

DATA ASSET MANAGEMENT

meta-morphix - Managing Customer Data

FIReBOX.COM



Christian Robinson, Managing Director of Firebox.com

Christian Robinson, Managing Director of Firebox.com, describes the importance of good data management in nurturing and growing their businesses.

Background:

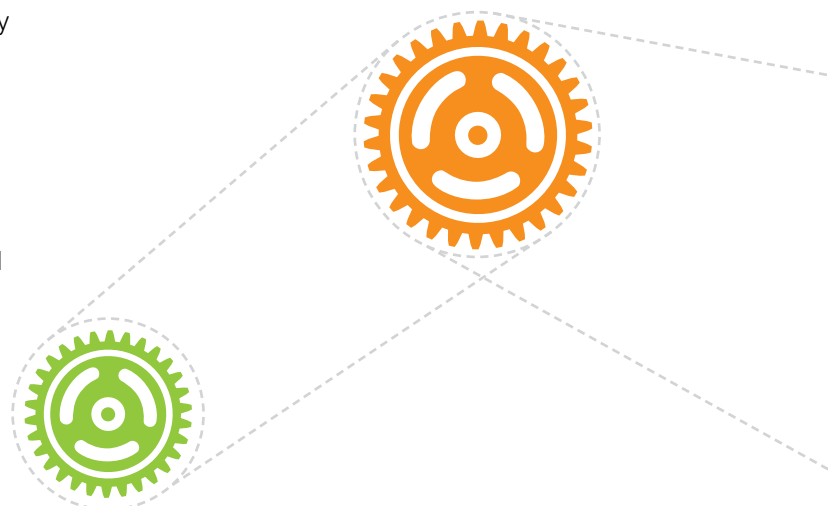
Originally founded by two university friends in 1998 as hotbox.co.uk, the now thriving online retailer rebranded to Firebox.com in 2000 during a notoriously difficult time for dotcom start-ups. Firebox.com has since gone from strength-to-strength, winning numerous awards – including Stuff and T3 magazine’s “Retailer of the Year” awards in 2007 and 2008 – and being ranked as the 13th fastest-growing business in the UK (Source: Sunday Times FastTrack 100, 2004). It is by all accounts a huge branding success story.

A unique online retail destination and purveyor of gifts with a twist, the Firebox product range includes only the most original, and exciting accessories, toys, games and gadgets from around the world.

Firebox eliminates the hours of fruitless searching involved in finding and buying the perfect gift with a hassle-free online shopping experience, which is focused on making the consumer’s life easier. With a number of value adding functions including a Gift Finder, convenient delivery options and gift-wrapping service, Firebox.com offers unrivalled customer service within the online retail sector.

Originally Firebox attracted a largely young male audience, but in recent years this has broadened considerably and today our customer base is an even male/ female split. Typical Firebox customers are 25-45, online-savvy, financially secure, possibly with a young family and are relying on Firebox as a source of gift inspiration for their friends and family.

The Firebox database now consists of over 1 million customer records that we have collected over our 12 years of trading. Our newsletter goes out to 650k recipients every 2 weeks, and our printed catalogues and other print media have an annual circulation of over 7m. As the business has grown, so too has the understanding of our customer database, which is a dynamic, organic by-product of the acquisition work our Marketing team does here at Firebox.



Over the years we've learned to manage our customer database like any other key business asset – we invest in it and we nurture it to generate the best possible ROI. I think the most striking change in the way we manage our database is that we've become much more ambitious regarding the business savings and efficiencies we can make. Our data bureau, meta-morphix ltd, has played an extremely important role in helping us to develop our database, make cost savings through not mailing Gone Aways, increase our knowledge of our customers and subsequently they have helped us to make good on our environmental promises and CSR goals.

One of the primary issues we face as an online retailer using printed mailings is to match our online sales against offline marketing activity. With the help of meta-morphix, we have implemented a number of systems to allow us to build a single customer view and understand how offline marketing drives online engagement. We currently employ a twin-track approach to our data asset management whereby we manage our primary customer database in-house for order fulfilment, customer communication and CRM. Alongside this we work closely with meta-morphix who manage our postal mailing data and the collection and processing of customer data for our printed mailings. Meta-morphix also work with us to segment and target our 'housefile' for mailings, post-campaign response and matchback analysis and they assist us with the cleansing and de duping of our prospect data.

Ultimately, the accuracy and security of our data asset is fundamental to the way we do business at Firebox - it's not just about upholding our legal obligations and maximising our financial efficiency it's also about respecting our customers and communicating with them in a way that reflects our brand values.

Christian Robinson,
Managing Director

