

Xero Shoes — a Runaway Success

Barefoot running entrepreneur teams up with PayPal and WooCommerce to build a global shoe business



Company

Xero Shoes

CEO

Steven Sashen

Industry

Retail

Website

xeroshoes.com



Company Snapshot

Steven Sashen is one of the fastest men over age 50 in the U.S. – but his acclaim as a Masters All-American sprinter almost didn't happen. Nine years ago, Steven took up sprinting again after a 30-year break but was constantly battling injuries. After two years of pain and set-backs, he took a friend's advice and hit the pavement in a different way – without shoes.

Steven became fascinated with the effects of being barefoot, so he came up with the design for a running sandal consisting of a thin, flexible sole with rubber laces to emulate barefoot running while protecting the feet. Shortly after, Steven and his wife Lena (COO at Xero Shoes) could be found making recreation sandals for other barefoot-running enthusiasts.

An acquaintance who was writing a book on barefoot running urged Steven to take his sandal-making business from the streets to the Internet. Steven had Xero's first WordPress site up and running in about an hour, thinking the website might generate enough to make a car payment. Within three months, Xero Shoes was a full-time job for Steven and Lena, but their big break came three years later when their business was featured on ABC's hit reality show *Shark Tank*. Today, Xero Shoes is a booming worldwide business after selling nearly 150,000 pairs of sandals.

The Challenge

Appearing on *Shark Tank* generated more demand for their sandals than Steven and Lena expected. The increased awareness for their products and surges in website traffic demanded the need for an extremely flexible ecommerce site that could scale as their business grew. Steven also wanted the freedom to add plug-ins to customize the site in real-time, and their ecommerce platform had to address the varying payment methods needed by an international market.

Xero's products also posed a unique challenge to inventory management. In addition to buying complete sandals, customers could also buy individual replacement parts like soles and laces. This variety made it challenging for Steven and Lena to track and confirm which products were purchased and shipped.

They needed an all-in-one solution that would enable them to harness their growth without having to shift website platforms or pay more to integrate multiple ecommerce systems and payment methods.

Challenges At-A-Glance

- Limited site scalability to handle high web traffic and transactions
- Inability to customize and update ecommerce experience
- Unclear tracking of inventory, purchases and shipments
- Satisfying the payment preferences of an international audience

“You want to give people the easiest way possible to complete a transaction. That’s why we’ve been using PayPal since day one.”

– STEVEN SASHEN
CEO, Xero Shoes

Results

- 5x growth
 - 25% international sales
 - Higher conversions through SEO, retargeting and coupon-handling
 - Scalability to handle traffic into the 100s of thousands, including surges
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About PayPal

With 188 million active customer accounts, we have created an open and secure payments ecosystem that people and businesses choose to securely transact with each other online, in stores and on mobile devices. PayPal is a truly global payments platform that is available to people in more than 200 markets, allowing customers to get paid in 100 currencies and growing.

Solutions

Xero Shoes used a combination of features and innovations from WooCommerce and PayPal to scale their business and keep their sales on the right path. The original appearance on *Shark Tank* and additional airings meant that Xero achieved a new and sustained level of website traffic from around the world, and they needed a cohesive and robust set of solutions to ensure they capitalized on their opportunities.

WooCommerce’s open-source platform gave Xero the degree of customization and flexibility they needed to achieve scale. With an active developer community and a variety of plug-ins available, WooCommerce enabled Steven to create an easy shopping experience and optimize the website for speed and efficiency. One of the first plug-ins Steven added was a tool that allowed shoppers to bundle products at checkout, which made tracking purchases and shipments much easier. Now, some 84 plug-ins later, Steven is tailoring the cart process to his buyers and adopting new features that can drive sales.

Serving the needs of buyers around the world was another priority for Xero Shoes, and fortunately, PayPal was there. According to Steven, “PayPal’s global reputation in payments, user-friendly setup and low processing fees made choosing the payment processor easy.” PayPal made the checkout process seamless for Xero Shoes’ customers, especially as the business moved into international markets. The fact that the PayPal logo is ever-present throughout the checkout process gives customers more peace of mind about their purchase as it signifies a brand that they can trust and that is secure.

“With PayPal, customers can avoid all the hoops they’d have to jump through to make a purchase otherwise – like logging into a system or creating an account,” Steven says. “And international customers know they don’t have to worry about typical headaches like currency exchange.”

Turning a Hobby and Passion into a Life-Changing Career

Xero Shoes is on track to make some exciting gains in the future. With a proven track record of online sales, they’re attracting the attention of major retailers to spur even more growth. In fact, Steven and Lena believe Xero can grow tenfold in the next few years. The combination of PayPal and WooCommerce as an all-in-one ecommerce solution enables the barefoot-running innovators to focus on new opportunities and trust that their online store is rock solid. They’re proving that the right tools can help turn their passion into a successful enterprise.