

Embracing the digital potential



Ms Pang spearheaded the implementation of Gramercy's new e-commerce system to better serve its customers.

Photo: Chong Jun Liang

In the final part of a six-week series featuring SMEs that have taken steps to build their capabilities or venture into new markets with Spring Singapore's support, Aaron Tan speaks to Gramercy Music.

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IT TOOK a while for Ms Geraldine Pang to convince her father to embrace technology in a bigger way at Gramercy Music, her family business that has been distributing musical scores and instruments in Singapore since the late 1980s.

Her father saw no need for change. Gramercy had been enjoying a booming business since it opened its first store at Odeon Katong in 1988 due to the growing popularity of classical music and music education over the years.

"The older generation may not understand the importance of technology, but things like social media, digital marketing and search engine optimisation are crucial to any business today," she says. "It took me some time to explain these to my dad, who finally gave me a say in taking things forward."

Gramercy set up its company website in 2012, before Ms Pang joined the company as its business development manager about eight months ago. However, the website at that time was rudimentary, with limited information about Gramercy and its products.

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How can retailers ride the e-commerce wave to boost store traffic and sales? At this month's Singapore Retail Industry Conference, the Singapore Retailers Association shared how

While Gramercy's website had some e-commerce capabilities, its lack of integration with backend systems meant that employees had to extract sales data from the website and re-enter that data into its inventory system. Ms Pang says this process was time-consuming, and affected productivity.

Accessing real-time data Ms Pang got to work quickly to turn things around. Besides refreshing the website with a more attractive design, she spearheaded the implementation of a new e-commerce system that would fully integrate with Gramercy's inventory system, providing access to real-time inventory data across its online shop and retail showroom in Ubi Crescent.

"We also beefed up the information on our website, and made full use of search engine optimisation techniques so that the website is more visible to online customers," she says. "And with our e-commerce platform, we can reach out to those customers."

Gramercy's e-commerce platform also includes digital marketing capabilities that allow it to send electronic direct mailers (EDMs) targeted at different customer segments.

"We faced the issue of how to tailor our EDMs to specific customers, like people who only play the cello, as well as students and teachers," Ms Pang says. "With the new system, we're now able to send out EDMs to meet the specific needs of customers."

Ms Pang's efforts to take Gramercy into the digital age has paid off.

Since the new website and e-commerce system went live seven months ago, the company has enjoyed an increase in productivity and sales, with most online customers hailing from across the region.

Easing the transition

The business benefits of Ms Pang's digital push, however, was not always apparent to some employees who resisted change. To ease the transition, the company got more experienced staff to train employees while tutoring them on the side.

"We also increased our group meetings to ensure that everyone understood, and could use our new technology with ease. This brought about a positive change in our daily processes because there was more communication among our employees," Ms Pang says.

She says the support of Spring Singapore for its e-commerce initiative has been instrumental to Gramercy's success in embracing technology.



"The representative that we were assigned to from Spring guided us and helped us understand ways in which we could improve technologically.

"She patiently addressed many of our employees' concerns over the course of several months through face-to-face meetings, and also took time to understand our industry goals and familiarise us with other schemes which could be useful to our company," says Ms Pang.

For more information on the retail sector and stories on how retailers have built their capabilities, please visit www.spring.gov.sg/retail or email lifestyle_division@spring.gov.sg.



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