

## Transforming online revenue opportunities in retail

Retail fashion is big business, disrupted. For decades, high street stores and shopfronts were the dominant destination for the style conscious, but bargain savvy consumers are now more accustomed to finding what they love online. Competing for the 'digital dollar' is a strategic requirement for every fashion brand so when a large surge in online transactions put the business under pressure, Florsheim brought Computer Merchants to the table to help prepare the business for long term digital success.

**FLORSHEIM**  
ESTABLISHED 1892

### THE SITUATION

In 2014, Florsheim Australia signed up to participate in Click Frenzy for the first time. The online massive shopping event is the local equivalent to America's "Black Friday" and typically draws a record number of shoppers ready to spend with their favourite brands.

The event did not disappoint for Florsheim. On the day Click Frenzy launched, the uplift in online transactions was immediate and significant, increasing simultaneous transactions on the site to an all-time record. Yet as the user numbers climbed, Florsheim's site performance slowed. Hosted internationally, the site and web server struggled to keep up with the additional demand. Page load times dragged and user experience was compromised.

The impact of the Click Frenzy surge was felt right across the business. IT Manager, Duane Kehoe explains: "The data flow between the website e-commerce engine and processing lagged. That caused downstream issues for customer service, who were working double time to clear back orders. Once the orders were processed, the ERP, logistics and fulfillment all progressed quickly but the lag between transaction and delivery increased."

Behind the scenes, an IBM iSeries Power 7 was running business critical wholesale, warehouse management system and backend retail systems. "All orders shipped through our warehouse travel through at least two of the systems run on the iSeries, and three when we add retail to the mix. Almost all our extraneous systems interact with it on some level," said Duane. "In essence, it is the cornerstone of our IT environment."

But despite an extended hardware and software maintenance contract, the aging IBM Power 7 was expensive on the upkeep and did not have the processing power, performance and capacity needed to support Florsheim into the future.

To support the e-commerce and customer loyalty strategy for the business, Duane needed a strategy to ensure a faster, more efficient and robust customer experience for anyone browsing or transacting online. Swift data transfer between POS retail and online orders would be needed to provide a more singular view of the customer, along with better syncing of data to better handle logistics bottlenecks and warehouse capacity.



When we invite our customers to transact with us online through a targeted loyalty offer, they should expect a swift and clean process from navigating to the website, to browsing their options to ordering, confirming receipt of that order, through to processing through the warehouse, and tracking all the way to delivery.



## THE SOLUTION

With disparate systems, customised code and integration points and a website to migrate to a local host, Duane had to unravel a complex set of challenges to get to his end game. The first priority was to seek counsel from a trusted IT advisory partner.

“Computer Merchants has worked with Florsheim for many years and are very familiar with the IT environment, the licenses and the business applications stack we run on. The team listened to my plans, and conducted great due diligence into the project that helped to unearth a number of considerations that might otherwise have been missed,” said Duane.

As a result of migrating the websites and running PCI compliance checks Florsheim was able to also resolve other underlying issues which had previously been undiscovered with the assistance of Computer Merchants which has resulted in a smoother customer purchasing experience online.

Another set of issues were addressed by moving from the old AS400 to IBM's iSeries Power 8, which provided Florsheim with faster processing of both interactive and batch jobs. “With the additional resources [provided by the Power 8] we were also able to build a development system for use in various business projects,” said Duane.

Through an expedited analysis of Florsheim's needs, Computer Merchants worked to upgrade the facilities and increase the speed and data transfer rate of the database and website, restoring the system to full serviceability.

## THE FUTURE

It's not enough to just plug the hole. Instead of a quick fix, Computer Merchants devised solutions that would keep Florsheim operating not just in the now, but from then on, not only keeping the technology up to date, but cost saving, too.

Computer Merchants' recommendation to Florsheim to move to the latest generation of IBM Power not only delivered more processing power, it did so with a smaller amount of cores, a result which helped Florsheim reduce the overall cost and ongoing maintenance requirements.

“A lot of upgrades are done on the basis that applications are not being supported, short term thinking cycles and kind of reactionary,” said Nick Henderson, Account Manager at Computer Merchants.

“In this instance, the decision to take advantage of IBM global finance, calculating the return over 5 years rather than 3 was based on a better analysis of the economics of their infrastructure, with a very forward, proactive view of where the company was going to need the processing power, not today, but 4 years from now,” he said.

The website and hosting were also brought closer to Florsheim's base of operations, allowing any problems to be diagnosed locally. This change in server location has improved site speed with over a second in load now reduced from the initial viewing, while the average sessions per month have increased every year, cementing the important work handled by Computer Merchants.



The replicated site for Australia and New Zealand means it takes much less time to set up new products and upload images. Time saved on large volumes of repetitive tasks mean we can be faster to market with new products, and as a result we have grown the size of our customer database by 70% in the 12 months since we participated in the last Click Frenzy,” said Duane. “With help from Computer Merchants, we now have processing time down to seconds even during the craziest of online trading periods.

