



MILKHOUSE CANDLE CO. CASE STUDY

Zoey makes B2B and B2C orders possible on a single platform, with an app to support the sales team

The Company



MILKHOUSE CANDLE CO.®

Milkhouse Candle Company

Founded in 2002, 130 Employees

www.milkhousecandles.com

What They Like About Zoey

1. Zoey support is genuine, human [not canned responses] and quicker than other solutions they've used.
2. Zoey takes customer feedback in, including feature requests and evolves with customer needs. They show they care by reaching out regularly and asking questions about how things are going, not just resolving the issue at hand.
3. The self service Web portal has contributed to a growth in orders placed without customer service intervention.
4. The combination of Zoey App and Zoey Admin makes it easier for the internal team to create and manage orders in a variety of scenarios.
5. Zoey evolves quickly to adapt to the changing landscape of B2B commerce, offering a growing array of services for B2B businesses and their customers

The Challenge

Milkhouse Candle sought a B2B solution that could ensure quick sales interactions for their customers so they can get back to other tasks. When previous solution Handshake proved too problematic, they re-evaluated Zoey for their B2B needs, having used Zoey for years already for their B2C customers.

The Success

- Able to deploy the iOS app within a couple of months, vs. their previous provider, Handshake, which they were still shaking out issues 18 months after purchase.
- Self-service orders are up, so salespeople aren't required for as many transactions.
- Salespeople can place orders with the mobile device while customer notes are up on screen.
- The amount of manual data entry has been drastically reduced, eliminating 12 hours a day of manual QuickBooks data entry for their B2B orders.

What Makes Them Special

With three different parts of the business, Milkhouse Candle has long had a foothold in various ways they can serve their market, from selling direct and wholesale to providing other candle makers soy wax for their own products. Their customer-friendly approach aims to make working with Milkhouse as easy as possible, so they can focus on other parts of their business.



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By the Numbers

70%

SALES GROWTH ON ZOEY
VS. THE PREVIOUS YEAR

43%

LESS TIME SPENT PER
ORDER THANKS TO ZOEY

37%

INCREASE IN SELF-SERVICE
CUSTOMER ORDERING

An Unexpected Find in Zoey

Eric Sparrow, President of Milkhouse Candle Company, has been selling online for a long time, and his experience across the various commerce platforms is considerable. But when he wanted to take a step back from the decision making process, he let his own team decide which direction they wanted to go for selling online.

“It seems like we tried them all,” Sparrow said. “We tried Big Commerce and Shopify. 3D Cart was where I kind of landed. It felt right for us at the time. But as the business evolved I had my marketing and designs crew. It’s time. One, as an owner, I need to get out of the way. Two, I need to give my marketing department a chance to find and figure out and develop and nurture a website platform that just worked for them.”

Sparrow empowered them to research and make a recommendation, but what they came back with surprised him.

“They did a bunch of work, asked a bunch of questions, and did a really stand up job. The person in charge came to me and said this is where we landed and put this Zoey in front of me. I never heard of it at that time. To me, it wasn’t one of those big names you come across when doing research on who’s the best ecommerce provider.

“So I was a little bit floored because I was expecting her to bring one of the big names. They tried building a site on Shopify, Big Commerce, WordPress with Woo Commerce - none were quite right. 3D Cart seemed like the rightest thing. They even tried SquareSpace.”

Not as familiar with Zoey, he was a bit concerned that it may be a harder climb, but he put his faith in his team to execute if they felt this was the right platform for them.

“In an effort to stay out of the way, I said if you’ve done your homework and think this is right, I asked a few questions - can it do wholesale and retail? What about building the site out? They confirmed you don’t need a ton of knowledge to build a beautiful site - this is part of what Zoey built. They were an advocate for what you’re doing, despite we never done business together. They built it out, and did a great job internally.”

Sparrow said that the time he spent working with Zoey during the buildout was a good indicator of whether the company would be a good fit.

“I was nothing but satisfied during the process. Even after getting involved with Zoey, noting something that wasn’t quite what we needed, I put a ticket in. The support team said it was on the docket they wanted to develop, and it was added. This feature that didn’t exist now exists because of our feedback. We’ve had a continual process where we ask and Zoey responds. It’s really intriguing to see.”

In Their Words

“We’ve been doing this for less than two months on the Zoey side, to get to what took a year on Handshake to get it launched and six months more to try and iron out issues. I love what you’re doing.”

Eric Sparrow, President, Milkhouse Candle Company



Superior Support

Sparrow said that his opinion of eCommerce platform support had traditionally been negative, based on his experiences, but Zoey reset those expectations.

“What I’d learn to expect from eCommerce solutions was to just be treated like garbage,” he said. “These eCommerce companies - all of them I had encountered to that point - would make you put in a ticket and you might hear some generic answer in the next 48 hours. Pretty much it. With 3D Cart, if you emailed their support team at 5 am you might get a quick answer. With you, if it takes more than 10 minutes, it’s a busy day. You guys are awesome on the support side.”

He added, “Their lackluster support is magnified by how good yours is. If I still had been with Shopify or Big Commerce or 3D Cart, their support would have seemed very normal. You wait two days, you get a response asking did you do this? Yes, then wait two days for something else. With Zoey, it’s here’s the documentation, here’s what to do. What you guys are doing is phenomenal. Hats off to you.”

Split Approach to Start

While Zoey was researched for both B2B and B2C commerce needs, and initially deployed as such, the company increasingly believed they should leverage different platforms for B2C and B2B. So they made the decision to split things up. Zoey would house their B2C sales and consumer facing website; another solution, Handshake, which has since been acquired by Shopify and closed to new customers, was their initial choice for B2B.

“It’s always tough to put retail and wholesale on the same site. 3D Cart was the best at it awhile ago. We decided we needed to be more robust on our wholesale. I had some good experience in the past with Handshake. So I said let’s go take a look at what Handshake is doing, create a bit of separation.

“The biggest reason I walked back into Handshake was they had an app. So we hopped in with Handshake. They had a platform I knew, and I trusted their concept. It appeared very clean, very smooth, very easy to use.”

Unfortunately, the rollout was extended and never quite got off the ground fully.

“Going to Handshake, once it got put into place, that took a year,” Sparrow said. “They made us promises that we can do these things, we can add custom features. We were paying our staff a salary of working with these guys. It just wasn’t fully developed, but they were willing to charge full price.”

In Their Words

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Encountering the same support problems they did with other commerce solutions, and not seeing the efficiency they expected, they noticed that Zoey’s wholesale and B2B capabilities had quickly become more robust.

“Things, especially with what they were doing, growing fast, growth is hard, mistakes happen. I didn’t feel like they were following up with good support after these mistakes happened. We were spending time hand entering orders anyway [when the goal was to get away from that need].

“As we were waiting for support to get back to us, while all this is happening, we were looking at things in Zoey that we had requested previously. Early on, the answer was ‘We don’t have it, but we can certainly put a request in.’ Sure enough, you guys, as always, said, ‘Hey, it’s there now, try it out.’ So we kind of softly played for a little while. It’s good, it works.”

After the launch of Zoey’s iOS app in mid-2020, Sparrow said the time was right to see if a permanent cutover back to Zoey for B2B made sense.

“Handshake had a mid-year payment coming up. A new commitment for six months of Handshake. The goal was to know well enough before that if Zoey can do what we need to do. If not, we’ll stay on Handshake. I made it very clear I don’t want to. We got things dialed in, and made the official launch back on Zoey.

“Zoey orders are coming in nice, set with our case packs, set with our shipping rules. These are all difficult on the Handshake side of things. On Handshake we couldn’t log in as a customer and get the order placed, you guys have that.

“We’ve been doing this for less than two months on the Zoey side, to get to what took a year on Handshake to get it launched and six months more to try and iron out issues. I love what you’re doing.”

More Efficient; Less Errors

Leveraging the app is part of an approach by Milkhouse Candle to minimize the time on the phone for customers to place orders, and to avoid unnecessary manual data entry.

“When a customer calls, the sales team would have an iPad open on behalf of the customer, as fast as they could rattle it off, and put the order in the system. As the customer hangs up, they get an email of the order. In QuickBooks, you can’t do that. This is saving 12 hours of data entry per day in QuickBooks.”

Their goal of making transactions quick and easy, even when over the phone, has increased in importance as the business environment has evolved.

By the Numbers

2

LESS PEOPLE NEEDED
TO CAPTURE SALES

12

HOURS PER DAY IN SAVED
DATA ENTRY TIME

72%

MORE B2B CUSTOMER
REQUESTS VS. LAST YEAR

“They might have a computer screen up already with QuickBooks and looking at customer data, whatever when that customer calls. We have the ability to say “Hey customer, there you are.” I might have a QuickBooks screen up on the computer that shows if they’re paid up and all those good things, but they’re calling to get an order in.

“We respect our customers’ time. They’re wearing a lot of hats. Maybe when the economy was better, they had five people running registers stocking shelves, but right now it’s them plus one. We want to make sure when that customer calls to order, they can get on and off that phone in a jiffy. Instead of switching between screens on their computer, we have this app ready to go.”

Within Zoey, the data is linked via Connex, a Zoey app partner that specializes in connecting various flavors of QuickBooks with commerce platforms like Zoey. This allows for automatic transfer of order information, payment confirmation, product and customer data, and more between the two systems.

“We had to connect with Connex. I’m not super savvy with that, but I had heard a lot of good things. Their support team has been really good. We’ve had almost no issues with them, and when we do they’re quick to hop on a call. I hate adding plugins because that’s one more chance for things to go wrong, but this works well.”

Sparrow says that the efficiency expands to finding information in the Zoey Admin.

I love the ability to search by coupon code. I’m able to find information in this unlike any other ecommerce solutions we’ve had. I can not know the spelling of the customer, just that the name contains these letters. I can search for when an order contains a specific item. To me, it is so refreshing to just know when I go to get information, I can just go get the information

“The ability for my employees to set up their dashboard, the way they want to see it, and manipulate, is incredibly powerful. Their ability to see and control an order status, so when an order first comes in, it has a yellow block next to it, and when it is submitted to be picked, change status, it now has a different color. Being able to make it whatever we need it to be is a really powerful and tremendous capability to keep things flowing properly.”

A More Meaningful Partnership

Sparrow noted multiple occasions where the Zoey team reached out in an unexpected way. He says this has kept him engaged beyond just a standard technology relationship, and encouraged him to put more faith in Zoey to deliver.

“Recently I was blown away because I had asked a question via a support ticket. A quick response came back and said here’s the solution, here’s your fix. This is always the norm for Zoey. Then, this is where I was floored, whoever it was, said, ‘Hey, by the way, I know you were doing a comparative analysis of our B2B capabilities, how’s that going?’ What just happened? This is not just some far off third world country responding. This is someone looking at our account and cared enough to ask. I was floored by it - this just never happens.”

Milkhouse Candle took another look at Zoey’s B2B solutions in part because of another unexpected outreach scenario. “Uri (Foom, Founder and President of Zoey) has been a tremendous help to us. At the same time we were talking with your team about something or other, Uri was reaching out to me. ‘Hey, I noticed when you click on Wholesale, it takes you off of Zoey.’ Same time talking about, realized why are they not using Zoey for wholesale. ‘Where did we fail you?’ “

Sparrow says the collaborative effort Zoey has taken to understand customers like themselves is a hidden asset that makes Zoey a much better choice. The fact that the platform listens, responds and evolves, makes it even stronger.

“Zoey is always improving. It hasn’t always had the features it had now. Zoey didn’t always have the ability to add multiple items to the cart at once. It hasn’t always had the ability to do the mobile app. That probably just came from great support and good communication, and the team working on it and then saying ‘Hey, there’s another option.’ ”

Ultimately, the transition has been smooth, and even led to more self-service orders being placed, something Sparrow attributes to the user-friendly nature of Zoey’s offerings.

“I think it’s been great. The greatest point is customers aren’t calling in complaining, or having a hard time getting in. The experience was working. When you change from one solution to another, there’s a bit of nervousness as to how many calls are we going to field. Customers may need to be walked through it; they may not be able to get their orders in nice and quick and efficiently as it’s not a system they’re familiar with. I simply have not heard that being an issue here. And when there is a question, we can log in as that customer, and make sure we see what we want them to see. You can’t get that with the other guys.”

About Zoey

Zoey is a powerful eCommerce solution for B2B and wholesale businesses. We offer three major solutions to run a business: A mobile app for taking orders on the go, a self-service web portal for eCommerce, and a web-based admin for product, customer and order management. Our features include net terms and credit limits, sales quote generation, customer groups, access restrictions, and quick order capabilities.



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