business further.

All Plow & Hearth family brands are individually marketed and each had their own flavor and audience niche. Built on the same “back-end” platform, each site had been introduced to the market at different times, with different front end look, feel, and functionality.

Brianne Forst, Plow & Hearth Director of Commerce summarizes the need: “Our homegrown platform was outdated. On the front-end, we needed a facelift, a reinvigorated marketing touch, and an improved ability to talk to our customers. On the back end it was important to have a platform that would allow our sites to look very different, but have some consistency in asset management.”



### THE SOLUTION

ShopVisible met all Plow & Hearth’s needs since a SaaS platform was an essential building block requirement. “We are a marketer and distributor of goods and need to be focused on that. Moving to SaaS allows us to bypass time consuming and expensive IT build-outs on our site and engage as many marketplaces online as we need to,” says Forst.

On the front end, ShopVisible designers provided a common set of wireframes with a unique design for each brand. In usability tests, customers responded very well to the “look and feel” and professional appearance of each site. Brand designs were unique but readily identifiable as part of the Plow & Hearth family. For back-end management, the Plow & Hearth design team can work in the same environment across brand sites. This greatly simplified development and administration and saved time and money.

Integration with legacy systems was a priority for Plow & Hearth. “Our data has always been complex,” says Forst. “It was incredibly daunting when considering partnering with others. ShopVisible ensured us they would partner closely with us to manage all the nuances of our data, creating a clean exchange. This was also incredibly helpful given we were resource-strapped and would not be able to rebuild internal systems or data sets.”

**THE RESULTS**

Plow & Hearth's ERP, CRM and other legacy systems are now integrated with the ShopVisible eCommerce platform, and today data flows smoothly between Plow & Hearth systems and the ShopVisible platform.

ShopVisible powers Plow & Hearth's official website ([www.plowhearth.com](http://www.plowhearth.com)), HearthSong ([www.heartsong.com](http://www.heartsong.com)), Wind & Weather ([www.windandweather.com](http://www.windandweather.com)), Problem Solvers ([www.problemsolvers.com](http://www.problemsolvers.com)), Magic Cabin ([www.magiccabin.com](http://www.magiccabin.com)), and Reuseit ([www.reuseit.com](http://www.reuseit.com)).

A lot of work goes on behind the scenes to make sure the eCommerce sites have the correct inventory, pricing, ratings, and other important data elements applied. This also includes data feeds from third parties such as PayPal, Google, eBay, Exact Target and other marketing partners.

Another significant integration involved incorporating the Google Commerce Search engine for internal site searches. Advanced features include category searches, ratings, price sort, and behind the scenes an override that can force product rankings such as bestsellers or other products with specific promotions attached.

"The nimbleness and marketing mindset of the ShopVisible people and platform are crucial to our longterm success," says Forst. "We are impressed with the flexibility and adaptability of the platform. They have structured it to accept as many marketing opportunities as possible, allowing us to be reactive to new technologies and marketing promotions."

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—Brianne Forst

Plow & Hearth Director of eCommerce

**CHALLENGE**

- Homegrown system lacked stability and functionality
- Each of its 6 sites had different look and feel
- Needed an improved ability to talk to individual customers

**BENEFITS**

- Common set of wireframes with a unique design for each of its 6 sites saves time and money
- ERP, CRM, and legacy systems now integrated with ShopVisible
- Seamless data feeds from PayPal, Google, eBay, ExactTarget, among others
- Incorporates advanced search features