

Taking Business to New Heights

The PowderHuffer Success Story





“Amazon Webstore, along with Selling on Amazon and Fulfillment by Amazon, has helped us increase sales, reduce costs, and focus more on running our business.”

Christon Horstman | Owner | PowderHuffer.com

To the Point

PowderHuffer’s Migration to Amazon Webstore was Fast, Easy and Inexpensive

Amid a substantial increase in sales from Selling on Amazon, PowderHuffer.com was having problems at home. The online ski store’s original eCommerce platform was proving expensive, unreliable, and difficult to manage. The store’s owner, a man with a wide range of business successes, looked to Amazon Webstore for help.

PowderHuffer’s migration to Amazon Webstore was fast, easy and inexpensive.

It opened the door to Fulfillment by Amazon and Amazon Prime. No longer did the site crash in the middle of the night. Costs related to hosting, development, and merchant processing were reduced along with staffing and warehousing expenses.

Amazon Webstore helped PowderHuffer.com build its brand through its online presence and freed the organization to focus on what it does best: bringing the look and feel of the slopes to buyers from coast to coast.



Who is PowderHuffer

Freestyle skiing has a language all its own, with bubbles and buckets, gapers and groomers. A powderhuffer, explained Christon Horstman, is a skier happily up to his nose in fresh snow. Horstman adopted the term for his online store specializing in ski gear and clothing from brands like Atomic, Full Tilt, Look, Orage and Skullcandy.

Horstman grew up skiing in Park City, Utah, got an MBA and became an airline pilot. He opened a brick-and-mortar store in the Park City ski resort and added two more nearby before selling all three and focusing exclusively online.

“While our brick and mortar stores were very successful, our biggest opportunity was always online,” he said. “That’s because if you’re in Utah or Colorado, every ski shop on the corner has what we’re selling. But the guy who’s sitting in Pennsylvania or Texas can’t buy that jacket he just saw on YouTube.”

In their searches for Smith Maze helmets, Armada stage suspenders and Full Tilt boots, PowderHuffer’s younger target market looks online first. “Our customers have spent their whole lives shopping online. That’s what they’re used to,” Horstman said. **“I saw the future of our market moving more and more online.”**





Helping fuel PowderHuffer's growth were the rising popularity of freestyle skiing and the sport's emphasis on fashion. "We're just seeing more and more people – many of them younger people – switching from snowboarding back to skiing," Horstman said. "But they don't want clothing, helmets and goggles that look like those Mom and Dad wore five years ago. They want to stand out and express themselves."

"Our goal is to carry a line of products that can't be found at a suburban sporting-goods store, one that keeps skiing fresh and PowderHuffer at the forefront of this new free-skiing movement."



Website:

PowderHuffer.com

CEO:

Christon Horstman

Amazon Products:

[Amazon Webstore](#)

[Fulfillment by Amazon](#)

[Selling on Amazon](#)

“Our first eCommerce platform was both cumbersome and susceptible to crashes. One bug could shut down our whole site; and fixing it could take days.”

Christon Horstman | Owner | PowderHuffer.com

The CHALLENGE

PowderHuffer’s Initial eCommerce Platform was Expensive and Difficult to Maintain

PowderHuffer’s transition to an exclusively online business fit the company’s target market and its owner’s busy schedule. But the store’s first choice of eCommerce solutions caused Powderhuffer both consternation and concern.

“It cost about \$30,000 just to get the platform up and running and doing what we needed,” Horstman said. “And while the system was robust, it required an expensive, enterprise-level hosting solution and management by a full-time web developer or a third party. That meant additional commitments of not just money but time as well.”

“An accidental change of a single code could turn the site’s homepage into a jumbled mess. The third-party vendor could take a day to return a call and several to address an issue. There were always hiccups,” Horstman said.

Meanwhile there was concern that with the original solution PowderHuffer was hosting its merchant processing accounts and the associated customer information. “We needed to reduce our merchant processing liability as well as reduce our development costs overall,” Horstman said.

“I needed to take the burden off my organization the responsibility for managing the behind-the-scenes elements of our website so we could focus on the business and the front-end: creating product, marketing, and then order fulfillment and customer relations. That’s where our strengths are.”

The SOLUTION

A Better Platform, On Time and On Budget

A solution to PowderHuffer's problems began to emerge soon after it joined Selling on Amazon. "We had really good sales, but there were always a few hiccups going from our website platform to Selling on Amazon," Horstman said. "That sparked my interest in the integration Amazon offers."

From their first conversations with an Amazon Webstore Associate, PowderHuffer personnel made clear their frustrations with their original eCommerce platform. It wasn't giving them control over their brand in the ways they needed. They couldn't push out content at the speeds they expected. Developers had to be called in to make even minor changes to their site.

Integration with Fulfillment by Amazon was another key need; and that would open the door to Amazon Prime. Horstman's fears of another large upfront financial commitment were quickly put to rest.

The Webstore Associate was able to determine what platform PowderHuffer was on, identify key pain points, and make recommendations based on its design requirements, timeline and budget. Then came direct introductions to solution providers that could provide the necessary functionality.

Horstman said, "The development firm Amazon recommended certainly played a role in my decision to move to a new platform. And it wasn't just their quote and their level of customization. It was their confidence in what I could achieve with Amazon Webstore."

“I’m not worried any more about our site crashing in the middle of the night. And with product in an Amazon warehouse, when something sells, I can just move it through. This has really simplified the overall process for me.”

Christon Horstman | Owner | PowderHuffer.com

Why Amazon Webstore?

With its easy migration to Amazon Webstore, PowderHuffer did more than address issues related to website development and merchant processing. “For me, it’s a three part deal,” Horstman said. “It’s Selling on Amazon. It’s the Amazon Webstore. And it’s Fulfillment by Amazon. It’s the whole package – three pieces that work really well together.”

Amazon Prime, Horstman said, “has been great for us. We know people are coming to our site through online ads and searches and saying, “Oh, wow. I can buy this with my Amazon account, and it’s going to ship Prime.”

He said, “I wanted all in with the Amazon system or not at all. With Amazon Webstore, I’m all in.”

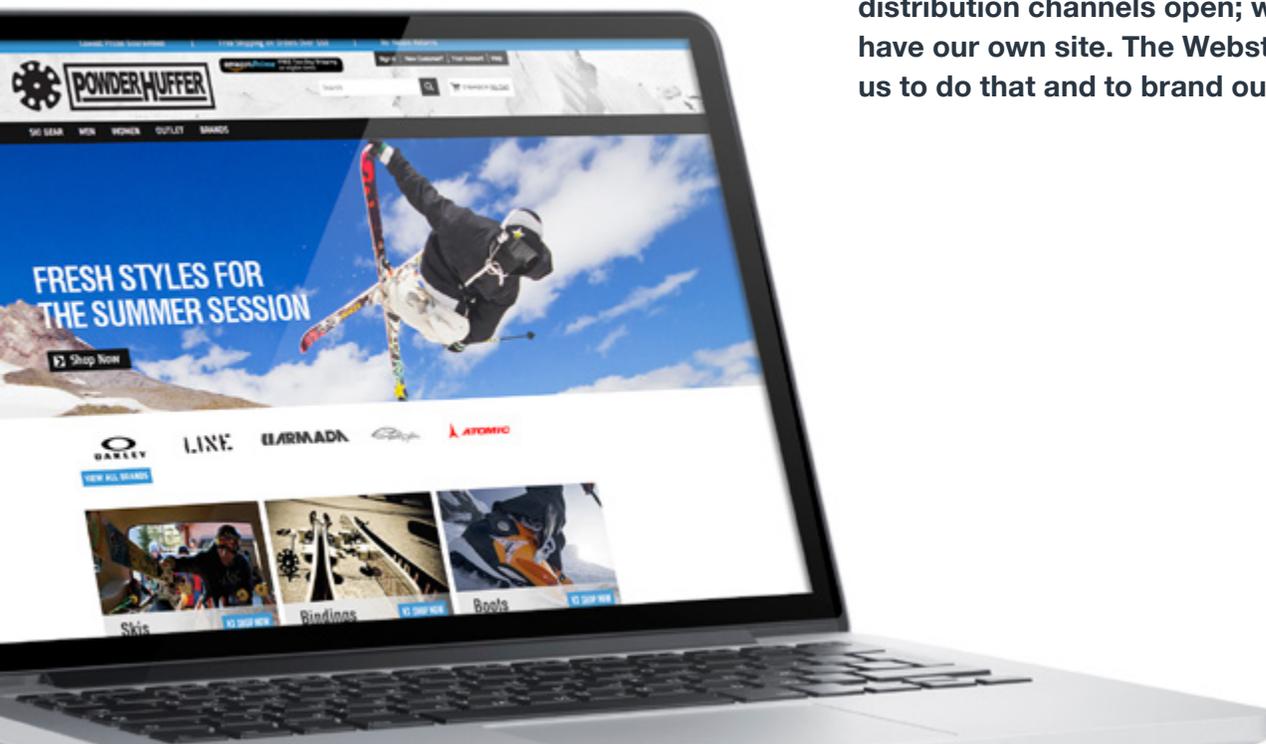
The RESULTS

Selling on Amazon and Webstore Presences Compliment One Another

For PowderHuffer, the switch to Amazon Webstore paid immediate dividends. Horstman said, “We launched a much better website and did the whole thing for less than \$2,000. We reduced our costs related to hosting, development, and merchant processing by \$500 a month.” Staffing and warehousing costs were reduced as well.

PowderHuffer was already enjoying 50-percent increases in sales year over year through Selling on Amazon. Horstman said, “Our sales on Amazon.com are higher now than our Webstore sales. That’s to be expected, especially because of Prime. And that’s fine. I’d be fine if 90 percent of sales came on Amazon.com.

“That said, we have to maintain our own branded website, our own branded store. That’s a major factor in keeping our distribution channels open; we have to have our own site. The Webstore allows us to do that and to brand ourselves.”



“If your business is really good at talking to customers, knowing products and selling products, great. Focus on that.”

Christon Horstman | Owner | PowderHuffer.com

IMPLICATIONS

The Freedom to ‘Do What You’re Good At’

What can other small and mid-size businesses learn from PowderHuffer’s experience?

“I’m not a web development or coding expert. I don’t really want to be,” Horstman said. “Even if I could hire someone who was, I don’t really know how to manage that.”

“So, if you didn’t get into business to code a website, don’t do it. Instead, do what you’re really good at and focus on what your business is really good at.”



Amazon Webstore is a complete eCommerce solution that helps businesses of all sizes create and manage an online store. Backed by Amazon technology and expertise, Amazon Webstore includes hosting, shopping cart, design tools, store branded and Amazon.com checkout options, payment processing, fraud protection, and easy integration to Selling on Amazon and Fulfillment by Amazon.

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Get Started

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