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Designing and Developing Topps

Turning a Classic Pastime into an Unforgettable Digital Customer Experience

Topps, a 75-year-old company known best for their baseball cards, fosters authentic connections between fans and the players they idolize. Their long list of loyal customers frequently visits the site with some coming back to buy special edition cards every week. In addition to selling one-of-a-kind and signed baseball, soccer, and wrestling cards, Topps has always sought to create a more personal and engaging online experience through investments, such as loyalty programs, rewards, and customizable products. However, adding new functionality to their M1 ecommerce site was becoming more costly and time-consuming. As the backlog grew, store operations took precedence over enhancing the user experience and optimizing conversion rate.

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Before M1 support ended, the Topps team decided to invest in a new M2 site as well as a new ecommerce agency. After going through an intense vetting process with FitForCommerce, Topps chose Blue Acorn iCi over its current partner and other agencies. Topps cited Blue Acorn iCi's unparalleled experience in ecommerce strategy, design, and replatforming as the reason for partnering with the agency.
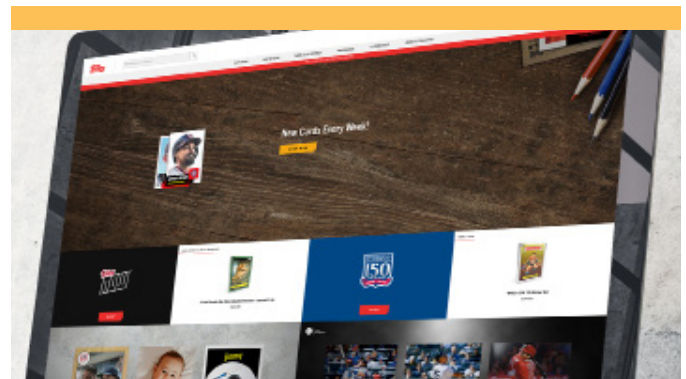
UX Blueprint

To evaluate the previous ecommerce site and identify opportunities, Blue Acorn iCi's Insights Team created a Topps-specific UX Blueprint—a tool that helps brands define their UX strategy. The team approaches a UX Blueprint from four perspectives: quantitative, expert, user, and qualitative. From the qualitative approach, they analyzed key metrics, such as conversion rate, average order value, device usage, and top pages.

The qualitative approach audits the user experience and customer journey for best practices, general usability, and conversion opportunities. The audit revealed mismatched merchandising, overwhelming navigation and a lack of compelling content. User insights validated the findings from the qualitative and quantitative assessments.

Following the UX Blueprint, Blue Acorn iCi created clear and intuitive navigation and filtering, improved product recommendations for relevancy and popularity, and added an easy-to-use search function. To optimize merchandising, the team added a variety of products and access to nostalgic products (all products are now archived and searchable but labeled as out-of-stock) and designed an exciting shopping experience to create brand awareness.

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Custom Card Builder

The original custom card builder was slow to load and lacked a mobile-friendly experience, making it impossible for customers to design their cards when away from their desktop. The Topps team envisioned a revamped custom card builder that allows parents to snap a picture of their kid playing baseball or soccer, upload the image to the Topps website, and immediately create the custom card—all while watching their kid's game. This vision led to three main goals for the new builder: make it easy to upload new frames, allow flexibility with future frames, and improve the user experience.

Blue Acorn iCi built the entire experience on native Magento, including templating and dynamic text. The entire builder is on one page developed in JavaScript, which keeps the builder extremely fast and responsive (similar to an app). It also minimizes the number of API calls; in fact, the only API call is the add to cart which is native Magento.

The first step of the custom card builder is choosing an image. Customers can either upload an image from their phone or computer's photo library or take a new picture and upload it. For coaches who want to create cards for their entire team, the new version allows customers to design multiple cards at the same time and apply the same template to all. Previously, in the old version of the card builder, users would need to design each card individually.

Once the shopper uploads their image, the next step is choosing a frame. Users can easily toggle between frames to see how their image would look in each one. The frames are treated as configurable products in Magento, making it easy for the Topps team to add new frames through the admin. The next step is choosing a team, which are considered simple prod-ucts (a product with a single SKU that can be used in association with configurable products). The selected team is uploaded as an image in each configurable product (frame). Each frame adapts to the team differently to align with the design. If the customer has their own team they'd like to add to the frame, they simply need to upload their team logo. The logo will automatically skew to fit into the frame design.

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Customers can further customize the card with their name, hometown, and stats as well as the font type and color. Each text option is treated as a custom option associated with the frame. The team can customize the text bounding boxes and the maximum and minimum font sizes.

When the customer is ready to add to cart, the builder captures the card as a PNG and uploads it to the cart. After completing the checkout process, the image is sent to the printers through a Magento integration.

The revamped custom card builder accomplished three things:
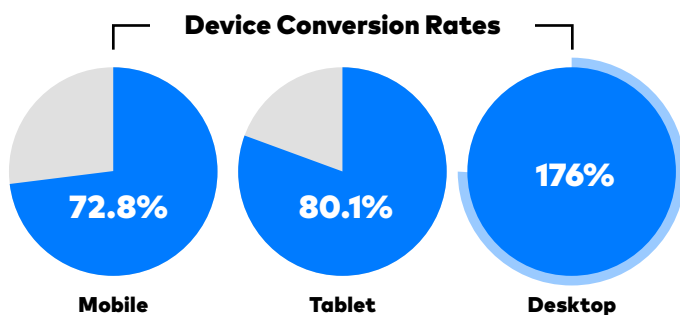
Improved user experience:
Using any device (mobile phone, desktop, tablet), a customer can upload images of their team members, customize the template with the team's logo, and personalize with each kid's name, hometown, and states.
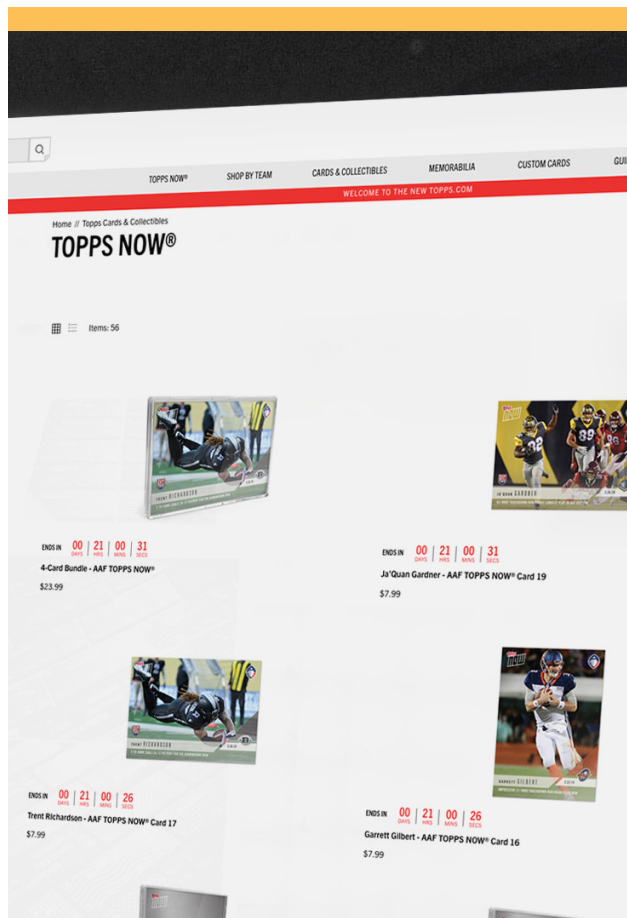
Add new frames:
The Topps team can easily add new frames to the card builder, same as they would add a new configurable product in Magento.

Frame flexibility:
Using Magento product attributes, all the current and future frames allow flexibility—from team logo and template to font color and type.

Device Conversion Rates

72.8% Mobile **80.1%** Tablet **176%** Desktop

The improved customer experience across devices increased mobile conversion rates by 72.8%, tablet conversion rates by 80.1%, and desktop conversion rates by 176%.

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Countdown Clock

Trading sports cards is a classic pastime, but the Topps team needed a way to make the hobby relevant for today's consumers. A few years ago, Jeffrey Heckman, director of ecommerce & new product development, came up with their Topps Now Cards. Each morning, Topps launches new cards based on the best (or worst) plays from the previous night. Below each Topps Now card is a countdown clock, revealing how much time is left before the card is no longer available for purchase.

Blue Acorn iCi's Engineering team completely redesigned and rebuilt the countdown timer through custom development. The rebuilt timer came with an automated process that would trigger events once the timer struck zero, including adding the out-of-stock attribute badge to the times and removing the add to cart button, the timer, and pricing. Essentially, the team can upload their new products and forget it.

The redesigned clock along with added compelling, educational content improved brand awareness and the customer experience—ultimately increasing conversion rates and reducing time-to-purchase. Nearly a third of customers purchased within two days of their first site interaction.

Redemption Feature and Home Run Challenge

Lucky retail customers will find a Redemption scratch off in their pack of baseball cards. Each card comes with the opportunity to receive a signed card from a specific player. To receive the card indicated, the shopper must enter the unique code from the back of the card on the Topps site. Before entering the code all users must create an online account. In addition to asking for name, email, and address, Topps also asks customers for their favorite baseball team—enabling the marketing team to use these customer attributes to target shoppers with personalized campaigns.
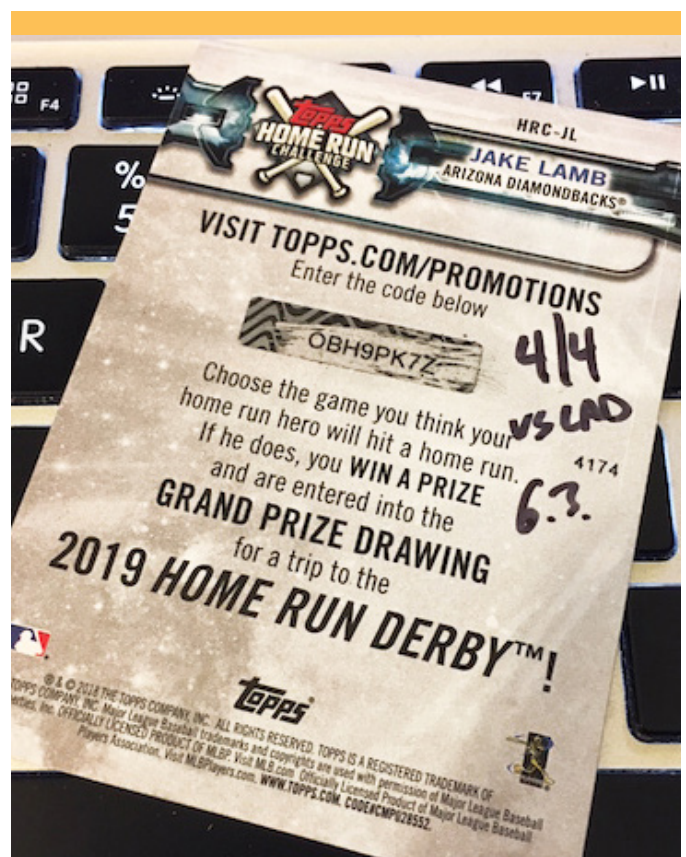
Similar to the Redemption card, the Home Run Challenge is a card put into packs of baseball cards sold at retailers. The customer logs into their Topps account and enters the code from the back of the card. At this point, the user picks a day in which they think the player on the card will hit a home run. If the user guesses correctly, they receive a free prize in the mail.

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During the replatform, the Blue Acorn iCi Engineering team replicated the Redemption and Home Run Challenge features, so they work in tandem with Magento. The two features now provide Topps the opportunity to convert offline customers into online ones, collect their information through Magento's customer account creation, and re-target for repeat purchases. Additionally, the features motivate shoppers to return to the site to check the status of their Redemption or Home Run card.
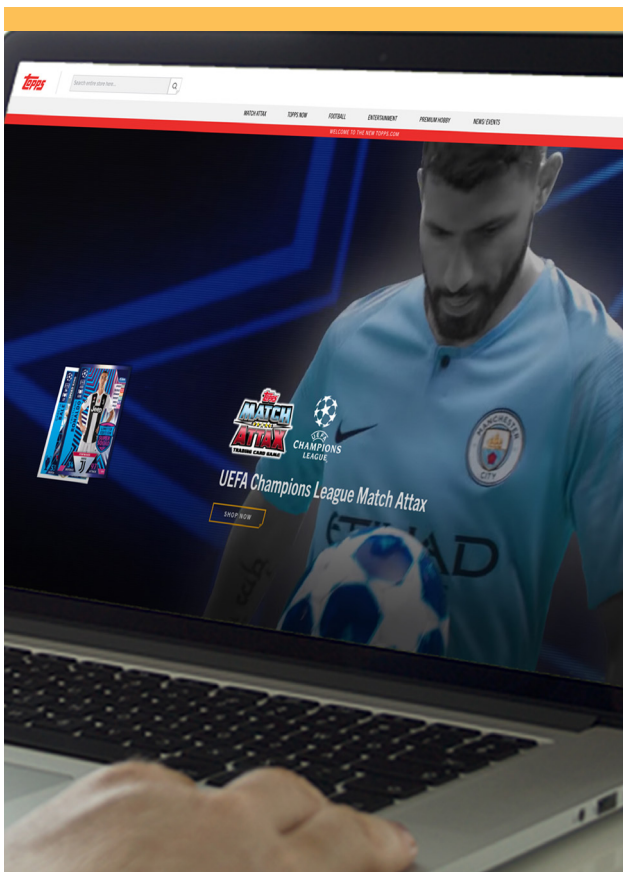
Many brands that sell through retail partners have no way of collecting that customer data. These two marketing programs allow Topps to cross those traditional channel boundaries and collect otherwise lost insights. Understanding how consumers interact with the brand across channels enables Topps to provide a holistic omnicommerce experience.
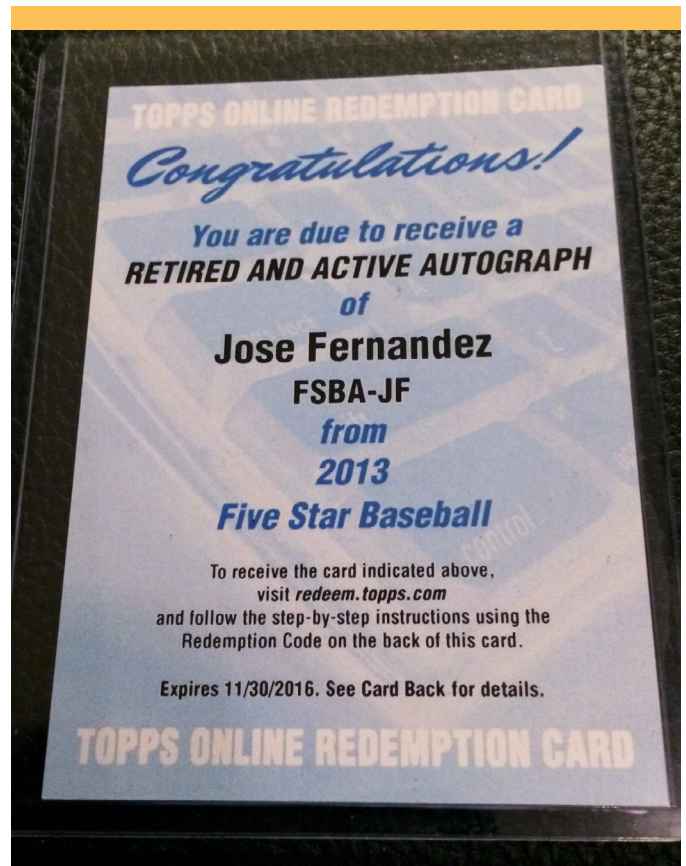
Improved Globalized Magento Setup

In addition to the US site, Topps has two international sites: UK and Germany. Previously on separate URLs and admins, Blue Acorn iCi brought the three websites into one Magento instance. With all three sites in one instance, the Topps team offers their shoppers localized brand experiences across all three international sites, while maintaining brand consistency. They can easily preview content, customize merchandising by location, and support local currencies and languages.

From the consumer's perspective, they now see a personal and reliable experience across three international companies. They only see product offerings and recommendations, content, and promotions that are relevant to their region. For example, the US site heavily focuses on baseball cards and content, but the UK site prominently showcases their soccer material and products.

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The Germany site deemed a more difficult challenge than the other two due to GDPR compliance requirements. The team installed an Amasty GDPR module. The module collects customer consent, lets users anonymize their personal data, receives and manages customer deletion requests, and enables the Topps team to create, update, and delete privacy policy documents in one place. This helps Topps avoid penalties for breaching GDPR, increase their German customers' loyalty and confidence, and collect and process customer data transparently and efficiently.

Results:

The analytics from the newly replatformed M2 site speak to the success of the improved user experience and enhanced customer features.

- Revenue increased 109.5%
- Bounce rate decreased almost 30%
- Transactions increased 234.2%
- Overall conversion rate increased 114.5%
- Page load time decreased 30%
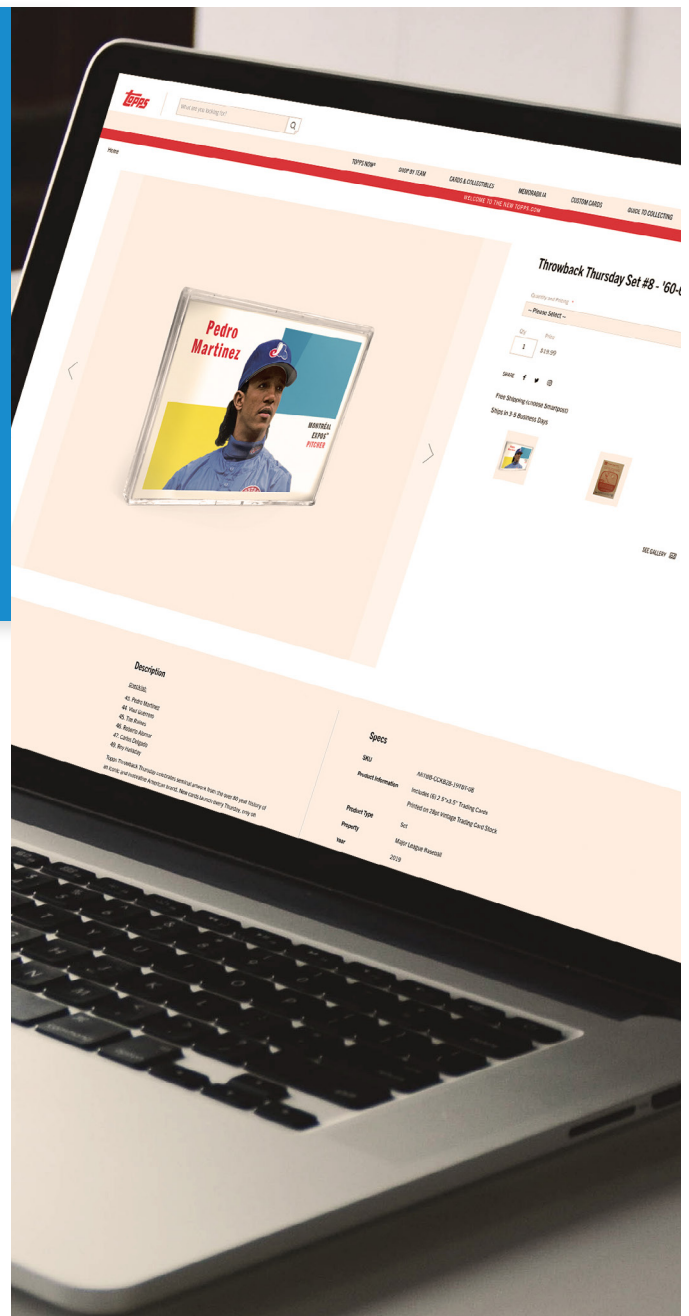
109.5%
Revenue +

Topp's revenue increased 109.5%