

# Case Study | Early Learning Centre

## The Brief

Reinvigorate the Early Learning Centre website to grow the brand and increase sales online

In the Spring of 2004, the Early Learning Centre engaged a consortium of companies that included Flow Interactive (user experience), Blue Latitude (marketing strategy) and Tobias & Tobias (visual design and technical build) to redesign their website prior to the 2004 Christmas Season.

The website redesign was part of an overall strategy to reinvigorate the Early Learning Centre brand and help it achieve its core proposition of "helping children be all they can be" across all customer touch points. The website was seen as a key channel to market for the Early Learning Centre and as such needed to be redesigned in order to:

- Provide a genuinely positive brand experience
- Optimise the site to meet different customer needs
- Build brand loyalty and drive sales across all channels
- Increase the quantity & quality of customer data captured

## What We Did

Design, Evaluate and Launch a new website for the Early Learning Centre in time for Christmas 2004

At the outset of the project, Flow conducted usability research on the existing Early Learning Centre website in order to identify when, how and why it was failing to address customer needs. As part of the exercise, Flow collected qualitative information about the customers which was then used to define the key requirements for the online offering.

Personas and scenarios drawn from the user research enabled the team to define a concept for the site that would satisfy both customer and business needs. This concept was then developed and refined through a series of rapid design/evaluation iterations which provided the customer insights and feedback needed to guide the ultimate design of the site (including functionality, structure, content and visual design).

## The Results

33% sales growth within the first year

By employing *User Centred Design* techniques to help focus the online offering on customer needs, the team were able to successfully design and launch a new website by Christmas 2004. In addition, because the *User-Centred Design* techniques employed by Flow eliminated most of the risks to customer acceptance and use of the site, the Early Learning Centre were able to launch the site with confidence that it would be a success.

This confidence was not misplaced. In the year since its launch, the site has achieved a 33% growth in sales and 30% increase in online orders. Most importantly, customers are viewing 21% more toys and spending 19% more on the new website than on the old site due to best-selling items being easier to find.



Early Learning Centre Homepage

## About the Early Learning Centre

The Early Learning Centre is the UK's leading toy retailer for children aged 0-6, with 215 UK stores and 65 franchised stores in 14 countries. The website and catalogue sales contribute 40% of the annual turnover of £50 million.

## About Flow Interactive

Flow Interactive began working with the Early Learning Centre on this project in Spring 2004 and, due to the success of the website redesign, have continued to maintain a positive relationship. In 2006, the Early Learning Centre contracted Flow to provide contextual research to inform the development of a new online business-to-business offering for childcare providers.

Our consultancy work with the Early Learning Centre has included qualitative user research, contextual research, depth interviews, usability research, and user-centred design consultancy.

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