

CUSTOMER CASE STUDY

DFS

DFS is the UK's leading upholsterer, with over 110 stores nationwide as well as additional outlets in Ireland, Holland and Spain. Specialising in sofas for the last 45 years, DFS offer customers the biggest range of sofas in the UK, along with unbeatable quality and service.

CHALLENGES

As with many retailers, DFS experienced a huge increase in mobile and online shoppers, with their platforms especially popular among customers researching new purchases. This was combined with two peak shopping phases throughout the year, one being the 'Guaranteed by Christmas' ordering period in September, and the other around the Boxing Day sales.

RACKSPACE SOLUTION

Rackspace supports DFS with VMware® Managed Virtualization on a dedicated infrastructure. DFS also benefit from the close partnership between Rackspace and Salmon – a global systems integrator, specialising in developing and supporting integrated eCommerce and e-Insurance solutions.

BUSINESS OUTCOME

As a business, DFS has achieved market leading status and has reported double digit increases in sales for the past three years. With Rackspace expertise, DFS has been able to roll out IT transformation and migration projects such as a new commerce platform that helps them stay ahead of the competition and cope with busy periods.



UK's biggest sofa retailer DFS, partners with Rackspace to introduce new ecommerce infrastructure to cope with seasonal traffic spike

DFS is redefining how consumers find and purchase furniture. Founded in South Yorkshire over 45 years ago, DFS is now the UK's leading upholsterer, with over 110 stores nationwide. That's not to mention additional outlets in Ireland, Holland and Spain. It was floated on the stock market back in 1993, initially valued at £271 million. Specialising in sofas, DFS strives to offer customers the biggest range available in the UK, along with unbeatable quality and service. With expertise from Rackspace, DFS has been able to roll out IT transformation and migration projects, that includes a new commerce platform to stay ahead of the competition and cope with busy periods.

COPING WITH DEMAND

Alongside many retailers, DFS is experiencing a huge increase in mobile and online shoppers, with the platforms especially popular amongst customers researching new purchases. "Furniture was once something that was solely bought in store, but as shopping patterns have changed, many consumers no longer feel the need to view the finished article and want to shop on their own terms. Instead, they choose to shop for furniture online and feel comfortable making bigger purchases like this over the internet," says Russell Harte, Group Technology Director at DFS. For the retailer, the impact of this shift is most pronounced in its two peak shopping periods throughout the year, one being the 'Guaranteed by Christmas' ordering period in September, and the other around the Boxing Day sales that filters through to the new year. Traffic to the website during these times spikes by 68% compared to average levels during the rest of the year. During these periods, it is vital for DFS that its IT infrastructure works effectively. According to research from Adobe^{®*}, customers are becoming more discerning and impatient, and will not stay loyal to an online retailer that doesn't provide a seamless service. In short, DFS knows that its customers will turn their backs

if they do not experience a seamless online service. In order to cope with these seasonal surges in demands, DFS, backed by Rackspace, employs peak planning in advance to ensure online channels work effectively for customers. This has led DFS to report a 34% increase in transactions per day during its most recent busy sales periods.

ONE TEAM MENTALITY

In recent years, DFS has also undertaken a wider process of IT transformation. In addition to mobile and online sales increasing, DFS has also sought to upgrade technology both in stores for customers, but also on backend functionality for employees. "Starting as an exercise to maximise floor space in our city centre stores, we introduced video walls so that customers get an accurate view of how their furniture will look in real life. Now we've progressed to offering customers use of augmented reality through our 'room planner' app," says Russell. Through such innovations and the correct managed solutions, DFS is able to utilise new technologies to stay ahead of competitors.

"THE ONLINE CHANNEL HAS NEVER BEEN MORE IMPORTANT TO OUR BUSINESS AND MEETING CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS IN THIS SPACE IS A CONSTANT CHALLENGE."

RUSSELL HARTE, GROUP TECHNOLOGY DIRECTOR, DFS

Behind the scenes, DFS has also worked with Rackspace on its migration towards a new commerce platform – IBM V8 WebSphere Commerce infrastructure – in the cloud. Signed off in February, it went live in September, making DFS.co.uk one of the first ecommerce sites with this status. Working in tandem, DFS and Rackspace were able to roll out the new infrastructure in under a year. By choosing industry-leading managed services from Rackspace, DFS is working with the team to find the right solutions based on the company's business goals. In addition, a change in its business intelligence tools, based on the success of website hosting has helped with growth,

processing large amounts of data.

Russell Harte, Group Technology Director continued: "The online channel has never been more important to our business and meeting customer expectations in this space is a constant challenge. Our partnership with Rackspace over the past five years has allowed us to continually grow our offering by taking advantage of cloud technologies. Being able to talk to people who have the right mix of technical knowledge and business insight makes our lives so much easier. With a small team and a big agenda at DFS, Rackspace knows exactly what is needed."

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RUSSELL HARTE, GROUP TECHNOLOGY DIRECTOR, DFS

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

DFS knows that now is not a time to be complacent when it comes to developing the business. Committed to offering high quality furniture at affordable prices, the retailer is keen to capitalise on its market leading status. "With over 45 years in the industry, we know that buying a sofa can be an emotional experience: it forms a centrepiece of the home and makes a statement about the owner. As a result, we're continuing to make the online and instore customer experience as pleasurable and seamless as possible", says Russell Harte. International expansion, innovative shopping experiences, and digital signage to display the sales process are top priorities.

Darren Norfolk, MD of Rackspace UK said: "It has been a privilege to work with such a big UK brand like DFS for the past five years. The retail industry and the cloud are now intertwined, with traditional hosting services working with other uses of technology to make customer experiences more personalised. Our expertise has allowed DFS to become a true pioneer in its use of technology and is

*SOURCE: <http://www.slideshare.net/adobe/adobe-digital-index-europe-best-of-the-best-2015>

enhancing its offering to customers and strengthening its position as market leader. It is an example of a true partnership in action, and we are looking forward to continuing our work with them in the future."

KEY STATS

68% - traffic spikes to the website during peak periods

34% - the increase in transactions per day during busy sales periods, enabled by peak planning supported by Rackspace

ABOUT RACKSPACE

Rackspace, the #1 managed cloud company, helps businesses tap the power of cloud computing without the complexity and cost of managing it all on their own. Rackspace engineers deliver specialised expertise, easy-to-use tools, and Fanatical Support® for leading technologies including AWS, Google, Microsoft, OpenStack and VMware. The company serves customers in 150 countries, including more than half of the FORTUNE 100. Rackspace was named a leader in the 2017 Gartner Magic Quadrant for Public Cloud Infrastructure Managed Service Providers, Worldwide and has been honoured by Fortune, Forbes, and others as one of the best companies to work for.

Learn more at www.rackspace.com/en-gb or call us at **0208 734 2600**.

ABOUT VMWARE

VMware, a global leader in cloud infrastructure and business mobility, helps customers accelerate their digital transformation. VMware enables enterprises and service providers to master a software-defined approach to business and IT with VMware Cross-Cloud Architecture™ and solutions for the data center, mobility, and security. With 2015 revenue of \$6.6 billion, VMware is headquartered in Palo Alto, CA and has over 500,000 customers and 75,000 partners worldwide.



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