



Bell Racquet Sports

Case Study:

Specialization in a commodity market



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Focus: Racquet Sports

Bruce and Cate Bell have been growing their business for more than two decades, specializing in racquet sports of all types. Bell Racquet Sports opened its first retail shop in 1991 and now runs two locations in the Rochester area.

Bell Racquet Sports caters to tennis, squash, racquetball, badminton, and platform tennis players, offering a full line of racquets, court shoes, clothing, bags and accessories. The company also services racquets, including stringing, gripping, and racquet customizations.

Bell Racquet Sports leveraged its specialization to compete against larger companies.

Although the products they offer are not unique, their **specialization in the racquet sports market** is. "We offer a broader product line compared to our competitors," notes Cate Bell, co-owner. "Plus our extensive in-house knowledge and experience make us a recognized leader in the racquet sports marketplace." Bruce Bell is one of only 500 Master Racquet Technicians in the nation, a distinction earned by demonstrating the highest level of expertise in servicing racquets.

Before using Cazbah to boost Internet sales, Bell Racquet Sports sold through retail stores, advertising in trade journals, and a website they created that acted as a catalog. The company enjoyed a steady annual growth of 7-10% over a 12-year period.

A toll-free number only goes so far. Make it easy on your customers by providing online ordering.

In 2002, Bell Racquet Sports developed a website that listed its products and provided a toll-free number to call for orders. What soon became apparent was that just having a web presence doesn't guarantee sales. What does boost sales is being found on the Internet when people are shopping for the best price and offering the convenience of online ordering.

"We probably could have taken the time to create our own ecommerce website and make sure our site was being found by the search engines," explains Cate, "but it was easier to hire Cazbah to get things rolling."

The Cazbah solution

Bell Racquet Sports signed on with Cazbah in January of 2004 and has been growing every year since. Bell Racquet Sports was primarily interested in having Cazbah create the site infrastructure. Cate and Bruce would enter the product information and pricing needed on the website.

Among the items Cazbah provided:

- **eCommerce shopping system.** As part of a general website redesign, Cazbah's built-in eCommerce solution simplified ordering for Bell Racquet Sports' website visitors. Cazbah also developed the content so that it accurately reflected Bell Racquet Sports' specialized status among its competitors.
- **Search optimization.** Bell Racquet Sports faces a lot of competition on the Internet from considerably larger online retailers. It was vital that the company could be found quickly. Identifying the right keywords and making sure they appeared in the content resulted in search engine rankings that placed Bell Racquet Sports side by side with much larger companies.

Search optimization was key for increasing Internet sales.

Providing meaningful content such as a knowledge base positions you as a leader in your field—and makes repeat visitors more likely.

- **Product search.** Cazbah’s built-in search functionality allows visitors to search the site by entering a SKU number, keyword, or brand name—and get pricing information in a flash.
- **Knowledge base.** Cazbah allows for the site to contain evergreen information, such as articles of interest, tournament schedules, product comparisons, etc. This commitment to customer service helped position Bell Racquet Sports as an expert in racquet sports.
- **E-mail marketing.** With just a few clicks, potential customers can be informed of specials related to their sport of interest. Cazbah’s development team helps create and launch email campaigns to targeted lists throughout the year.

The Bottom Line

For Bell Racquet Sports, the concept of Digital Marketing proved its value in less than a year. After Cazbah was in place and running, Bell Racquet Sports realized a **30% growth in Internet sales—in just six months!**—and Internet sales have continued to grow each year since.

Cazbah’s price model—a monthly fee rather than add-on charges—makes sense for companies that want to grow Internet sales but don’t have the resources to take on the task.

What was crucial to Bell Racquet Sports’ online success was being found by search engines and getting ranked near the top. “Players shop by price all the time,” says Cate, “and if we didn’t appear on the first page of the search engines, there was no way we could compete against larger outfits.”

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As an added bonus, Bell Racquet Sports’ website was nominated for the *Rochester Business Journal’s* Best of the Web Award in the retail category.

Lessons Learned

Cate Bell explains that she learned a lot about how Cazbah's Digital Marketing can boost sales:

- "I always thought the Internet had potential as a marketing tool, but I never realized how much we could increase sales once we were up and running. Having an eCommerce system also cuts down on the number of toll-free calls we have to manage."
- "Since we sell items that are very price-competitive, we had to find a way to compete against larger online competitors. Using Cazbah to handle that end of the business simplifies our overall company management while increasing online sales."
- "We've always been able to compete on price, but making sure that consumers find us has been and will be key for our continued success."
- "Our Account Manager was right there every step of the way, providing a web design based on our requirements, intelligent experienced-based advice, and honest opinions. Help with continuing education has been extremely valuable as well, as we continue to learn the inner workings of Cazbah and its many features and deep functionality."
- "A monthly review session with our Account Manager helps us monitor results and set goals and action plans."