



Small Business Solutions Customer Case Study



Customer: C4 Waterman
Web Site: www.c4waterman.com
Customer Size: 8
Country or Region: United States
Industry: Retail—Specialty retailing—Sporting goods

Customer Profile

Based in Honolulu, C4 Waterman specializes in the traditional Hawaiian sport of stand up paddling. The company offers paddle boards, accessories, and training to surfers and other sport enthusiasts.

Software and Services

- Microsoft Office 2007
- Windows Vista
- Windows Live OneCare



Todd Bradley and Brian Keaulana, Co-founders of C4 Waterman. "Our Core Four values, or C4, are Balance, Endurance, Strength, and Tradition—B.E.S.T.," says Bradley. "Follow them in life and in business, and be your BEST."

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Surfers Ride the Wave to Success, Use Technology to Double Business in Two Years

"Using Microsoft solutions definitely saves us time. We use the time that we save to do things that we enjoy—getting in the water, spending time with family and friends.... It's all about balance."

Todd Bradley, Co-founder, C4 Waterman

With interest in the traditional Hawaiian sport of stand up paddle surfing on the rise, C4 Waterman needed to upgrade its technology to keep pace with increasing demand for its quality products. The company installed 2007 Microsoft® Office Small Business and the Windows Vista® operating system, and credits the use of these integrated solutions with helping it stay connected, save time, improve quality of life, and boost business by 200 percent.

Business Needs

Todd Bradley, Brian Keaulana, and Mike Fox—Co-founders of C4 Waterman—all share a common passion: the ocean. "I have saltwater in my veins," says Keaulana, a pioneer in the field of water safety risk management and son of legendary Hawaiian surfer "Buffalo" Keaulana. "If the ocean is calm, I'll swim. If it's big, I'll surf. If it's clear, I'll dive. The ocean is a beauty and a beast—that is its nature. And my nature is to share the ocean with people in ways that help them to respect and enjoy it—in all of its extremes."

In 2003 Keaulana, reintroduced Bradley to stand up paddling—a sport Bradley had enjoyed while growing up in Waikiki. "I saw a lot of business potential in bringing back this traditional Hawaiian

sport," says Bradley. "I used to be an executive for a chemical manufacturing company, but I always aspired to do something that had more meaning for me. In my heart, I'm a waterman—my lifestyle revolves around the ocean. So when stand up paddle surfing started to catch on, I approached Brian and Mike about joining forces and building a business that reflects our 'C4'—our four core values as watermen: balance, endurance, strength, and tradition. That's how C4 Waterman began. We had a vision and we went for it."

As watersport enthusiasts around the world discovered stand up paddle surfing, the C4 Waterman team worked diligently to promote the sport and demand for the company's innovative boards, paddles, and accessories exploded.

Microsoft®

“Business grew so fast that our biggest challenge was staying organized,” Bradley says. “We needed a flexible, easy-to-use solution that would help us maneuver quickly so that we could continue building our brand. Our days are short and money is tight, so we have to keep moving if we want to stay ahead of the curve.”

C4 Waterman ran the business using one desktop computer and Microsoft® Office 2003. “When we first started, we used Office products for basic tasks—to design flyers and form letters, and to track orders,” Bradley says. “But when we launched our Web site, that’s when business really started to boom. We started accepting orders over the Internet, and I began traveling one week out of every month to promote the C4 Waterman brand. We knew we needed to upgrade our technology to keep pace with our growth.”

Solution

In 2008, C4 Waterman purchased six portable computers and upgraded to 2007 Microsoft Office Small Business along with the Windows Vista® Home Premium operating system. Windows Vista (Business and Ultimate editions) includes the Windows® Aero® desktop experience, a visually dynamic user interface that makes it easy for users to navigate quickly between programs, including Microsoft Office Excel® 2007 spreadsheet software, Microsoft Office Outlook® 2007 messaging and collaboration client, Microsoft Office Publisher 2007, and Microsoft Office Word 2007.

“With Windows Vista, I’m able to quickly move between programs, whether it’s Office Excel, Word, Publisher, or Outlook,” says Bradley. “Windows Vista is great for helping me organize and manage our information. I get my administrative work done quickly, so I can get out on the water and spend time sharing this sport with the people.”

From its office in Honolulu, Hawaii, C4 Waterman now supports hundreds of retailers around the world and manages a thriving Web-based business. To manage the security of customer information, the company relies on Windows Live™ OneCare™ computer protection and maintenance software and services. “Security is very important to us,” Bradley says. “We want our customers to know that their credit card and personal information is secure. We use Windows Live OneCare because it gives us peace of mind.”

For daily operations, C4 Waterman uses Office Excel for budgets, financial reports, and product listings. “Office Excel is very important to us because we need to manage our budget very wisely,” Bradley explains. “We have to manage our inventory so that we know what we have available to sell. Because the economy is fluctuating and we’re trying to grow this new company, Excel is perfect for that.”

Office Manager Rizu Kennamore adds, “Office Outlook is another program that we use every day. We send and receive hundreds of e-mail messages, and it’s very important that we keep track of those contacts. We save customer information in the address book, and set reminders about appointments and birthdays using the calendar feature. We can easily sort customer information or search for a specific contact. I don’t know what we’d do without it.”

C4 Waterman also uses Office Publisher to create high-quality brochures that reflect the company’s brand identity. “When you’re building a brand, the emotional attachment comes first, and the sales come second,” says Bradley. “It’s important that we use pictures and design our brochures in ways that effectively communicate our story. Office Publisher helps us share that story with our customers in visually compelling ways.”

Benefits

By incorporating Microsoft technology with Hawaiian traditions, C4 Waterman employees enjoy work/life balance, enduring connections with customers and with one another, strong business growth during times of economic uncertainty, and a foundation for future growth.

Balance: Time Savings Promote Quality of Life

Windows Vista and the 2007 Office system have helped C4 Waterman complete everyday tasks more quickly and easily. “Using Microsoft solutions definitely saves us time,” says Bradley. “We use the time that we save to do things that we enjoy—getting in the water, spending time with family and friends, which is very important to anybody’s lifestyle. It’s all about balance.”

Endurance:

Remote Access Strengthens Connectivity

Currently, C4 Waterman manages a network of distributors in mainland United States, Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and Europe. Bradley spends 25 percent of his time traveling around the world

promoting the company and the waterman lifestyle. “I travel a lot, so it’s very important for me to stay connected,” he explains. “I receive over 100 e-mail messages a day. With my laptop and using Office Outlook, I can stay in touch with the office and with my customers, and I have instant access to my calendar and contacts.”

Strength:

Increased Efficiency Drives Business Growth

Surfers and extreme sports enthusiasts around the world have discovered C4 Waterman, along with the health benefits and sheer enjoyment of stand up paddle surfing. “Using Windows Vista and Office 2007, we’ve doubled our business over the past two years,” says Bradley. “That’s a tremendous amount of growth in a very short time. I have a huge responsibility to my employees, my customer base, and my partners to keep the ball rolling. These are tough times, so it’s important that we keep working hard. Using Microsoft solutions helps us to work efficiently so that all of our efforts go into building our business.”

Tradition:

Respecting the Old, Incorporating the New

The partners of C4 Waterman all possess different strengths. “Brian’s family goes back hundreds of years—as watermen and as Hawaiians,” says Bradley. “He is a modern-day surfing legend, and brings that knowledge and culture to our business.”

Keaulana adds, “It’s important to have a strong foundation of history and tradition. But without imagination, you can get stuck in the past. At C4 Waterman, we have a lot of imagination and believe there is a hidden waterman or waterwoman in every person. We want to use our company to help people enjoy the water, and enjoy their lives.”

Bradley concludes, “Being watermen and small business owners is a great lifestyle for us, and using Microsoft products makes it possible.”

Microsoft Small Business

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