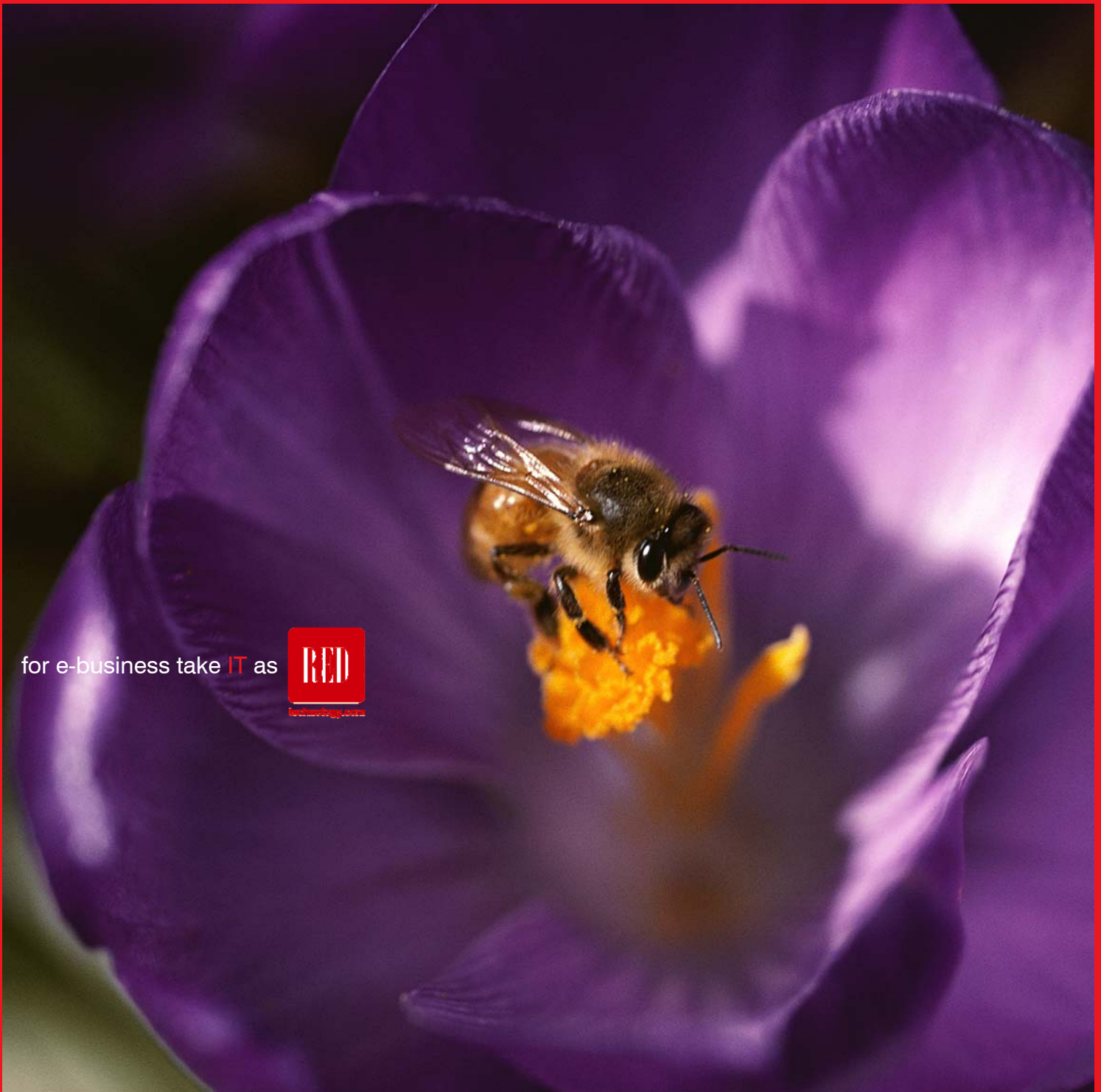


CASE STUDY

e-commerce

Creating an integrated multi-channel, multi-lingual
e-commerce solution for Maximuscle Ltd.

for e-business take IT as





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Profile

The UK's number one sports nutrition supplier, Maximuscle has grown at a phenomenal rate by focusing on highly effective research-supported formulas that deliver what they promise. Their products are now available everywhere from specialised stores, gym chains across the country and the big chain-stores such as Argos, JJB and many more.

Their products are compliant with International Olympic Committee standards and they sponsor several Olympic athletes. If you're hungry from that last workout or need to fuel up for the next one, Maximuscle products aren't hard to find. Indeed, one of their largest sales channels is the internet; selling direct to the UK public via their tradeIT enabled e-commerce site.

“Our old e-commerce store just wasn't allowing us the flexibility in terms of growth and scalability that we now needed. It was also becoming increasingly expensive to update and maintain. We had to plan for the future and invest in an e-commerce platform that could grow with us.”

*Leon Hughes
Director, Maximuscle*

Maximuscle identified the following concerns with their old online store that needed to be addressed. Their web site had been developed using the ePages web platform. While this was robust, it's development had not kept pace with the growing sophistication and demands of e-commerce. They identified the following issues:

- With the business achieving rapid growth and market penetration their old site architecture was struggling to cope with customer volumes.
- Their old web site was not search engine friendly and could not handle search engine spiders, leading to poor search engine rankings.
- All content updates had to be implemented by their internal IT department, which was time consuming and resource intensive.
- They needed to develop a trading platform that could cope with multi-site e-commerce stores operating in multiple languages targeting different customer segments and nationalities. In particular there was a pressing need to develop a separate UK site specifically aimed at female athletes with different branding but sharing some content and products. Future plans for European expansion would require further sites and additional languages.



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Researching The Solution

IS THERE A NEED?

Maximuscle had initially developed their business model via the internet, selling online to UK sports men and women. Having used the ePages e-commerce platform for many years they had developed a great deal of in-house technical expertise and an in-depth understanding of online sales. However, their business needs had outgrown the capabilities of this platform. In particular they realised that for future business expansion they would need a technology that allowed them ultimate flexibility in terms of content management, multi-lingual, multi-site trading. Finding a solution with this flexibility would help to ensure fast return on investment, and allow them to capitalise on growth potential.

RESEARCH

Maximuscle undertook extensive research into solution providers. As a proactive, forward looking business they already had a great deal of knowledge about what was available. After developing a short list of potential technologies they asked suppliers to submit proposals.

EXPLORE SYNERGY

Red Technology's state-of-the-art data centres had been providing dedicated hosting for Maximuscle since 2002. Although the majority of their IT development had been carried out in house, they had occasionally used Red Technology for more complex software development and support.

"It was a no-brainer to ask Red Technology to bid for the business; we had seen their professionalism over the years and knew that they had been developing their own e-commerce and content management platforms. Their technology was already proven in the market and turned out to be exactly what we were looking for. Not only were they providing the right product at the right price, but we already knew we could work well with them"

*Leon Hughes
Director, Maximuscle*

CHECK SUITABILITY

Red Technology had spent over 6 years developing their tradeIT e-commerce platform and its flexibility meant Maximuscle could have a site tailored to their exact requirements very quickly at an extremely competitive price. Additionally, their tradeIT platform was incredibly scalable and had a host of in-built content management, reporting and e-marketing tools.



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Understanding The Issues

Red Technology undertook a comprehensive consultation and design process for Maximuscle, the first stage of which was a requirements gathering procedure, examining their business structure, customer purchasing habits and scoping out future requirements. This highlighted that there were several features key to the success of the project. At this early stage it is important to make sure you are happy with the proposed solution before fully committing resources. You have to take the time to ensure that you know exactly what to expect, how this will integrate into current systems and operational structure, what resources will be required and what you can realistically expect to achieve from your online store, now and in the future. Some of the main requirements identified for Maximuscle were:

Scalability. Maximuscles' business had grown rapidly over the past 10 years. With annual turnover in the £10's of millions, their old e-commerce platform was bursting at the seams. They needed a system that could handle larger customer volumes, was highly scalable in terms of volumes and load, and could expand and grow across multiple servers as the business grew.

Manage content quickly and efficiently. Ensuring that online content could be managed in-house was vital. This would keep operational costs down and allow them complete control of their online product offering. Their old system meant that all content changes had to be passed through their IT department. A system was needed that allowed individual departments to take control of, and update their own content; speeding up the process and reducing costs.

Easy integration with internal IT, distribution systems and call centre operations. Maximuscle already managed their own email promotions in-house and operated a customer service centre, so it was important that these business functions could integrate and communicate with the on-line customer database easily, enabling quick and effective customer service.

Multi-Site capability was imperative. With plans for international development and the imminent arrival of a new dedicated female athlete site, the business would need to centrally control different web sites, in different languages, on different URL's across multiple servers; something that their old technology would not allow. The system would also have to be flexible enough to allow individual country operations to implement and update local content, while still maintaining a large degree central control.



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Agree Functionality

In addition to the specific business requirements identified, many of the usual features and functions of an e-commerce store were required for the site, including:

Generate vouchers to maximise sales revenue. The new system needed to have the capability to up-sell, cross-sell and easily generate customer or segment specific vouchers that could be integrated with e-marketing campaigns.

Increase profile of the business and provide company and product information to customers.

Develop a customer database that would allow Maximuscle to gain a greater understanding of their customer profile and further develop the business with e-marketing tools.

Search engine optimised site, content and URL's: to ensure good search engine visibility and ranking, raising the Maximuscle profile and attracting new customers.

"The functionality of the web site is everything we could have asked for, plus more! This is translating into increased visibility and turnover, directly improving the bottom line"

*Leon Hughes
Director, Maximuscle*

Usage analytics to measure the success of different sections of the site. By ascertaining where and why customers abandon shopping baskets Maximuscle can adjust the dynamics of their site to remove bottlenecks and increase turnover.

Hosting the web site on robust dedicated servers with full backup redundancy and 24/7 security and performance monitoring.

Multi-currency, multi-tax and multi-delivery zones and options capability to reflect the growing international side of Maximuscles' business.

Customer account functionality to allow customers to save their delivery preferences and take advantage of personalised promotions and offers.



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Project Implementation

Maximuscle decided that Red Technology's tradeIT™ e-commerce platform was ideally suited to their requirements and asked them to implement the new site for November 2006. This is a feature-rich e-commerce solution that can be easily customised to reflect the customer's brand identity, attract new customers, and encourage repeat purchases. Importantly it also allowed their in-house team to fully manipulate and update the site content via a 'word' style interface. Multi-domain capability allows them to present different content and shared content across distinctly disparate web sites from a centralised database.

Red Technology have created an e-commerce product that contains all the elements a retailer needs to develop, promote and maintain their online presence. Because the functionality has already been tested and is market proven it was simply a case of customising the look and feel to reflect Maximuscle's own style and brand.

As markets, the web, and customers develop and change over time – so can tradeIT™. Utilising the latest relational database, SQL and ASP.NET technologies, new functionality can be generated and integrated into the core application as required; growing and developing with the

business, eliminating the need to invest in new technologies and effectively future proofing the initial investment:

The Maximuscle implementation process:

- **Developing** templates, designing the look, feel and functionality requirements of the web site.
- **Migration** of the old site content, including product, pricing, order history and customer data.
- **Connecting** the system to the fulfilment operation and in-house legacy systems, allowing seamless data communication.
- **Testing** functionality and stability, and training to ensure Maximuscle were comfortable handling content management, site analysis, and search engine optimisation techniques.
- **Launching** the new web site to the public seamlessly, ensuring minimal site downtime.

“tradeIT™ is a Microsoft certified product that combines rapid implementation capability with industry leading flexibility.

80% of the functionality comes 'out of the box', leaving only 20% to be customised, ensuring a high return on investment”.

*Calvin Litchfield
Managing Director, Red Technology*



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Behind The Scenes

ADMINISTRATION

The customer facing website is only half the story. The systems administration functionality is the heart of the tradeIT™ platform, fully integrating into the customers own ERP, accounts and fulfilment systems. Powerful tools allow Maximuscle to manage and maintain their web sites, updating products and prices, developing new page layouts, product categories and content and creating customisable forms for data capture. This can all be done in-house, cutting out the time lag and cost associated with outsourcing web updates. In-house experts, such as Category Managers, can now individually control their own content.

DRIVING REVENUE

Marketing tools, easily managed in-house, drive a host of up-sell and cross-sell features on the site. Customers are automatically offered spend dependant free gifts within their shopping basket, encouraging higher spend to earn higher tier gifts. When viewing products, multi-buy offers and complimentary product options are displayed to encourage increased spend. Powerful reporting tools allow the success and profitability of marketing activity to be closely monitored.

SCALE

The new site is highly scalable, with Red Technology's platform allowing an unlimited number of products, product categories and content pages to be added – without affecting site speed and navigation.

The system can handle multiple domains, micro-sites and e-commerce stores from one central database, tailoring branding, content, navigation and language to individual web sites. Depending on operation size and requirements this can be handled through one server, or seamlessly across multiple servers and locations.

“The ability to push content management responsibility inwards to individual stakeholders has dramatically freed up our IT resources. Additionally, the increased responsiveness has given us a competitive advantage and significant cost saving”.

Leon Hughes
Director, Maximuscle



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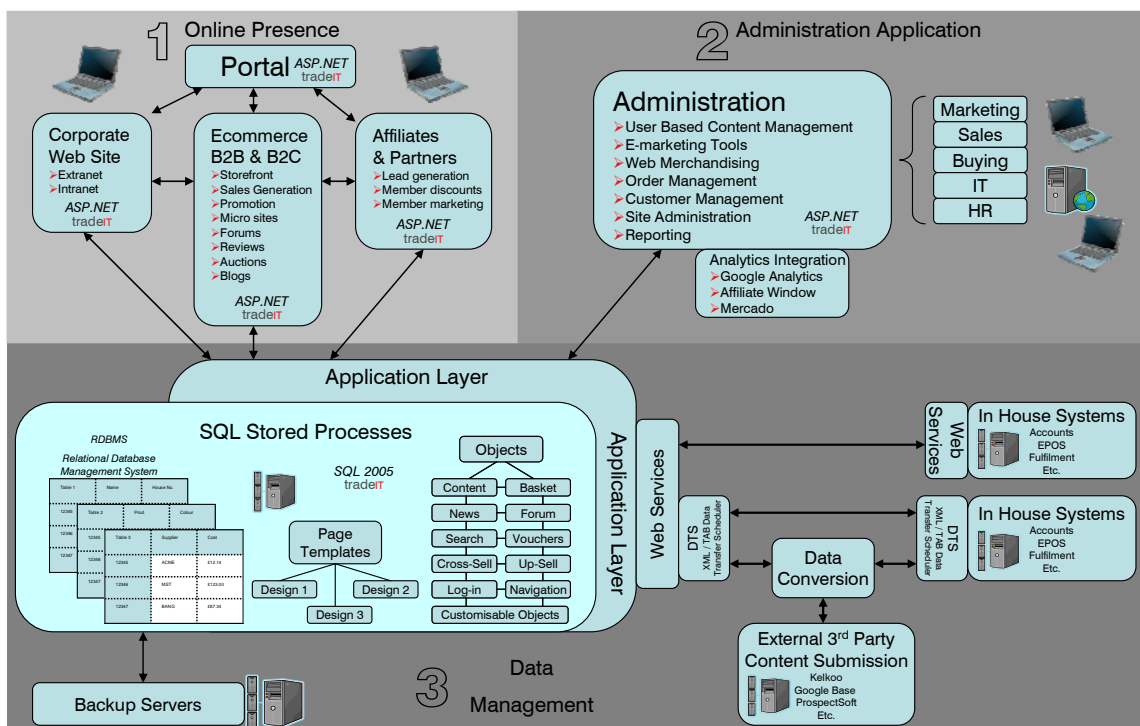
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Red Technology tradeIT E-Commerce Platform

1. Online Presence. The tradeIT platform can present multiple web sites, in multiple languages. Highly scalable, the system can manage content for multiple domains, automatically presenting personalised content, including branding, languages, B2B account management and B2C e-commerce.

2. Administration Application. Administer multiple site content, customer accounts, online trading and e-marketing via a web based interface. Multiple administrators control their own content, wherever they are in the world. Can be hosted separately from web servers to reduce server load.

3. Data Management. Hosted over single, or multiple servers, with backup redundancy; ensures rapid deployment to multiple web sites. Securing your data while communicating with 3rd party and in-house systems. Scalability to expand with your business and data storage requirements.





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Red Technology Delivers

Maximuscle are delighted with the public response to their new e-commerce platform and its administrative functionality. Now achieving better visibility on search engines, visitor traffic and sales continue to grow strongly. Maximuscle are confident that the site, database and administration functions are robust and flexible enough to grow with their business; effectively future proofing their investment.

The project was delivered on time, within budget and they can now centrally manage international web sites, in multiple languages, on a platform that is highly scalable. Their female athlete site has already launched and they will shortly be launching a new website for the Greek market using the tradeIT e-commerce platform.

Red Technology has been a leading UK e-commerce solution provider since 1996. Their development specialists have built more than 400 e-commerce solutions selling products and services online, to both businesses and consumers. Customers include high street retailers, specialist online retailers, B2B suppliers and large corporations from across the UK.

Red Technology creates e-commerce destinations that do more than just process transactions; capturing the client's brand, effectively merchandising products, streamlining the checkout process, and ensuring online success. They are the UK's leading mid-market provider of comprehensive web solutions across a number of market sectors including private, public and not-for-profit.

"Managing multi-national web sites centrally, with the capability of local content input, branding and pricing structures gives us the flexibility we need to push ahead into global markets. Selecting Red Technology and tradeIT is the best business decision I have ever made".

*Leon Hughes
Director, Maximuscle*

- E-commerce solution software.
- Content management systems.
- Consulting complex web issues.
- Multi-site, personalised content capable.
- Proven website implementation and project processes.
- Ongoing e-marketing consulting, software and support.
- 24x7 secure web hosting and redundancy systems.
- Catering for mission critical systems.
- Search engine optimisation.
- Ultimately scalable to grow with your business.

