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From Frustration to Conversion: Fixing E-Commerce Bottlenecks

Overview:

Snowgum, a 100% family-owned Australian brand since 1926, transitioned from operating 40 retail outlets across Australia and New Zealand to becoming an online retailer. This shift helped cut overhead costs and deliver better value to customers, but also came with challenges such as maintaining the same level of customer trust along with physical stores, adapting to evolving e-commerce technologies, and ensuring smooth logistics for nationwide delivery.

By controlling their design, sourcing, and manufacturing and upholding their century-old customer-first refund policy, Snowgum not only overcame these hurdles but also reinforced its commitment to sustainability, quality, and customer satisfaction.

Challenges

As Snowgum transitioned from a traditional retail model to an online eCommerce platform, several challenges emerged that directly impacted user experience, conversion, and operational efficiency. From technical glitches in navigation and payments to complexities in product display, checkout, and shipping, these issues created barriers for both customers and administrators. Here are those:

1. Checkout & Payment Issues

- Payment not properly processed
- Guest user payment issues (methods not displayed)
- Multiple event processing during payment (causing pending transactions)
- Split payments (credits + cash/card) not working smoothly
- Gift card not applied properly
- Credits are not integrated correctly at checkout

Impact: Checkout friction → abandoned carts, failed payments, loss of trust.

2. Product Display & Variations

- Bugs in product navigation (show/hide products)
- Out-of-stock items not auto-hiding
- Product image variations are not displaying correctly
- The variant color section is not active
- Issues with thumbnails, buttons, and drag & drop functionality
- Multiple products with colors/sizes show inconsistencies

Impact: Poor product discovery → frustrated buyers, lower conversion.

3. Promotions & Discounts

- Promotions and discounts are not displaying correctly
- Gift card display issues

Impact: Reduced sales from promotions and customer dissatisfaction.

4. User Experience & Accessibility

- New pages redirect to the homepage instead of opening correctly
- Order filters & search are not active
- Shipping methods inconsistencies
- The marketplace feature for new store options is not functioning

Impact: Limited usability → restricted business growth & reach.

5. Customer Communication & Validation

- Email validation errors (existing vs. new emails)
- Guest user email validation issues

Impact: Errors in communication & customer account creation.

6. Admin & System Performance

- Admin-side product display and optimization changes required
- System upgrade to the new version with bug fixes

Impact: Operational inefficiencies for store managers.

Why It Matters:

1. Revenue & Trust Recovery:

Fixing checkout failures, product discovery issues, and broken promotions directly increases conversions, reduces cart abandonment, boosts average order value (via correct discounts/credits), and rebuilds customer trust for retention and revenue growth.

2. Market Expansion & Scalability:

Resolving UX/accessibility barriers (e.g.shipping address issues, broken search/redirects, inactive marketplace) unlocks national reach, improves product discoverability, and enables new sales channels, critical for scaling the business and tapping into the complete Australian market.

3. Operational Efficiency & Platform Stability:

Streamlining admin workflows, fixing core system bugs (e.g., payments, emails, UX, shipment), and upgrading the platform reduces operational costs, minimizes manual workarounds, ensures long-term stability, and eliminates technical debt to support future growth.

Our Solution Implemented:

Our Solution

To overcome Snowgum's challenges, our team implemented a comprehensive, future-ready system that not only resolved existing issues but also positioned the brand for long-term eCommerce growth.

1. **Agile Development Approach**
   We adopted agile methodologies, allowing for iterative development, quick bug fixes, and continuous feedback. This ensured that critical issues were resolved in priority order while maintaining flexibility for future enhancements.

2. **Robust Checkout & Payment System**
   We redesigned and implemented a reliable checkout system that supported split payments, fixed payment calculation with gift cards, and user credits, ensuring customers could seamlessly complete purchases even with partial payments. This greatly improved conversion rates and reduced cart abandonment.

3. **Product Variations & Catalog Management**
   We fixed issues with product variations, thumbnails, and color/size options to deliver a smooth browsing experience. The catalog management system was optimized for both customers and administrators, making it easier to manage inventory and product display.

4. **Promotions, Discounts & Gift Cards Optimization**
   To enhance customer engagement, we resolved visibility issues with discounts, promotions, and gift cards. This ensured that all marketing offers were displayed accurately, encouraging more conversions during sales and campaigns.

5. **Improved User Experience (UX) & Navigation**
   We enhanced overall site usability by streamlining navigation, product filters, and search functionality. Additionally, we improved shipping method integration to support business scalability.

6. **Email Validation & Guest Checkout Enhancements**
   Guest checkout was refined to display all payment options and ensure email validation worked seamlessly for both registered and guest users. This reduced payment errors and improved the checkout flow for new customers.

7. **System Upgrade & Performance Optimization**
   We upgraded the system to the latest version, ensuring stability, speed, and reduced admin overhead. This improved backend management while ensuring the platform could scale with Snowgum's future growth.

Results & Growth

Within just six months of implementation, the transformation delivered measurable business impact and positioned Snowgum for sustained growth and digital leadership. The improvements not only resolved critical challenges but also enhanced both customer experience and backend efficiency.

1. **Smooth Checkout Experience**
   By introducing a robust checkout and payment system, Snowgum experienced a higher payment success rate and a significant reduction in cart abandonment, ensuring customers could complete their purchases seamlessly.

2. **Improved Product Browsing & Shopping Journey**
   With optimized product variations, display fixes, and catalog management, customers were able to quickly find the right sizes, colors, and product types. This led to an increase in conversion rates and repeat purchases.

3. **Boost in Promotional Campaign Performance**
   Promotions, gift cards, and discounts were made more visible and reliable, resulting in greater customer engagement during campaigns and a measurable increase in promotional sales revenue.

4. **Enhanced Usability & Market Reach**
   Site navigation, product filters, and marketplace options were improved to

provide a smoother, more intuitive shopping experience.

5. **Reduced Administrative Overheads**
   A faster, stable, and upgraded backend system reduced manual workload by above 100%, allowing Snowgum's team to update products and manage operations more efficiently, saving time and resources while ensuring long-term scalability.

6. **Admin Panel Optimization**
   We streamlined the Spree admin panel, empowering Snowgum's team to independently create and update landing pages (e.g., *About Us*, *Contact Us*) with ease. This reduced reliance on developers, accelerated content updates, and improved overall operational efficiency.

KPI (unit)	Before	After	% Difference
Checkout payment success rate (%)	41	96	80%
Cart abandonment rate (%)	84	48	57%
Split-payment success rate	52	95	59%
Gift card/credit application success (%)	44	98	100%
Site search success rate (%)	33	88	200%
Guest checkout completion rate (%)	62	86	139%
Email validation error rate (%)	15.7	0.9	178%
Time to publish/update product (mins)	32	8	120%
Time to create/update landing page (mins)	120	28	124%

Conclusion

Snowgum's journey from a traditional retail model to a fully scalable eCommerce business reflects the power of strategic digital transformation. By addressing core challenges in checkout, catalog management, promotions, and overall usability, we

enabled Snowgum to deliver a seamless shopping experience for customers while streamlining backend operations for the team.

The results achieved within just six months have not only strengthened their market presence but also positioned them for sustained growth, international expansion, and long-term digital leadership. This case demonstrates how the right technology and agile implementation can turn challenges into opportunities for scale and success.