

E-Commerce Case Study: Kokomo Opalescent Glass

Introduction

Client Background

Kokomo Opalescent Glass is a manufacturer of colored glass for art and architecture with worldwide distribution and a strong commitment to research, education, and promoting sheet glass art. Based in Kokomo, Indiana for 122 years, they are known worldwide for their hand-mixed sheet-glass art and colored-glass.

Project Objective

In October 2009, Kokomo Opalescent Glass(KOG) approached SmallBox to help them create an online presence for their business. After more than a century of making sales face-to-face or over the phone, they were ready to move into the realm of e-commerce. After extensive consulting and planning with KOG, SmallBox outlined a set of goals to roll-out an online sales strategy that would be implemented on a new site developed, designed, optimized and launched by SmallBox. Our aim was to create a rich e-commerce platform with design elements tailored to KOG's crafted aesthetic, with strong Calls To Action that would funnel traffic through their extensive catalog from home-page to pay-portal. We would integrate CS Cart into the new site so that visitors could make their purchases online. Our design goals were as follows:

- To increase time on-site by offering lush imagery, with strong CTA's encouraging multiple page-views, thus decreasing abandonment rate.
- To enhance conversions by offering an option to make purchases online.

**Create an online presence that
generates sales**

**decrease
abandonment rate
with lush graphics
and strong CTA's**

**engineer online
conversions(sales)**

E-commerce Strategy

Small Box embarked upon a 4-phase Design & Development strategy to meet the goals for Kokomo Opalescent Glass:



Research

The two main goals of SmallBox’s research were as follows: 1. To determine the best filtering strategies to seamlessly direct visitors towards the products they were shopping for. 2. To get a fine-tuned sense of the aesthetic we wanted to achieve.

SmallBox conducted their preliminary research in multiple phases.

- Consulting owners and employees, and gathering assets
- Surveying consumers
- Conducting a competitive review
- Conducting an expert review of best industry practices

Phase 1: Consulting KOG

SmallBox employees toured KOG’s facilities and gathered assets from their employees: collecting photos of their best work, and asking for input from employees about how to compartmentalize their products when organizing their extensive catalog by style and material, while taking into account what kind of consumers each product would be marketed to.

Phase 2: Surveying Consumers

SmallBox consulted some of KOG’s local clients about how they made purchase decisions with KOG, what they looked for in the products, and what other types of sites they shopped on (if any) to make purchases of similar products.

Phase 3: Conducting a competitive review

SmallBox analyzed the sites of competitors to determine how and where we could one-up the competition in terms of usability and aesthetics.

Phase 4: Conducting an expert review of best industry practices

Coextensive with our competitive review, we researched industries that were similar to the opalescent glass industry—such as e-commerce sites selling jewelry or billet glass. This research would further inform filtering strategies and design.

Wireframes and Design

Kokomo Opalescent Glass

Site Map 1.0

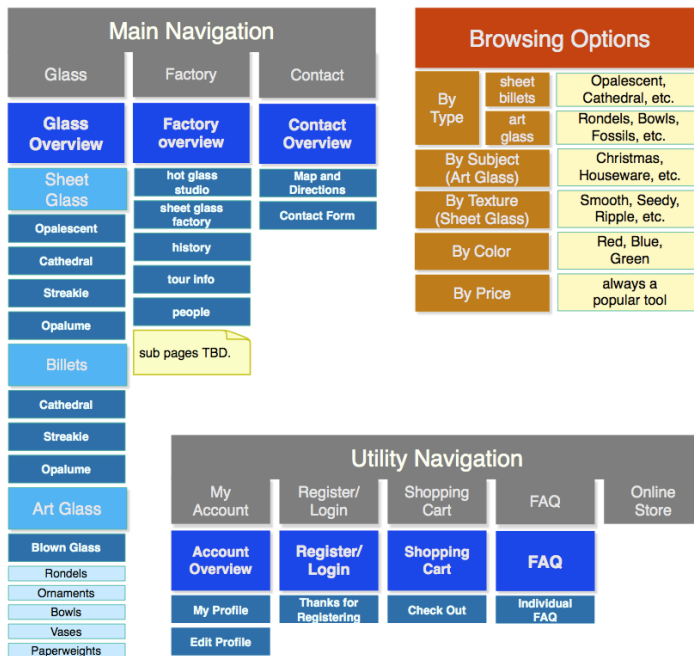


Figure 1 A rough draft of KOG's Site-Map composed by SmallBox's Usability Engineer Ed Rice.

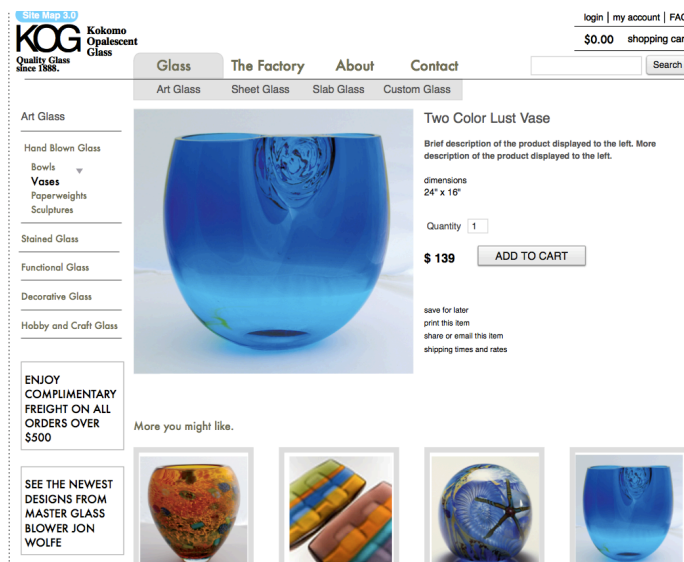


Figure 2 A rough wireframe sketch of a purchase page for one of KOG's vases composed by SmallBox's Usability expert Ed Rice.

SmallBox designers series of mock-ups—wireframes and sitemaps—which were eventually assembled into the high-fidelity prototype that we used to do User-Testing. [See next section]

User Testing

SmallBox conducted **User-Testing** in three stages.

- SmallBox engineered a high-fidelity click-through prototype of the KOG site.
- SmallBox shared the prototype with stakeholders and asked for feedback on its functionality and aesthetic.
- SmallBox shared the prototype with an E-Commerce expert, who made further recommendations for refinement of the site-design.

Having integrated the insights of stakeholders and experts, SmallBox could proceed with development, SEO, and site-launch.

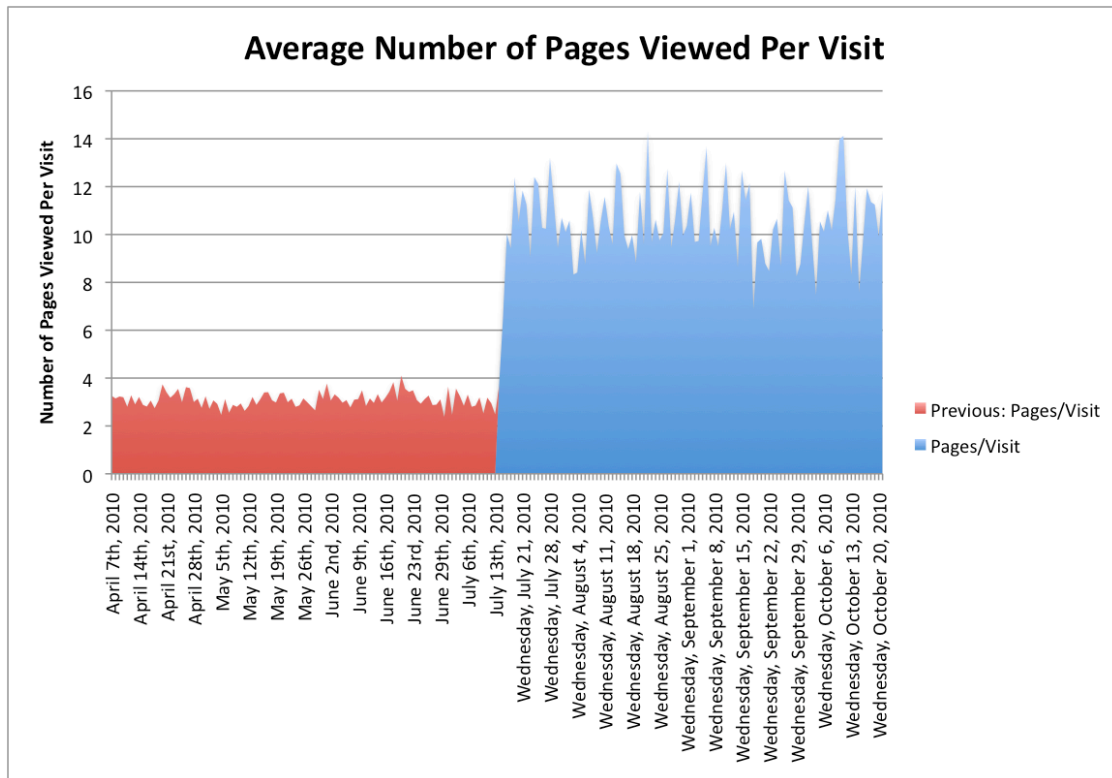
Development, SEO, and Site Launch

- During development SmallBox integrated CS Cart into the rich fusion outlined during design, preparing the E-Commerce arm of KOG's business for launch.
- A full discussion of the implementation of best practices for Search Engine Optimization into this site would require a case-study unto itself. Suffice it to say: code and content were optimized by conducting keyword research into search-terms germane to KOG's products. Social bookmarking and press releases were included in KOG's SEO plan.
- After site-launch KOG began to see immediate results.

Results

Beyond an immediate (and sustained) 25% increase in traffic, 300% increase in page views and a doubling of time-on-site, KOG is now doing thousands of sales a month via their Website. This is bringing fresh revenue into the business and keeping their team busy, scrambling to take calls and orders coming in from the Website.

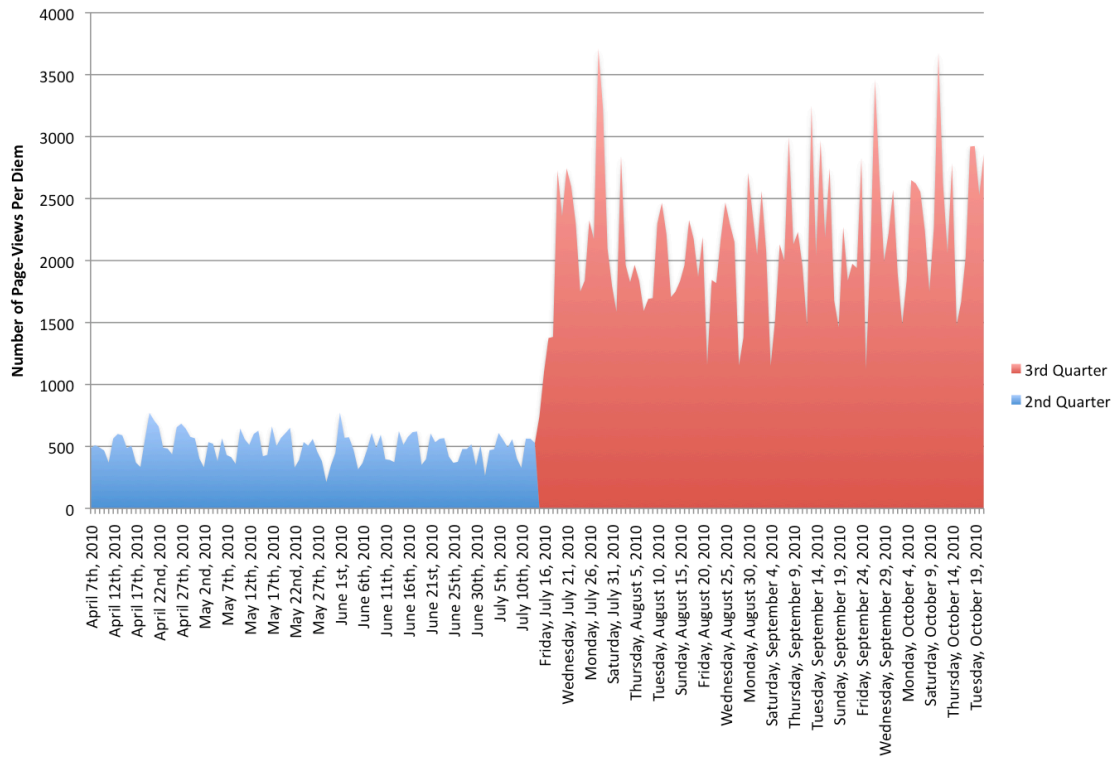
Comparing Google Analytics from the 2nd and 3rd quarters of 2010, we see that these gains have coalesced into a sustained and steadily growing transformation.



Conclusion

By doing their research, and implementing their findings in their design strategy for Kokomo Opalescent Glass's site, SmallBox was able to produce impressive and measurable results. Increases in sales leads and new customers at KOG, is correlated with the increase of time on site. The more information KOG's site's visitors are able to get about their stunning products, and the more easily they are able to access this information, the more likely they are to become customers. An appealing design and seamless usability was the key to ROI in the case, and these were calibrated to the appropriate demographics during the research and planning stage. KOG's new site is only three months old, even after the initial hockey-stick increases, so far its continued growth across all relevant metrics has been steady and sustained.

Page-views for KOG: 2nd Quarter vs. 3rd Quarter 2010



Time Spent On Site (In Minutes)

