

CASE STUDY

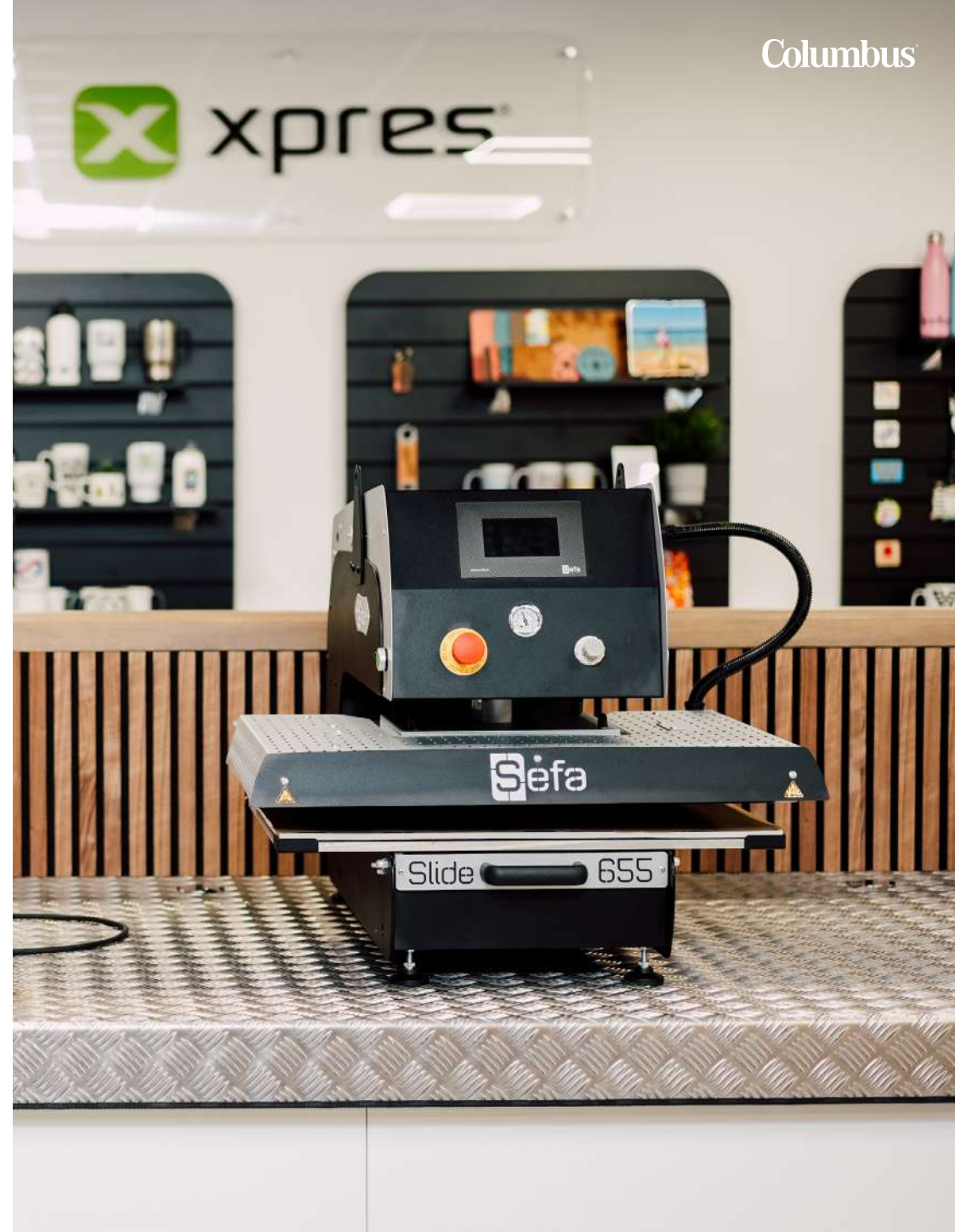
Charterhouse Holdings: A seamless integration of innovation and expertise with Columbus, Optimizely and Microsoft



About Charterhouse

Founded in 1970, Charterhouse Holdings plc is well known in garment manufacture and personalisation solutions. Based in Derby, UK, the company has evolved significantly over the last 54 years and empowers its customers to personalise by providing an innovative and unique product mix through four successful brands: Kustom Kit, Xpres, Vanilla and Adkins.

Kustom Kit is one of Europe's leading suppliers of high quality corporate, work and team clothing. Xpres is the UK market leader in technology, media and printables for the personalisation market. Vanilla is a collection of premium fashion basics optimised for print personalisation, whilst Adkins has been the dominant force in heat press technology for over 45 years.



Challenges

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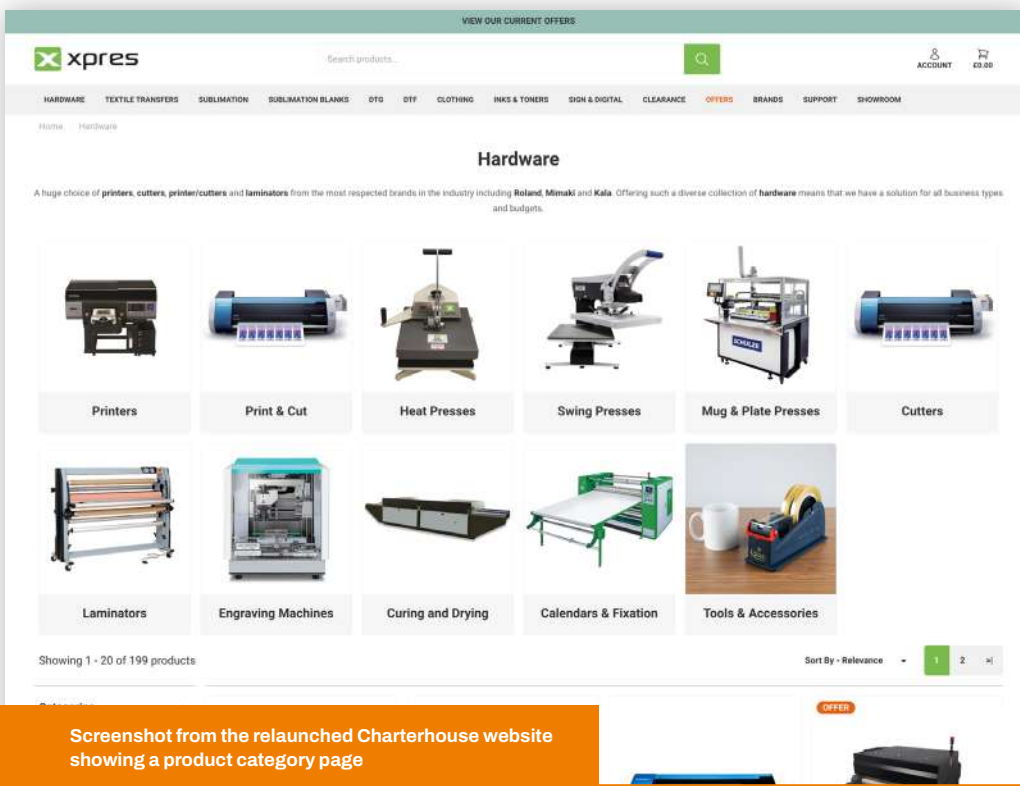
Angus Mears, IT Manager at Charterhouse



Charterhouse faced significant challenges with its previous e-commerce platform for their Xpres division, which was deeply integrated with Microsoft D365. Any updates or customisations to either system often led to conflicts, causing disruptions. For example, upgrading the ERP system required taking the website offline, resulting in lost transactions.

Performance speed was another major issue due to the reliance on the existing solution, which became increasingly difficult to integrate as Microsoft developed their own e-commerce solutions. Additionally, during peak times like clearance events, the platform struggled to scale, affecting promotions and sales.

Angus Mears, IT Manager at Charterhouse, explains some of the issues the company was facing: “We had to be cautious about how we promoted products because our infrastructure couldn’t keep up. We wanted a robust, best-of-breed solution that could be integrated into D365, simplifying the upgrade process and reducing costs.”



Screenshot from the relaunched Charterhouse website showing a product category page

The solution: Optimizely and Columbus

Seeking a more efficient web solution integrated with its ERP system, Charterhouse turned to Optimizely. Known for its digital experience platform, Optimizely Commerce offers a comprehensive suite of tools designed to enhance e-commerce capabilities.

This was particularly appealing to Charterhouse due to its flexibility and scalability. The platform's ability to handle complex product catalogues, and seamless integration with ERP systems made it an ideal choice for Charterhouse's needs. Additionally, Optimizely's user-friendly interface and extensive customisation options allowed Charterhouse to tailor the platform to their specific requirements, ensuring a perfect fit for their business processes.

With Columbus' proven track record in implementing Optimizely, their long-term relationship with Charterhouse, and deep industry expertise and understanding of Charterhouse's unique challenges, the decision was clear.

John Slater, Marketing Manager at Charterhouse, explains one of the reasons behind their decision, "Columbus had just implemented Optimizely with D365 F&O ERP, mirroring our system perfectly. This provided us with a functional demo and significantly boosted our confidence in their team."

Angus further clarifies, "It wasn't just about replicating a solution from another customer. It was about leveraging the knowledge gained from other implementations and tailoring it to our specific needs. While we differ from Columbus' other clients, their deep understanding of the product and its possibilities is invaluable."

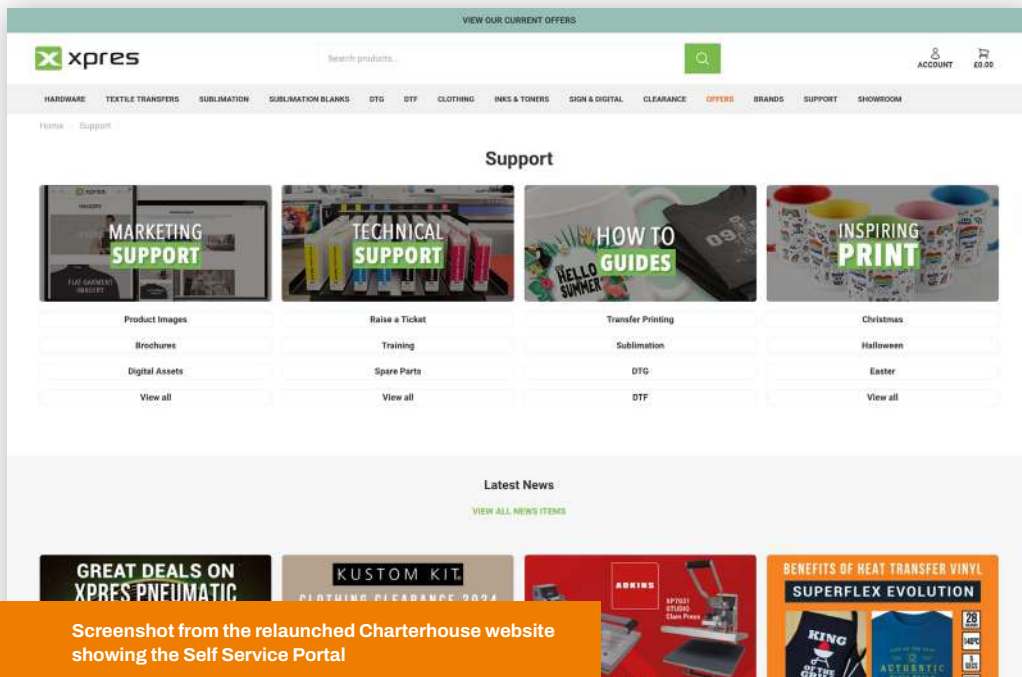
The project, initiated in March 2023, utilised Jira for agile project management and iterative sprints, allowing Charterhouse to test and refine features throughout the process. Columbus provided dedicated test environments, enabling thorough testing before the official go-live on April 4, 2024.

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Angus Mears, IT Manager at Charterhouse



Seamless integration and enhanced performance



Screenshot from the relaunched Charterhouse website showing the Self Service Portal

The integration between Optimizely and Microsoft D365 initially presented challenges, especially with data extraction and configuration. However, with the expertise of Columbus, these issues were quickly resolved. “We thought pricing would be a major hurdle, but Columbus made everything come together smoothly with no hiccups,” added John.

The customisable nature of Optimizely allowed Charterhouse to tailor the platform to its specific needs, enhancing the company’s ability to manage and optimise their e-commerce operations. Columbus’ deep knowledge of manufacturing and distribution processes ensured that the implementation was aligned with Charterhouse’s operational goals, resulting in a seamless and efficient integration.

“There are many e-commerce platforms that offer comprehensive solutions out of the box,” explains John. “However, Optimizely’s customisability allows us to modify it as needed. We communicate our requirements to Columbus, and anything becomes possible. It can be built precisely to our specifications.”

Angus also praises the support from Columbus, “You can have the best product in the world, but if the implementation team isn’t up to par, it’s not very useful. Optimizely’s extensive customisability initially posed a challenge because we didn’t know enough to understand what needed customising. Columbus guided us through the journey, showing us what was possible.”

” **Optimizely is incredibly customisable.
It can be built exactly as we require it.**”

John Slater, Marketing Manager at Charterhouse

Benefits of the partnership

Since completing the project with Columbus, Optimizely has improved several areas of the business:

1. Improved customer experience

The new platform has significantly enhanced the online customer experience, with pages loading ten times faster and a more streamlined checkout process. The introduction of a saved cards feature has further improved the user experience. Customers now enjoy a seamless and efficient shopping experience, which has reduced the bounce rate and increased customer satisfaction.

2. Operational efficiency

Charterhouse can now capture web orders even during D365 maintenance or upgrades. The new system has also improved shipping charge calculations and provided a more accurate and detailed Google Shopping feed, boosting ad performance. The enhanced integration means that Charterhouse can handle peak traffic times more effectively, ensuring that promotional events run smoothly without technical glitches.

3. Advanced features

Enhanced product filters on category pages help customers find products more easily. Future plans include auto-generated product recommendations using sales data from D365F&O, further enhancing customer satisfaction and sales. This personalised shopping experience is expected to drive higher conversion rates and increase average order values



4. Seamless upgrades

Recent ERP upgrades did not require taking the website offline, allowing continuous order processing and ensuring a smooth transition. The ability to perform system upgrades without downtime has been a significant advantage, minimising disruption and maintaining business continuity

5. Increased agility

The agile project management approach has allowed Charterhouse to quickly adapt to changes and implement new features based on customer feedback. This iterative process ensured that the final solution was highly optimised and met the evolving needs of the business

“ We have many exciting plans to implement numerous enhancements that will undoubtedly improve online sales and customer satisfaction.”

John Slater, Marketing Manager at Charterhouse



Working with Columbus: A testament to expertise and trust

The collaboration between Columbus, Optimizely, and Microsoft has not only addressed existing challenges but also positioned Charterhouse for future growth and success.

Reflecting on the partnership, Angus adds, “Having been in the industry for 30 years, I’m quite cynical. When people say, ‘oh yes, we can do that,’ I’ve learned to distrust it. But with a team like Columbus, who can clearly demonstrate their capabilities, it instils a lot more confidence.”

John also commends the support from Columbus, “This was our first experience using Optimizely. Columbus knew the product so well they could guide us in how to use it effectively, which was invaluable.”

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Angus Mears, IT Manager at Charterhouse



About Columbus

Columbus is a global IT services and consulting company with more than 2,000 employees serving 5,000+ customers worldwide. Columbus helps ambitious companies transform, maximise and futureproof their business digitally.

We are specialised within the industries retail, distribution, food, manufacturing and life sciences. We offer a comprehensive solution portfolio with deep industry knowledge, extensive technology expertise and profound customer insight. Columbus has offices and partners all over the world and we can deliver our solutions and services locally – on a global scale.

www.columbusglobal.com

We're not just a partner with **Optimizely...**
we're an award-winning partner.

2023 winners of:

- **Commerce Partner of the Year**
- **Best Buying Experience Project**

