

A Beginner's Path to Getting in the eBook Game

Case Study

Situation (Challenge)

Record Research is a publisher of reference books based on data from popular music charts, such as *Billboard*. These books are used by the entertainment industry and are valued for the wealth of accompanying information available on each recording. Record Research's music enthused customers love the data in their printed books but they also like new technology, technology that allows them to carry their beloved books around without weighing them down (Record Research's books can weigh as much as seven pounds). Record Research's knowledge of eBooks was limited and they were looking for a partner who could help them convert their complex titles to eBook form and create a platform from which to sell their new electronic content, complete with payment processing. Additionally, they needed someone who could guide them every step of the way and provide ongoing support. "Very strong support from our eBook partner was necessary for our eBook success. We've been printing books for 42 years, so eBooks were an entirely new venture for us," stated Kim Bloxdorf, Vice President at Record Research.

Solution

Record Research partnered with Sheridan Books to help carry out their eBook strategy and solution. This solution provided Record Research with eBook conversion to eBook PDF format, the application of Digital Rights Management to protect content from unauthorized users, and a custom branded eCommerce platform that seamlessly connected to their website.

eBook Conversion

Record Research's publications are highly complex and contain large numbers of tables, making them difficult to convert into electronic books. Sheridan's conversion staff evaluated their titles and provided several samples and options for Record Research. Ultimately the eBook PDF format was chosen. This file type is compatible with most devices, tablets, and readers and can maintain the structure and integrity of the content that Record Research's designers so carefully put together. Record Research also chose to enhance their publications by adding color and design elements that are limited in the print edition, but translate well for electronic devices.

Digital Rights Management

Digital Rights Management was very important to Record Research, which is why they chose to utilize Sheridan's Digital Rights Management platform that is empowered by Adobe Content Server. Permissions are applied at the point of purchase to protect their intellectual property.

Sheridan Connect

The current Record Research website did not have the technology necessary to add a new eBook sales channel or process payments for customers, so the Sheridan Connect platform was a perfect fit. The new custom branded and hosted eCommerce site allows consumers to purchase and download their eBooks and easily navigate to other Record Research content online. Sheridan established and manages the credit card clearing process for Record Research, which includes applying the appropriate sales tax, processing the payment, and sending Record Research a monthly check for their sales.

To start the process, a kick off meeting was held to discuss what the project would entail, establish the timeline and responsibilities, and then regular meetings were established to review the progress of the site. Once the Sheridan Connect implementation was completed, but prior

to launch, training on how to add new titles, apply coupon codes, update pricing, and access sales reports, among other site administration tasks was conducted for the Record Research staff. “Our contacts at Sheridan trained and informed us every step of the way. Sheridan proactively kept us on track, as we were immersed in other print projects. They did much of the work of setting up the platform and the process of outfitting the store was very intuitive and easy to learn” comments Bloxdorf.

The ability to link books in a series, offer coupon codes to discount titles, and pre-sell titles still in production are some of the features enabled. FAQ and support resource pages for consumers, along with preview pages to view selected pages of a title prior to ordering, also help consumers with their purchase. Access to administration tools allows Record Research to change pricing and add new titles quickly and easily in addition to being able to view monthly sales reports, consumer reports, and statistics through Google Analytics.

Results

Record Research is able to satisfy their customer base by providing them a lightweight version of their book – in electronic form. This new electronic solution is available via a custom eCommerce site that blends seamlessly with their existing website. An added benefit is the data available from monthly sales reports, consumer reports, and Google Analytics that provides consumer behavior and purchasing patterns. This is valuable information and can be used to guide business and marketing decisions going forward. Record Research’s Sheridan Connect eCommerce platform is fully managed and hosted by Sheridan Books. This means that Record Research maintains a regular cash flow without having to manage the payment processing and eBook fulfillment. Ongoing support from Sheridan’s technology team provides Record Research with the assistance they need to keep the eCommerce platform running.

Bloxdorf states: “Based on the sales of our first two eBooks, our plan is to eventually release all our current and future titles as eBooks.”

Successes Include:

- New lightweight, portable books that customers can experience electronically
- Easy to manage sales channel for eBooks purchases
- Presales promotions for marketing titles before the publication date
- Effective revenue stream with steady sales since launch

Products and Services Used

- eBook Conversion
- Sheridan Connect
- Digital Rights Management (powered by Adobe Content Server)

Additional Information

To learn about the marketing techniques Record Research employed to promote their eBooks download the *Marketing Tips and Techniques for Selling eBooks Directly to Consumers* document here: <http://www.sheridan.com/resources/books-resources/white-papers>

Company Profile



Record Research: Joel Whitburn's Record Research publications include complete research of every artist and song that make Billboard's Pop, Country, R&B, Rock, Adult, or Album charts. Since 1970, Joel has published over 200 books that chronicle the Billboard charts. These books have become essential reference tools for music journalists, professionals, and music fans everywhere.



Sheridan Books, Inc.: Located in Chelsea, MI, Sheridan Books, Inc. is a leading book manufacturer providing publishers complete book manufacturing services. Sheridan Books provides sheet-fed and web offset printing, digital inkjet and toner printing, and eBook conversion and distribution product offerings. Sheridan Books is one of five Sheridan Group companies providing print, publishing services, and technology solutions to the publishing industry.