A household name for greeting cards on the web

If you ask any British consumer where to buy personalized greetings cards online, it´s extremely likely that the answer will be Funky Pigeon. During the two years between the company starting up under its brand-name in 2008, and its sale to WHSmith in 2010, Funky Pigeon has seen unparalleled growth of sales and market share, with tens of thousands of designs and products available on its web portal.

Today, Funky Pigeon is the number two cards and gifts portal in the UK, the world's second biggest market for greeting cards, and as WHSmith continues to invest in marketing, brand-recognition and the development of exciting new products, Funky Pigeon is well placed to eventually take over the number 1 position.

Since the first day of Funky Pigeon's operation, DirectSmile technology has been a cornerstone of its rise and DirectSmile has since supported the rapid development of the company as a committed partner.

Richard Pepper, founder and Business Unit Director of Funky Pigeon says: "When we started, our business plan was completely built on using DirectSmile. We evaluated the different solutions and found that DirectSmile was by far the best solution to reach our goals."

Creative personalization key to success

DirectSmile's image personalization technology played one crucial role in Funky Pigeon's development. "To the present day, the team is designing all image sets in-house, offering customers over 10,000 different motifs – more than anybody else in the market, and the team is constantly developing new ideas and designs," says Richard Pepper. The designs evolved from Spoof and Humor to a very broad range of motifs for virtually all occasions, and creative edge sets Funky Pigeon apart from many of its competitors.

Photo upload, another DirectSmile feature, soon became of equal importance. Richard Pepper comments: "As the market developed, using customers' photos in our products became increasingly popular. Today, close to 50 % of our orders include photos that visitors upload to our portal."


Using photos and personalized images attracts customers

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Super-fast previews crucial for high conversion

Funky Pigeon has used DirectSmile online server technology from the start to enable the individualization of greeting cards through its customers. "The rendering speed is extremely critical for the success of our business. Personalization without previews doesn't make sense! And previews really mean instant previews, and not waiting seconds until the design is displayed. Thanks to DirectSmile we managed to achieve exactly that," explains Richard Pepper. "The ability to deliver the fastest possible previews makes a huge difference to conversion rates."
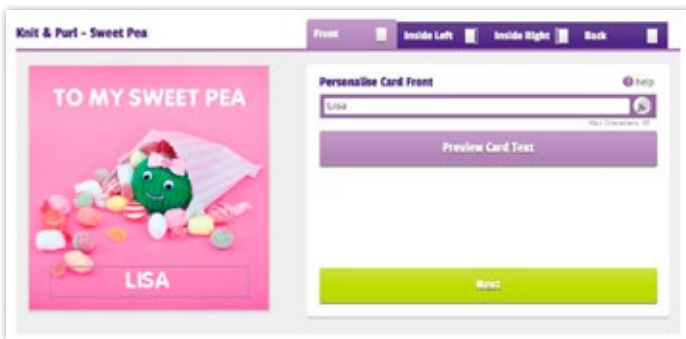
Real-time configuration of greeting card designs

Funky Pigeon is printing and fulfilling on its own premises using HP Indigo presses in two factories in Bristol and Guernsey. Christmas, Valentine's, Mother's and Father's Days are the most busy times, but also individually scheduled occasions such as school exams, parties, weddings and, of course, birthdays, add their share to Funky Pigeon's success. "Because our business is so peaky, we decided to take parts of our document and image generation to the cloud, which we eventually started in September 2012. This allows us to optimally scale our business for peak occasions," adds Richard Pepper.

Close partnership enables constant improvement

Its long-term cooperation with DirectSmile has helped Funky Pigeon to adapt to an ever-changing market place. "DirectSmile's continuous support is superb, it has helped us to consistently improve our products and service for our customers," stresses Richard Pepper. "DirectSmile does not only see the technical side, but also understands what we are trying to achieve with our business. Over the years, our system has always been adapted to our developing business and modified according to new requirements."

Innovating in mobile to take the lead

"Today there a two leading companies in the UK for personalized greeting card. We are still number two but growing every day, and we are using DirectSmile for each and every job," comments Richard Pepper. Funky Pigeon is working hard on the development of new high-volume products to complement its greeting cards offerings. Richard Pepper explains: "Greeting cards currently amount for the largest proportion of our business, but gifts are on the increase, and we're looking at the combination of cards and sentimental gifts for each occasion." The latest innovation is the Funky Pigeon App that allows customers to trigger the sending of personalized greeting cards through all mobile devices. Richard Pepper: "We provide optimized auto-scaled web pages for smartphones, tablets and desktop. And – as always – it´s all fuelled by DirectSmile!"

Richard Pepper
Business Unit Director,
Funky Pigeon

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www.funkypigeon.com