

CRT takes stock of online strategy in rural market place.

The Grass is Greener

with EpiServer



THE SITUATION

Combined Rural Traders (CRT) has a vast presence in the South Island, providing rural services and products to 23,000 shareholders who are mainly farmers and lifestyle block owners. As a shareholder-owned co-operative, CRT has a unique relationship with its customers, and has established a brilliant field sales force at CRT FarmCentre stores throughout the South Island. A CRT website, with a third party shopping facility, sat in conjunction with this service, but was a long way short of hitting its full potential. Service is king in the rural sector, and CRT wanted to distinguish their partnership with farmers by providing the most dynamic and accessible ways of doing business. They wanted to achieve a level of online interaction that would raise the bar emphatically in the rural marketplace, and would provide a strong competitive advantage for CRT's aspirations to be New Zealand's number one rural services provider.

THE PAIN

CRT lacked a content management system capable of supporting its strategy of bringing the bulk of its operation online, including a shopping facility for over 20,000 rural products.

EpiServer 5.0 was about to prove the grass was greener on the other side.

PREPARING THE GROUND WITH THE RIGHT CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Entirely open to the choice of content management platform, CRT took proposals from five potential suppliers, and made their decision to engage Interger based on what their CIO Roger Rennie calls 'a total package'.

He says, "We had a high level of confidence they would deliver, as Interger is extremely good in this area as Microsoft partners. With offices in Christchurch and Dunedin, Interger could build a team across two locations and was able to put developers onsite with us. The transfer of knowledge was a given – we wanted an outcome that would be easily managed internally."

Interger judged that the technologies offered by EpiServer 5 would achieve the degree of online interaction that CRT sought and would support sustained growth across key business units in CRT. In a phased effort, the content management deliverables were made, and a vast number of EpiServer features and custom properties were used. EpiServer was complemented by integration with Active Directory, whilst MondoSearch was embedded as the search engine. The CRT website received a visual overhaul delivered by Interger's Interactive team, which was in keeping with CRT's service approach and desire to make communication with farmers as easy and convenient as possible.

ROLLING OUT MORE VALUE TO CRT CUSTOMERS

The next phases in the project are dedicated to developing the shopping service tier 'My CRT' which brings farmers and over 2,300 suppliers together in an online rural marketplace second to none according to Roger Rennie.

"This is a whole meeting/marketplace coming together – I call it an explosion waiting to happen. We've got an excellent online vehicle for where we are going and there are some really good synergies along the journey in terms of the value we are adding to the relationship with our customers. Customers can purchase from CRT using their Choices Rewards Card, encouraging loyalty. Invoicing is monthly, so from a GST/tax perspective that's less paperwork and online shopping equates to less travel for time-pressured farmers. It's all about an ease of doing business with CRT."

THE GAIN

The availability of a highly personalised online rural marketplace is now a crucial factor in a farmer's decision as to which rural service provider to join. CRT has taken the high ground with their online strategy.

ENGINE ROOM

EpiServer 5
MondoSearch