

PannaDolce.com's social networking tools help start-up e-bakery boost sales

Panna Dolce recently launched an online bakery on Volusion Inc.'s e-commerce platform, where built-in social networking tools are helping its sales to rise, Panna Dolce co-owner Katherine Greis says.

Much of the young retailer's early success, which has sales doubling week to week, can be attributed to its strong following on social networking sites, Greis says. Panna Dolce maintains an active presence on sites including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, Yelp and Vimeo, and it shares bakery news on PannaDolce.com's blog.

Volusion's platform allows online shoppers to instantly share their favorite products with friends on more than 225 social media outlets. The retailer estimates that 35% of its orders come directly from these sites. Panna Dolce surpassed its sales projections for Valentine's Day, estimating that 50% of orders in that critical selling period were driven by social media.

"Without Volusion, building a solid social networking following would not have been so easy," Greis says. "I never thought social networking tools would generate such a tangible dollar-value return."

The Volusion platform's "Social Store Builder" and "AddThis" features allows the retailer to sell products directly on MySpace and Facebook while adding product sharing capability on hundreds of popular social media networks. Integrated search engine optimization has also helped the site achieve high levels of exposure, Panna Dolce says.

Largely a specialty gift site, Panna Dolce also values the ability of shoppers on the Volusion platform to customize gift baskets, place items on their wish lists and buy online gift certificates, the retailer says. ●

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