

CASE STUDY

M&S

PRODUCT



RETAIL SEGMENT

Omnichannel Department Store

CHALLENGE

Marks & Spencer sought to complement its Magic & Sparkle Christmas advertising campaign with an enhanced gift finder tool that could save its trading team from time-intensive manual merchandising, while speeding and optimizing personalized product discovery.

RESULTS

- ▶ Added to all gifting pages on M&S.com
- ▶ Over **12%** conversion rate for Cyber Monday 2014
- ▶ **85%** higher revenue per session

12%

Conversion Rate
(Cyber Monday 2014)

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Using RichRelevance, we can now give shoppers unprecedented access to a more intelligent and granular level of gift recommendations online.

– Heena Theakstone

Digital Marketing Manager
Marks & Spencer

In line with its long-standing tradition of spreading 'Magic & Sparkle', Marks & Spencer sought to bring its 2014 Christmas advertising campaign to life in the form of two playful fairies, named Magic and Sparkle—who perform Christmas miracles to people in need. As part of the campaign, M&S chose to implement an enhanced Gift Finder tool, to help shoppers find the perfect gift for their loved ones based on shopper personas, interests and price range.

Digital Marketing Manager Helena Theakstone explains the concept: “We used a gift finder tool on the website in previous years. While successful, it required manual uploading of products into the tool. Not only was this very time-consuming for the trading team (especially during peak trading season), they also had to remove products as they sold out.” Theakstone knew that the amount of required maintenance was not viable moving forward.

Innovating the enhanced 2014 Gift Finder

Prior to the 2014 holiday season, M&S chose to collaborate with creative agency AKQA and personalization partner RichRelevance, to develop a web-based gift finder.

“RichRelevance has been helping us deliver personalized shopping online since 2011. For the upcoming Christmas season, we wanted to build on our personalization abilities by giving shoppers a truly unique experience through which they can easily and efficiently find the perfect present for their loved ones,” said Theakstone. “Using RichRelevance, we can now give shoppers unprecedented access to a more intelligent and granular level of gift recommendations online.”

The creative design and customer interface of the tool were developed by AKQA, whilst RichRelevance provided the gift recommendations based on an M&S product feed and a custom API, or application programming interface.

Under the hood with the Gift Finder

With the goal of maximizing revenue per session and conversion, RichRelevance set out to develop a real-time API that could return matching gifts based on shopper personas such as “Greatest Gran”, “Little Prince”, or “One of the Girls”,

which are further categorized by traits such as “Foodie”, “Stylish”, “Green-fingered”, etc.

Periodically, M&S delivers a product feed to RichRelevance that lists all the products that traders have selected for each interest and persona. In turn, RichRelevance creates a real-time API that, when given a person and interest, returns a gift list ordered by which products are currently trending on Marks & Spencer’s website.

Here’s how it works:

1. M&S traders send RichRelevance a text file that indicates which gifts are associated with personas and interests on a weekly basis.
2. RichRelevance analyses recent shopper behavior on Marks & Spencer’s website daily, identifying which products are most popular, and publishes the results to three European data centres. The analysis takes into account whether products are in stock and recommendable.
3. When a shopper uses the Gift Finder, the website calls the API, passing the persona and interest that the shopper has selected, and retrieves and delivers trending gift recommendations in real time to help the shopper find the perfect gift.

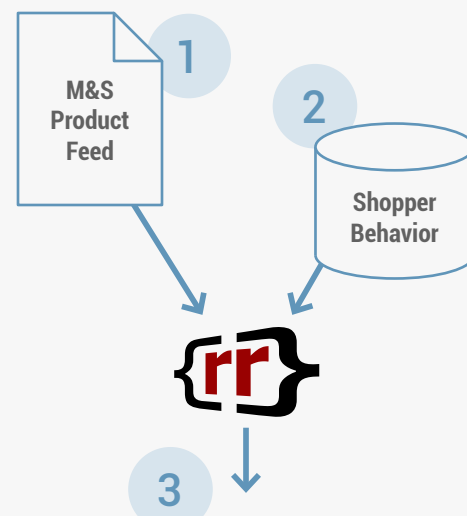
It’s a wrap! The trending gifts API delivers results.

Marks and Spencer have recognized that real-time APIs are paramount not just for the shopper’s own experience, but also when purchasing for others. The Gift Finder innovation showcases the retailer’s forward-thinking approach in this regard.

During a time of year when system lockdowns and development resources are thin, getting a project through development and testing cycles is challenging at best, and oftentimes difficult. RichRelevance were able to get the Gift Finder project up and running in just three weeks, in time for a busy holiday season.

By relying on RichRelevance’s API servers and robust IT infrastructure, M&S ensured that there was no extra load on ecommerce databases, and avoided having to perform stress testing or rigorous user acceptance testing in the run up to peak trading season.

The Gift Finder was added to all gifting pages on MarksAndSpencer.com and promoted on home and category pages, social media channels, and digital display banners. During three weeks of the peak shopping season in late November and early December, **shoppers who used the Gift Finder tool had a 12% higher conversion rate than other shoppers and generated 85% higher revenue per session.**



Want to learn more?

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