How Important is Shopify in Ecommerce Business Platform?

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Dave: Hey! Welcome! This is Dave Wooding from the Integratepro Show. And today, I have here Shaun Lathan as a guest. So, Shaun, would you say hello and introduce yourself?

Shaun: Hi Dave! Thanks for having on the podcast.

Dave: My pleasure.

Shaun: I'm looking forward to meeting you.

Dave: Likewise. So, tell me something I don't know about you already.

Shaun: Okay. Well, I guess.. First of all, I'm based in Northern Australia which is a big island. Im sure you are all familiar with it. And Im very passionate about swimming. In fact, swimming is compulsory in my family. We all swim. In fact, we all went into a race altogether once a year. Im kind of born to swim. So, that's a bit of fun. and yeah, so that is probably something you dont know.

Dave: No, I didn't. Tell me a little more. Are we talking….

Shaun: Yeah. It sort of happened by accident.. The swimming thing. Im up and always counselling. But My wife is a very ____ of swim at stake in UK years ago. We actually live next door to a tennis court here. And when we first got married we were sort of quite keen on sports. But anything that i do that i could beat her, I should never ____ on tennis again. I could never bait her to swimming so I decided I give a go on swimming. And that is something we do together. You know, we swim a few times a week. ___ outside. You know that's kind of our "switching off from the technology" which is funny.

Dave: Does that mean you are near the water?

Shaun: Yeah. Im in a two-minute walk from a olympic size pool in Hoofbourne Australia. Im very fortunate that we got a bathe house in the morning to drench yourself down here which is a beautiful spot. We decided to spend a couple of months down there. I decided myself so I have a swim everyday in the island. It's lovely

Dave: Excellent! So, you may know this already. I've been to Sydney when Im in Australia. One thing that I find really interestinthe most is those pools that is right by the ocean that just pick up the ocean water.

Shaun: Oh yeah! They are magic! I would kill to swim in my life. You know, we have to swim in 2.20 and the outdoor tours. There is something special about the salt water. It really makes you feel alive. You got that fresh feeling when you get out of that fresh chilling water.

Dave: Right. Okay. Cool

          So, Shaun, we kinda have a mutual (kind of) understanding about (little bit) business (kind of technology ____). And if I am not mistaken, your website is InfoBytesmedia.com.au. What exactly are you doing?

Shaun: Basically, we are very shopify-centric. We have a very similar service to what in terms of (we rolled about automatic prices ranges). And I know you've got a big range of platforms to deal with but we are a lot narrower. We basically help drop off shippers, automate the inventory side of their business. You probably might have a lot of three thousand products. So that's a big job to ___ and categorising them. We'll just setting them and store them up and get those product synced with those supplies. So that is also a big time saving. So basically, its an end to end shipping prices. Everything is set up. Everything is required to (what we used to call) term-case solution.

That (kind of) hault. I didnt start of doing that. I've started probably similar a lot of work to you back in 10 years ago. Still sort of selling peer to peer. (sort of) Wordpress type, small business website but working with digital agency in wholesale basis. So i provide hostile service to digital agencies. That was a good little business model. I had a business partner that was in ____ Seattle and he had a few credit things that we use to term him. and one time we hurd on a bunch of stores. And we would normally, back on the days in Seattle with a few colleague. In 2008, I stumbled upon across particularly onto shopify and I want to build half a dozen of sites in this shopping network and what not. I was used to presses in building site of Wordpress that could take month or two with complicated works. I used to build 10 sites in one week. It was a real game changer for me. And immediately, that was pretty basic, just copy and pasting. But there were a thousand of products but we were just using things and changing logo. But that was ____5:19 for me. I had a lot of clients that had ____ stores and all the issues that go with ____ source platforms. I, very quickly, changed direction.

I can't influence all my clients as not all my clients have all my platforms but certainly my clients are educated with B to B custom. and guide your customers to shopify platform. It sound easier for the clients and it is easier for me. Im sure you are familiar with some of the issues that come along with the ____5:53 world particularly the plugin model. you build the site, you do the thing right, the top thing, you dont touch the color, and the things that you might want to pull back, the things that might explode. Im just trying up with some plugins and the plugin number 20 is something that went what. That is your fault. I havent had to do that for several years now. So that is a beautiful thing.

Dave: Have you obviously used all the other shopping systems if you will. And come up with a conclusion? That sounds shopify is the best.

Shaun: The big thing for us is the support factor. The platforms like Majento which is so popular a few years ago. And you jumped into the backend and without spending a lot of time training the clients. And feels like a hundred, ____6:58 in there. There is about 64 ways of building a product that comes in complex, simple panel and too many to mention. And i think i ended up buying it and hosted a platform and then went broke after several months. It was not a good solution. But there's been a real trend. you look into the new platforms and i think there are two things that really have changed the game now.

The successful platforms like Shopify or Accounting Wise 7:32 Zero and these new ones, they are very simple. They do one thing really well they don't try and ____7:39 every costumer. But they have API. And that's the thing you love.

Dave: That's beautiful.

Shaun: I had to jump into Wordpress the other day for a client. Ive been wondering if wordpress is gonna jump on board with these API and they've been trying to do it fo years and because no one owns it. It's an open source code. They've got a plugin that is kind of beta or something. and someone mentioned the other day that Wordpress is 20% websites. but they still dont have the proper API. For me, one of the criteria I need to work with a platform that has the right prospect. I see Shopify ticks that box. But other platforms like Zapier, ive noticed when i logged into that shopify shop. it kept on popping up. Set up some integration with woocommerce or whatever it is. SO thats i think the way the things are hitting and the big change and the probability if _____8:55.

Shaun, what about woocommerce vs. shopify. I'll be honest. Im kind of ignorant. I did set up a shopify site for my wife and get used of the API. And I totally agree its ____9:09. But is the woocommerce all the same plain field or are we comparing apples to apples or apples to oranges.

Shaun: Yeah. Look. They've got to be following _____9:32 one that is called WPCommerce. And they sort of came along and simplify things a lot. So they've been into market for a few good years now. I don't want to look geeky but if you look at the architecture of Wordpress, its a blogging in general. So if you have a website that has a really thousand of products, behind those things, all the woocommerce is doing is basically creating a custom post type. and everything in meta, a what we call a meta field. so we are stuffing, raising a different fields. Unless you have a serious situatuon going on and really have a descent APS or a server. this is the issue. Most of the people save money with Wordpress and woocommerce because it is free. and they skip on the hosting and I come along and ive got to do integration and ive made to run some __con 10:89 job. That's gotta time it up in 60 seconds because they are on shared web hosting.

Or maybe they've got permissions and that is something silly because they do not even have a control panel with some godaddy cheap platform. People think it is cheap. But you know the most valuable resource we've got in life is time. And we've worked up on the same time and the day and time is money. With wordpress and woocommerce, we are still paying a hosting fee probably paying for some training in setting up word and __11:20 product.

Whereas Shopify, we get everything. Products with $29 a month. You get 24/7 service. If your WordPress site explodes, you cant call anyone. You are on your own. Where as Shopify, you've got a friendly Canadian that's gonna be on _____11:36.. And He's gonna help you out. and that means they call me as much. I dont really have hasteful issues these days because of the fact that it's just so robust. And it is very easy to use. they've got a training. Usually for the session, ive been training them up online. Because we are automating the __12:08 of the products and they order the process they can just focus on marketing theri business which is sort out.

Dave: So if somebody comes to you and you're gonna do business with them, you are gonna set up a shopify store and do all the integrations. What would a typical client be to you, somebody who has thousand of products?

Shaun: Absolutely, most of my referrals come from wholesale companies. So they come from big catalogues, maybe 5 thousand products. I don't know this specific arrangement with them. I kind of fell in to this business by accident. I have a drop shipping site and I did it. and the supply said, "Oh! OK! you do another one." And it just felt like a snowball from there.

So, 80% of my business comes from the a little bit of __ 12:52 point dependency there. And most of those supplies actually out of old school like I said probably half of them have two more businesses from retired shops. SO the prices would be that I would have an existing website and often it is on shopify now. And if it on Wordpress I try and convert them to the bright side. I can't ___ too much 13:23.

From there we basically hold their hand from the whole prices because as I was listening to a podcast last night one of James', and he was talking about "Don't worry about the how, Don't worry about the who" and some people rely in that. So the customary they just give it to us. WE dont need some to explain the technical stuff. We just get the brief. Say, what do you want? What kind of risk you want? We just hold the hand you whole life through. Set it up for them and then try them.

And I should end up with a finished site. And we'll do everything and it depends on the level of the expertise. But often, ___14:17 domain and pretty much everything that is required to do. Setting up emails, and google apps. I do provide full service and that's it. Because we are dealing with drop ships at the end of the day. and they all just want a turn case solution that worked. We'll not just have to find the API. We will manage the whole process.

And we have a support plan with them. So, there is another reasonable plan people can rely on. We are setting up a product-izer. Depending on what solution I've got for the reasonable support plan.

Its about some of the customers we never hear from. That works hard well fir abiut 15:25..

Dave: What are some of the big challenges that show up with regards to what you do? Where you on the point where you do typically a lot of the same thing over and over? And you figured out all what the new ones is and occassionally you got this big surprises.

Shaun: Look, I tried to and its one of the reasons that I focus on shopify. Any business if you can ___ 15:44 that's a beautiful thing because you become a subject expert but obviously from the shopify side of things, I'm a little ___15:53 in it's two sides of equation. There's a shopify side and supply side. ___ 15:59 supplies have existing cards. So, we have a very good understanding on how they worked. ___ 16:07._____ 16:16 So, thank you for that.

Dave: You're welcome.

Shaun: So, I guess the only time that we really need probably look in and knocked things out are two issues. One, a different platform that we used to in terms of the supply rate and we also have different solutions that we've got. So, that's probably where we put the most our effort in. And sometimes, we could even get in the information. Because one of the problems, one of the supplies they will have their own API's. Maybe, deal with the IT guy. But sometimes get in the documentation. And then you get the documentation, maybe it's wrong. You will just know that, I can tell you shopify some of their documentation. ___ 17:16 documentation features you get to know it and know that it is not an issue. That's probably the biggest challenge. It always depends on third parties is your biggest challenge.

Dave: Sure.

Shaun: Occasionally, design can get us. We don't do a lot of design, we usually work on things and we've got some designers that we worked with. ___ 17:41. We do like API stuff because it ___ works ___. We don't have any issues for a while. But I did have with one client ages ago. It took like a month just to __17:58. That stuff.

Dave: That happens. That's for sure. people get hang up on or life just happens. Some things important to them initially like ___ 18:08. Something else in their life happened. We get that all the time, it's just the same thing. The biggest challenge we often have is getting the requirements from the customers. So, I can feel your pain because I know exactly what you are talking about.

Shaun: It's a fact to doing business. You're going to be patient. Most people are really understanding and I think in business you should really be honest. And as long as you communicate the issues you having, most people are really understanding. You really have your __18:44 on.

Dave: Here's one thing we've done. We do no update updates with our customers. In other words, even if we don't have an update. We say, hey, we are still here, we're alive. We are working on your project but we have no update. If nothing_____19:00. Is that _____that you are out in the open, and we also have our regular schedule, we know that once a week or reach out to customers and at least let them know that we are still alive in this side of the world. and we do have your project going on.

Shaun: That's a great idea. Actually, I was thinking about that today. I have no update for client. You just ___ 19:19. I just going to do that after this podcast.

Dave: Part of it because some people really want to stay up to date. So, I don't have to keep track. Okay, this person wants to know very frequent. This person wants to be updated once there is some changes. So, instead compromise. At least once a week, and then when things happened as they happened. But that way, we covered our basis.

Shaun: And I think that's really a good strategy. Because I think when people hear nothing, they think the worst.

Dave: Why not?

Shaun: I'm an optimist at heart. But there is an expression, no news is good news. And I think the opposite is true when it comes to customers.

Dave: So, I'm just going to ask you a little bit about getting into the techie stuff. How do you handle failures? Like you are already _____ 20:13 to _____20:15. Did you handle that gracefully? Do you have your system checked again for another update? How do you do that?

Shaun: We, do. So, we do simple log-in essentially. A little bit of old school stuff going on. I try to catch ____ 20:38. It's really time stuff. And then we also, we just got traditional log-in for everything we do to basically text file and so we can anytime go and check what's happening. That essentially if there's any _____ 21:03. orders we could____ 21:08 a little bit old school. We put orders would get drop to certain folder and it's prices correctly moved to another folder. And some of these things a little bit old school, a few difference and checks and balances. We have caught a few something and go back and it is kind an old school way moving one folder to another we can actually drop it in another folder. And push it through again.

Dave: I just going to mention, there is an app, at least on the iphone. I think that it is a pushover.net, probably a website. It basically catches whatever you send to it.

Shaun: Okay, great!

Dave: So, you can send data to it. Your friends can make a sale or your customer makes a sale. And when they have this app they can be notified or if the service goes down they can have it notified it. It's annoying. I usually set it up whenever the web server goes down I need to ping the host team to bring it back up. You can use it a web hook to catch whenever information you want.

Shaun: I definitely check that. I think the other thing is, we are always ____ 22:25. We haven't ____ 22:29

Dave: Shaun, stepping away from work a little bit. Besides swimming, I'm guessing there is a family there too. What else do you do? What keeps you busy?

Shaun: I guess it's probably a midlife crises. I joined a rock band a few years ago.

Dave: Excellent!

Shaun: We played a gig last weekend ____ 23:01. Getting back to the family.____ 23:08. Young kids basically went to local __ 23:13 school. We always go camping and stuff. And around a camp fire, we played various musical instruments. So, we formed a band. Our first gig a few years ago, we played __ 23:33 basketball. And the party there was huge. So, we progressed it ____ 23:43 clubs. _____23:48. That's a good relay actually. In fact, that's how i left. I used to be in a corporate world. I worked for telcos and stuff like that. I got off a job that build a music website for client. And that's when I had my resignation. _____24:08. That's a music sharing site back in 2006. Luckier, I was looking on a website._____ 24:20

Dave: I love that! I was going to mention that.

Shaun: ____24:35. That's a great line! The young kids these days, they think internet is going to be forever but it's pretty new, isn't it? It is still __26:25.

Dave: Yes, I agree. It is just amazing how much things got so much easier. Especially like regards to web development. Like __24:58, a great example.

Shaun: I've seen that everywhere. I used to _____25:03 internet. Like a string __ 25:10. Sometimes, when I see kids on facebook. I wish that annoying noise would come. It's too easy now to spend time online. Yes, it's everywhere. It's a good fun. But if your family was a family of five and all great, good kids, so healthy. We lived in a beautiful power__25:37. And like yourself, I went on with my own __25:41 because of the lifestyle. Do a school run with the kids. 25:48. Walk the dog during the day. It's a great life.

Dave: It's great talking to you Shaun. I appreciate you taking the time. Like I said, part of the reason of having this phonecall is just to get to know you a little bit better. And also introduce you to people so that they know that you have expertise in shopify. And your site is infobytesmedia.com

Shaun: That's right! Correct!

Dave: _26:20. What the bytes mean. __26:22 that's the name of your site. Appreciate it very much

Shaun: Thank you very much for having me. It's a joy. Thanks guys!

Dave: You bet.

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