



CUSTOMER STORY

ANYA HINDMARCH
LONDON



ANYA HINDMARCH

LONDON

‘RESPONSIVE’ TO INDUSTRY DEMAND:

FUTURE-PROOFING ECOMMERCE FOR ANYA HINDMARCH

Anya Hindmarch ran a successful ecommerce website with a unique and well-designed front end. But the back end was built on an older version of Demandware that was proving difficult to manage. This was hampering the brand’s growth potential, the speed at which it could launch new features, and the ability to best serve its global client base.

In order to remain competitive and future-proof its existing ecommerce position, Anya Hindmarch recognised the need to reassess its existing Demandware installation. The brand wanted to get as close to the original code base as possible, and put a framework in place to start introducing a full omnichannel and localised retail experience. It was at this stage that Astound Commerce came on board.

As a direct result of the Demandware migration, Anya Hindmarch has seen its mobile conversion rates more than double. The project has also positioned Anya Hindmarch at the forefront of ecommerce development, with the new website coded using JavaScript controllers instead of pipelines and benefiting from the introduction of a fully responsive design.

BACKGROUND

Anya Hindmarch, the luxury accessories brand, had been leading the way in online retail for a long time. Its global and US website was delivering the required results, and included many bespoke features exclusive to the Anya Hindmarch name that were actively helping the brand to stay ahead of the competition.

However, while the website front end was modern and unique, the back end was built on an old version of Demandware that was proving increasingly difficult to manage and maintain. It was also layered with instances of custom code. This was hampering the brand’s growth potential, the speed at which it could launch new features, and its ability to consider introducing a true omnichannel offering.

Anya Hindmarch was therefore keen to future-proof its existing ecommerce position and give the brand the capability to more effectively meet the needs of its customers going forward. Enhanced localisation was another major consideration due to Anya Hindmarch’s plans to capitalise on its global presence.

Together, these factors culminated in the decision to reassess the brand’s existing Demandware installation and strip it back to basics. The goal was to get as close to the original Demandware code as possible, and in turn deliver an advanced ecommerce offering that would make staying ahead of the retail curve much easier in the future. The challenge, however, was to achieve this without impacting the website design at all, which was entirely dependent on having the right partner in place to bring the retailer’s vision to reality.

CHOOSING A BEST-OF-BREED DEVELOPER

“We were initially after a ‘lift and shift’ project,” said Liz Rawlinson, Associate Digital Director at Anya Hindmarch. “The existing website was incredibly well received and it was important for nothing to change on the front end. This meant all the heavy lifting would be on the back end. So it was vital for the chosen developer to have a lot of technical experience, and be able to work closely with our internal team to ensure nothing was amiss.”

It was clear that Anya Hindmarch needed the help of an established and well-respected digital commerce provider, which led the brand to ask Demandware for its recommendations. Six company names were put forward, with one ultimately coming out on top. It was at this stage that Astound Commerce came on board.

“ASTOUND’S EXPERIENCE WITH COUNTLESS OTHER MAJOR RETAIL BRANDS PUT US AHEAD OF THE CURVE WHEN OUTLINING THE BEST APPROACH FOR MEETING ANYA HINDMARCH’S NEEDS. WE WERE DELIGHTED TO NOT ONLY HAVE OUR NAME PUT FORWARD BY DEMANDWARE, BUT ALSO THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE INVOLVED IN SUCH AN IMPORTANT PROJECT FOR ANYA HINDMARCH’S FUTURE GROWTH.”

TERRY HUNTER, MANAGING DIRECTOR AT ASTOUND COMMERCE LTD

PROJECT DELIVERY

It was clear from the get-go that delivering on Anya Hindmarch’s requirements would represent a multi-faceted project. Not only did the retailer need to be migrated to the latest Demandware Site Genesis 2.0 platform, but recreating the brand’s bespoke and often unique set of features on the new installation was also a major task. It required a highly intuitive approach to recode these elements without stepping too far away from Demandware’s core code base.

The Anya Hindmarch website, for example, includes a tool that offers consumers the ability to upload their own handwriting and drawings that can then be used to personalise their purchases. It was features such as this that had to be rebuilt from the ground up by Astound’s development team in order to function on the new Demandware platform.

Anya Hindmarch’s desire to future-proof it’s offering as part of the upgrade also presented its own technical considerations. Prior to Astound coming on board, the retailer had desktop and mobile websites running side-by-side. Making Anya Hindmarch’s online presence responsive, in the interest of optimising the brand’s ecommerce presence, was therefore par for the course.

Another key factor in future-proofing Anya Hindmarch’s online portal was found in the decision to migrate and rebuild the ecommerce platform using JavaScript controllers instead of pipelines. This, seemingly small, alteration to the development process represented a significant step-change for the retailer, and has an important role to play in streamlining the website maintenance and upgrades process going forward.

SETTING FOUNDATIONS FOR FUTURE BUSINESS GROWTH

As future localisation was at the forefront of Anya Hindmarch’s considerations for this project, it was important for the approach taken by Astound to meet this need. This goal was ultimately achieved through a combination of shifting to a responsive site design, upgrading to the latest Demandware platform, and also simplifying Anya Hindmarch’s back end environment. A single code base was introduced, and in doing so made it much easier to introduce new country-specific variations of the main global site in the future.

As part of the project, Astound was also required to integrate a new Payments Service Provider and launch it on the ecommerce store to support cross channel payments and other new functionality. This was an important part of Anya Hindmarch’s future growth and localisation goals, as the new PSP supported additional global currencies and also introduced seven new payment options at the checkout for the Anya Hindmarch website. This has set the foundations for enhanced localisation in the future. In the meantime, it already offers a far better degree of support for Anya Hindmarch’s global customer base and a wider range of payment methods for the brand’s growing percentage of international traffic.

Introducing a full omnichannel offering (including click-and-collect and other initiatives that cross between online and bricks-and-mortar) are all part of Anya Hindmarch’s future roadmap. However, it’s through this project with Astound that the wheels have been set in motion for this to become a reality.

CHALLENGES

As is often the case in the retail sector, time was the biggest challenge. With the sale season rapidly approaching, it was essential that Anya Hindmarch’s new website was live and operational on the 19th May. Astound Commerce worked closely with the Anya Hindmarch internal team to ensure this strict deadline was met, finalising the project and bringing the new site online on the target date.

Converting the existing website template into a responsive format also posed an issue. Anya Hindmarch relies heavily on media content and imagery to drive sales, with its Product Listing Pages vastly different from most other retailers in the sector. Astound worked closely with the internal team to ensure all existing content supported the new responsive approach, in addition to putting steps and processes in place so all future materials could meet this goal too.

Migrating Anya Hindmarch to the latest Demandware platform also streamlined the content creation process, making it much easier for the retailer’s creative teams to manage and upload new materials to the website than ever before.

THE ASTOUND COMMERCE DIFFERENCE

“It was the smoothest project I’ve worked on for a long time,” said Liz Rawlinson, Associate Digital Director at Anya Hindmarch. “In fact, it went so well that I’ve already got Astound’s development team on board for the next project.”

Rawlinson continued: “One of the factors that let us know we had made the right decision in entrusting this project to Astound was direct access to the development team. We met the Creative Design Lead for the project on day one, and had a close relationship with the entire development team after that. It was reassuring to know we could get hold of the Astound team at any time of day, and it was it a key part of what made this project run so smoothly.”

Commenting on the completed project, Terry Hunter, UK Managing Director at Astound Commerce, added: “Flexibility was key. Anya Hindmarch was after an ecommerce platform that was not only future-proof but also functional and engaging without being reliant on bespoke software. That’s exactly what we delivered. Astound has set Anya Hindmarch up to become a leading omnichannel player in the future, and all within the tight time restrictions imposed.”