

# Ability Commerce: Arming E-retailers to drive growth through software

**W**ith the ecommerce boom in the late 1990's, the need to go digital swept through the retail industry and businesses alike. This resulted in a lack of software companies that integrated order management systems and websites for retailers. To fill this void, Diane Buzzeo founded Ability Commerce, which, nearly two decades later, has become a leading provider of direct commerce solutions for e-retailers. The company's core purpose is delivering value to their customers through their industry-leading products and services. The ultimate goal of their 150+ retail professionals is to be the partner that helps their customers increase productivity, profitability and growth for their direct commerce business.

*"We love what we do and are 100% focused on providing the highest quality solutions and services to our customers. They have our commitment as a true partner to work side by side with them to grow their business,"* said Diane Buzzeo, President and Founder of Ability Commerce.

## **Candid Q&A with the key executive; Diane Buzzeo**

### **Why was the company set up? How did you select the vertical?**

Being in the catalog service business for 20 years at the time, it became apparent there was a void of software companies that integrated order management systems

and websites for retailers. Ability Commerce was formed out of that need.

### **What is your company's mission statement?**

*"Ability Commerce provides multi-channel retailers with comprehensive software and services to help manage their successful growth and profitability. We find our purpose through exceeding the goals of our customers in an environment that nurtures and supports the members of our team."*

### **How was your first project roll-out?**

Our rollout of ecommerce software from Ability Commerce was sensational and one of the first websites that could actually process orders. Today it is an operation that survived and thrived in the dot.com bubble, and has evolved into a half billion dollar company.

### **What were the challenges you faced initially as a budding organisation?**

Initially we faced technology issues because our wants outpaced the available technology. Peers can learn to always push the envelope, because in this business, you can't settle for what technology can do today. You have to constantly look at ways to make the customer experience better and drive technology forward.

### **In all these years, what according to you have been the greatest assets to the growth of your**

### **company?**

**Employee base** – Our passionate and dedicated employees understand that it's not only about cool technology; it's about cool technology that helps you sell more products, which is what our software is about. **Technology infrastructure** – it allows our staff to have leading edge capabilities and to work as a team regardless of their physical location. People have the resources available to make them as productive, successful and creative as possible. **Customization of services** – we are able to tailor our solutions and services based on each individual client's need. **Customer base** – our customers get it. They trust us to do our jobs and lead them into technologies that are up-and-coming

### **Two-way communication is the key. How does your company ensure this?**

Our company is built on the sharing of ideas and on the people we employ bringing their expertise to the table to move the company forward. It's expected, not just encouraged, that they speak up. We have an open door policy so employees can speak not only with their manager, but with any executive. People do feel like they have a voice.

### **The focus on purpose. How well do your employees know their role in contributing to the team's and company's success?**

We make a continuous commitment of giving feedback on how

well employees are doing and how their contributions are making the company successful.

**What makes a company the best place to work is a culture of listening to what employees want to do, and a commitment to help them do it. Do you agree to this statement?**

I do agree with that statement. I think when someone has a good idea, it's important for everybody in the company to understand their role of bringing that person's vision to fruition - It takes a village.

**Conflicts in a workplace can be commonplace, how do you go about it?**

Intelligent people bring different experiences and perspectives to the table. Our team has to make sure that when there are conflicts, we have a shared vision of where the company is going. They can take comfort in knowing that when someone else's idea wins the day, their idea will win another day, and they will receive the same respect in return.

**How do you bring the best out of an employee, do you give them enough autonomy in work related decisions?**

I think we do give employees enough autonomy and that's part of how we bring the best out. We hire people who are individual contributors yet want to be involved in team projects. In a company our size, we can be short on people and time. The only way we can manage these tasks is by sitting down together and brainstorming our way through it.

**The opportunity to grow professionally inspires employees to work better and harder. Do professional development opportunities exist in your company?**

Since we have so much growth, there are always opportunities, because there's always something that needs to be done. Opportunity is usually the mother of invention... when people see opportunity and choose to take advantage of it. I built my personal career by seeing a need and taking the initiative to fill the need. We encourage professional learning.

**It is difficult to start a venture. But far more difficult to maintain it' – What is your take on it?**

This is absolute truth. You have to be a little bit nutty to start your own company, and when you're lucky to have the employees and customers we have, it becomes such a passion and joy. But it's still hard. I work the same amount at 62 as I did when I was 22. You have to get 150 people marching the same direction instead of 2... the ship becomes harder to turn.

**How do you and your company contribute to the global IT platform and society at large?**

Ability software products are built by developers and contributing team members who are users of the very products they design. Our products are built with attention to the business user's needs and the customer's user experience. Our goal is to change the way the industry creates solutions by focusing not just on the end customer user, but the business user who purchases our technology solutions.



**Diane Buzzeo,**  
President and Founder

**Meet the key executive**

Diane has more than 40 years of experience in the catalog and service industry. She has turned multiple companies into Internet Retailer Top-500, 1000 and Euro sites. In 1985, she founded Marketing Concepts to deliver marketing services to direct commerce retailers. With the ecommerce boom in the late 90's, she started her software company Ability Commerce.