Point of Rental's Online Store Increases Sales for Epic Event Rental

Challenge:

After purchasing the event rental division of A to Z Rental Center in Eden Prairie, Minnesota, owners Kim and Jeff Kim knew this was an opportunity to have new software, new processes and new procedures that would push their business ahead of the competition. Thinking through ways of generating more rental orders, they understood that a solid online presence would effectively elevate their marketing platform. The Kims believe that a great website is a no-brainer for any relevant business today, but since everyone does business on their mobile phones, they realized that a mobile optimized website and an online store would give them a clear advantage over competing stores in their area. In addition, they wanted a web-based rental management software for mobile accessibility, which would enable them to offer unparalleled customer support.

Solution:

Renaming their store Epic Event Rental to signify a new era, the Kims evaluated different rental management and inventory tracking software options, ultimately turning to Point of Rental Software. While Point of Rental offers three rental management software products, the Kims chose the cloud-based Rental Essentials solution for its low cost and the appeal of not being tied down by hardware. The customer portal feature of the software provides a virtual store where customers can view store inventory, pre-register as a customer with payment information, and utilize the shopping cart feature to get an online quote. Rental store personnel can then contact them via email to convert the quote to a reservation, suggest add-on items, or give discounts. To reserve items, customers submit a secure deposit via the customer portal. With stored credit card payments, damages and follow-on charges can be collected. Once customers have registered through the portal, they can login to update their payment information, view or cancel their reservations, or see their order history. Furthermore, the software offers automated customer notifications to send a variety of notices, including default notes, reminders, quotes, reservations, receipts, terms and conditions, discount offers, and electronic signature requests.

Result:

After implementing Point of Rental Essentials, the Kims have streamlined their processes at Epic to facilitate web orders which now make up approximately 30% of all orders they receive. Recognizing that customers want the ease of online shopping, Epic's business model capitalizes on self-serve options available through the customer portal feature. "We find it very easy to
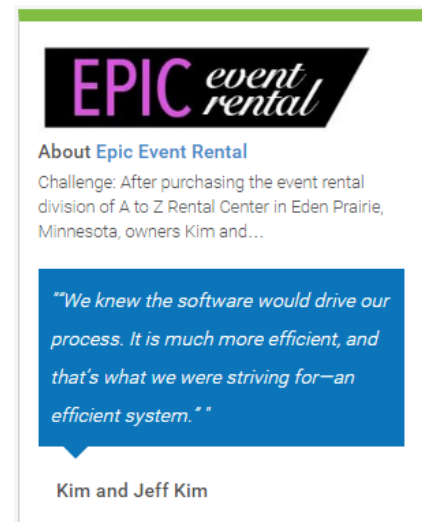
manage," said Jeff Kim. "When we get a new item, we can put it on the site in a matter of minutes. We upload our own images very easily; it's pretty intuitive."

"We didn't need any training [to use Rental Essentials]," Kim Kim added. "It is very modern, and very user friendly. Employees can go on the internet and play around with it at home since it is cloud-based; a nice training aspect."

Utilizing Google AdWords which they monitor through Google Analytics, the Kims take advantage of online marketing opportunities to drive web traffic to their virtual store. "Everyone wants the ease of online shopping," said Jeff. "You can just go online and Google what you need, and a lot of people are doing that on their mobile devices. So the fact that Rental Essentials is mobile friendly is very important. The web interface absolutely gives us an advantage in our marketplace," he continued.

Google Analytics provide statistics for Epic which show patterns in web traffic including the time of day and how long people are staying on each webpage. The Kims have found that many of their customers shop in the evenings after store hours. "The fact that people can check availability and get a quote at any time is a great asset," Jeff noted.

When customers choose rental inventory and create an online quote, Kim is automatically notified so she can immediately follow up with the customer via email. Because Rental Essentials is web-based, Kim can easily log in from her mobile phone to check statuses or change reservation quantities. "Love it that I can do that anywhere I am," said Kim. "Also, we will get orders coming through at night time when we're closed for business. It's nice that I can just email them back right then, because we respond to every order that comes through, confirming the order and letting the customer know what times items are available for pickup. Being really responsive we think is very important at the customer service level. It's also nice to know that there's at least some way to get ahold of us after hours."

Using Rental Essentials' reporting features, the Kims have recognized not only increases in orders, but savings in man hours. During a period of their slow season, in the midst of the Minnesota winter, 77 web orders came through the customer portal where customers had self-served, including entering non-refundable deposits. Had those been phone orders, the amount of time it would have taken to enter each of the orders would have equaled 12.5 hours' worth of phone time. The Kims anticipate even greater savings as they enter into the rental store's busy season.

Kim reported that first quarter earnings for the store were up approximately 30% compared to last year. "That is a pretty incredible jump for a first quarter and that's our slow season," she said, "so we think that's a positive result which could potentially be the web interface, maybe the rebranding, and remarketing." Regardless, the Kims acknowledge that the software has contributed towards the increase. "We knew the software would drive our process. It is much more efficient, and that's what we were striving for—an efficient system."