The Situation

Two brothers, their cousin and a friend started a different kind of clothing company in Saskatchewan in late 2011. Possessed of a sense of social and environmental responsibility, they brainstormed an idea to make money in the greenest way they could think of: by planting ten trees in areas of the world that needed them most for each and every article of clothing they sold. The business would be called tentree.

They started small, selling to friends and family. Then, sensing broader interest they began to rapidly expand, eventually finding their way onto the popular investor TV show Dragon’s Den in 2013. Knowing this would result in a surge in website traffic they began looking for an online payment system that would help them handle the load.

“We were about to get hit by a massive amount of traffic on our website,” said co-founder Stephen Emsley. “And we had a very small team with no in-house or outsourced developers. We were on a tight budget, making any new technology implementations tough to tackle.”

Tentree required a payment solution that its small staff could deploy on its own in a short amount of time, one that would have the flexibility to grow with the company as its operation continued to expand in the following years.

The Solution

Examining available payment processing options, Mr. Emsley quickly settled on PayPal Payments Pro and got busy integrating it within his site.

“The total implementation time, including testing, was probably one or two hours,” he said. “We were able to get PayPal up and running with our e-commerce store and process every single order that came through when our Dragon’s Den episode went live on the air. At the end of the show, not one single customer had an issue with their transaction and we were able to create a solid building block for what we have grown to be today.”

What’s more, he discovered PayPal to be an enormously popular payment option with his company’s youthful target audience of Canadians aged 18 to 26. A big part of the appeal, according to his customer care team, is that younger buyers like to use an online payment option linked to their bank account rather than constantly falling back on their credit cards.

“We noticed that the number of customers who were checking out with PayPal was higher than any other payment method,” he says.
“Without PayPal we wouldn’t have been able to expand our e-commerce presence to what it is today. We look forward to our international growth over the next couple of years, and are thrilled to have PayPal at our side for the next million trees!”

– Stephen Emsley, Co-founder, tentree

After the show aired PayPal proved vital in helping to grow his business beyond Canada’s borders by allowing customers to easily pay in their own currency.

“In the past eight months we’ve experienced a much larger reach to customers outside North America,” Mr. Emsley explains. “And we’ve noticed that these customers almost exclusively use the PayPal option to complete their orders. Without PayPal our conversion rate would be much lower.”

Beyond the tangible financial benefits that came with selecting PayPal, Mr. Emsley is pleased to be working with a payment processor that has a history of supporting social-minded businesses like his.

“We believe that every business we work with should align with our brand values, whether that be a treeplanting organization, clothing manufacturer, or the hosting companies that power our web servers,” he explains.

“Knowing that PayPal, our primary payment processor, aligned with these values was an important addition to our statement as an environmentally responsible retailer.”

The Benefits

Tentree deployed PayPal Payments Pro in just a matter of hours and successfully processed every transaction during the surge in traffic to its online store following the company’s appearance on Dragon’s Den. Mr. Emsley attributes part of his company’s continued growth in the years since to PayPal’s popularity among younger buyers and the ease with which it handles international currencies.

Learn more

To learn more about how PayPal can help your business sell more – and connect with your customers wherever they shop – go to www.paypal.ca/business.