Graeter's Ice Cream Automates 100% of Orders with Custom Functionality

About Graeter's

Graeter's Ice Cream is a family-owned craft ice cream producer in Cincinnati, Ohio. For more than a century, they have produced their product using the artisanal French Pot process (which results in a small batch—only two and a half gallons at a time!). Over the course of their history—from selling in Cincinnati street markets in 1870 to more than 40 retail stores, a presence in 6,000 grocery stores in 46 states, and 300,000 pints shipped annually today— Graeter's Ice Cream has won the hearts of ice cream enthusiasts and foodies across the United States.

Image credit: Graeter's Ice Cream

Challenges

- Inventory data was scattered between different systems (eCommerce and shipping) and often delayed by manual processes.
- Dry ice and other packing materials needed to be automatically optimized and presented to warehouse staff for picking and packing.
- Lack of information flow between warehouse locations.
- Inability to assign users specific role and permissions.
- Unable to see an order's life cycle from start to finish.
- It had to be fully functional in advance of the holiday season.

Goals

- Establish a real-time system of record for managing inventory and fulfillment, including allocated and unallocated products
- Build a full integration with Graeter's eCommerce platform, and improve processing speed when importing orders and creating UPS labels.
- Automate packing directions so ice cream doesn't have a chance to melt in the warehouse, a delivery vehicle, or a front porch.
- Designate specific roles for user types across the organization's different departments.
- Create a fully functional, integrated system that was tested and ready months before the holiday season.

SkuNexus

The Situation

Running their eCommerce operations on a software-as-a-service (SaaS) platform with limited capability, Graeter's was experiencing issues such as delayed inventory counts, lack of information flow between their warehouse locations, inability to assign users specific roles and permissions, shipping inefficiencies, and inability to see an order's life cycle completely. With each of these – and especially without proper warehouse workflows - Graeter's knew, coupled with their continued rapid growth, the problems would only be amplified in the future.

In a case like Graeter's, no one likes melting or melted ice cream sitting in a warehouse, on a delivery truck, or on a front porch. Time is of the essence, so the need to get the orders fulfilled correctly, in a timely manner, and with the proper shipping and handling to keep it frozen till the recipient can get it in to their freezer is of the utmost necessity.

In addition to lack of efficiency in shipping and handling, disparate systems and isolated business units are some of the main drivers of inefficiency in the order-to-door cycle. If the eCommerce application (in this case Magento) doesn't communicate correctly with the back end operations, the ball will be dropped. If each business unit at the company can't see the same information the other sees, things will be missed. The company's users must be able to see up-to-the-minute order and inventory data in order to make sure nothing is oversold or shipped incorrectly. Furthermore, the company's customers have to be assured the orders are being handled and shipped correctly.

Lastly, having different employees fulfilling similar roles in different ways and using different systems (and, in some cases, manual systems) further leads to more inefficiencies and more chances for discrepancies.

The Solution

❝ *The increase in processing speed on importing orders into SkuNexus and generating UPS labels has been critical.*
— Jaclyn von Stein, Director of Ecommerce and Technology

Initially, our team scoped out, discovered, mapped, and developed a customized system with a target of making sure Graeter's was **fully operational for their important 2017 holiday retail season online.**

After discovery, our team began working closely with Graeter's to build-out their portal, and ensured there was no disruption to their day-to-day business during the migration and implementation process.

Ensuring that their Magento eCommerce platform was fully integrated into their SkuNexus instance also allowed their warehouses to achieve automation in the flow of order information from those online sales. This resulted in increased efficiency from their original manual information processing. We also serve as the system of record, so the Graeter's team knows SkuNexus is the one place with the most up to date information about this part of their business, whether it's inventory, omnichannel order data, shipping, or something else. **Graeter's now has accurate, instant inventory counts across all their eCommerce systems.** And considering their small-batch artisanal process, that is especially important when large orders need to be made on-demand in their kitchens (or when they don't want anything melting en route to a customer).

We also integrated a specialized shipping method that takes into account the weight and size of shipping ice cream with dry ice, as well as mark dates for perishable items.

Graeter's now also has the **ability to designate roles for their specific users across the business.** Order managers, fulfillment managers, system admins, and other customized, specific roles ensure that all users get access to the functions of the services that they need and the ones they don't need can be removed without affecting their work. Improving the back-end efficiency has saved time with end-user training and the improved functionality empowers vital roles to self-manage the system.

The Results

With SkuNexus, Graeter's was able to get itself off of the "one size fits all" mentality of SaaS. Inventory is managed and updated in real-time, orders are synchronized across sales channels, and user management is straightforward.

The focus on deeply integrating SkuNexus with Magento, as opposed to simply connecting, means Graeter's has the capability to efficiently fulfill every order on the back-end with improved processes.

Graeter's does more than 40% of its annual sales in the month of December and they shipped well over 110,000 pints of ice cream during that month in 2017. Using the SkuNexus platform, Graeter's was able to automate 100% of their standard orders (excluding custom-mixed flavors).

Further benefits Graeter's has realized from their move to SkuNexus include:

- SkuNexus' early morning support (when Graeter's starts fulfilling) is a welcome change from their previous platform.
- Graeter's team can track every single order in real-time from the point of capture to delivering at the recipient's door.
- Instant inventory and fulfillment data is accessible to as many users and roles as needed in a single system.
- Lost business and unhappy customers from delayed orders or long shipment times have been reduced.
- Automated the fulfillment process so employees have clearer tasks when picking and packing.
- Shipments are sent via the most efficient warehouse location and cost effective carriers and routes.
- They can manage their shipments with real-time tracking information and share that information easily with their CSRs and customers.

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"SkuNexus took our processes to the next level! Using its automations for shipping and fulfillment, we saw massive improvement in our order handling and fulfillment during the 2017 holiday season. We're looking forward to even more improvements this year!"

Jaclyn von Stein
Director of Ecommerce and Technology, Graeter's Ice Cream