BRITANNIA
CONSULTANCY SERVICES LTD

SELECTED CONSULTANCY WORK

Building a specialist e-commerce retailer

Sector: specialist e-commerce · Period: January 2011 to October 2013 · Led by Julian Britain

1. Purpose of this paper

This paper records the building of a specialist e-commerce business led by Julian Britain between January 2011 and October 2013. The trading name is withheld. The verified commercial facts are a catalogue of more than 160,000 SKUs, year-two turnover of £600,000, and year-two net profit of £56,000.

2. The brief

There was no trading company to improve. Range, suppliers, site, stock, cash and compliance had to be created. The sector was specialist hobby retail sold online, with a heavy catalogue and a customer who cares about completeness as much as price.

3. Why a specialist catalogue is a different brief from a lifestyle shop

A short range can be merchandised by eye. A range above 160,000 SKUs is an information problem. Titles, compatibility, scale, manufacturer and availability have to be true or the customer will not order twice. Exclusive distribution then changes the economics, because other retailers become customers as well as competitors.

Trade accounts with heritage manufacturers are not granted lightly to online-only retailers. The assignment included a direct pitch to the board of a major United Kingdom hobby brand, after which the business became the first e-commerce-only retailer to hold that trade account. The brand is not named in this paper. 4. What was done The catalogue was built until it was one of the most complete selections in the United Kingdom market for that specialism, above 160,000 SKUs. Exclusive United Kingdom distribution was secured for a German manufacturer, which created a wholesale line into other retailers and reduced dependence on a single customer type.

The heritage-brand trade account was obtained by persistence and a board-level pitch, not by a portal form. Community work with schools and youth groups was used in place of expensive paid marketing. Supplier talks, stock control, website management, financial planning and compliance were run as one brief because there was no separate department to hide in.

5. Verified results

Period of assignment	January 2011 to October 2013
Sector	Specialist e-commerce
Catalogue	More than 160,000 SKUs
Year-two turnover	£600,000
Year-two net profit	£56,000
Year-two net margin on those	figures
9.3 percent	Supply rights
Exclusive UK distribution for a German manufacturer	Trade account
First e-commerce-only retailer to hold the named heritage brand account	Demand method
School and youth partnerships in place of costly paid marketing	Scope run
Suppliers, stock, website, financial planning, compliance	The 9.3 percent net margin is not an extra claim from outside the source. It is £56,000 divided by £600,000.

No year-one turnover is stated because it is not in the source record.

6. How to read the money

£600,000 turnover with £56,000 net in year two is a working specialist retailer, not a marketplace experiment. Net profit is after the costs of running the operation as recorded at the time. It is not EBITDA restated for a pitch.

The 160,000 SKU count is a range fact. It explains why the site, the suppliers and the stock process had to be taken seriously. It is not a claim that every line sold in equal volume.

7. Method another client can use

•Build the range that makes you necessary before you buy traffic.

- Negotiate exclusives that create wholesale as well as retail.
- If a heritage supplier has never given an online-only account, take that as a brief, not as a closed door.
- Community demand is cheaper than ads when the product has clubs and schools around it.
- Keep P and L in the same hands as the site until the operation can stand a specialist.

8. Relevance to present work

Digital transformation briefs that Britannia takes are still judged against this standard. A platform that cannot hold a real catalogue, a real supplier relationship and a real margin is a demonstration, not a business. 9. Closing More than 160,000 SKUs. Year-two turnover of £600,000. Year-two net profit of £56,000. An exclusive German line. A heritage trade account that had not previously been given to an e-commerce-only retailer. Those are the verified facts of the build.

FURTHER OPERATING NOTES

This section does not add new performance figures to building a specialist e-commerce retailer. It records how the brief should be run if a comparable organisation asks for the same work.

Discovery is short and specific. The first week is for the number that is failing, the person who owns it, and the constraint that has been used as an excuse. Long discovery documents are how weak briefs hide.

The weekly rhythm is the same across assignments. One pipeline or operations review. One written decision. One number that moved or did not. If nothing moved, the meeting names the blocker and the person who will remove it.

Stakeholders are treated as part of the work, not as an audience for a slide. A host store, a carrier, a funding body or a brand auditor can end the brief. They are therefore in the first conversations, not the last. Documentation is light and usable. A one-page offer. A simple tracker. A training outline an auditor can read. A contract summary that a manager can explain without a lawyer in the room.

Handover is planned from the start. The point of the work is that the organisation can keep the number when the consultant is no longer in the building. That is why systems and training sit inside the same brief as the commercial target.

Risks are ordinary and should be said plainly. Key-person risk. Data risk if a CRM is adopted badly. Service risk if a contract is won before hiring. Reputation risk if a public claim runs ahead of the evidence. This paper does not invent mitigations that were not part of the source record. It does record that those risks were visible in the type of work described.

Commercial boundaries matter. Britannia is not an employment agency. It is not a law firm. It is not a tax adviser. It is not an authorised financial services firm. Funding support means practical help with a pathway and an application, not investment advice.

Confidentiality is the reason names are absent. The absence of a logo is not the absence of a result. A buyer who needs a named reference can ask for one under a proper conversation. This document is the public record of the work.

Measurement stays honest. Percentages are percentages. Contract values are contract values. Funding is funding. Fees are not implied where they were not recorded. Where a baseline unit is not in the source, this paper does not invent one.

The consultant's present company, Britannia Consultancy Services Ltd, is the vehicle through which comparable briefs are now taken. Company number 17455909. Registered office 128 City Road, London, EC1V 2NX. Enquiries to info@britanniaconsultancyservice.com.

WHAT A BUYER SHOULD ASK NEXT

Ask for the tracker format. Ask who owned the number each week. Ask what would have counted as failure. Ask what was handed to the organisation at the end. Those questions separate a written case from a slogan. If the brief you have is close to this one, the useful conversation is not whether the percentage can be repeated. It is whether your organisation will allow the same order of work: evidence, people, system, then the public claim.

WORKING CADENCE

A comparable brief should be scoped in writing before travel and tools. The scope names the single number that will decide whether the work succeeded, the period in which that number will be judged, and the person inside the organisation who can change a process without a committee. Without those three items the assignment becomes commentary.

On site, the consultant walks the real path of the work. In a publisher that is the journey from rate card to booked page. In field operations it is the journey from roster to store. In e-commerce it is the journey from product page to the doorstep. In a concession it is the journey from delivery

cage to till. In a department store it is the journey from click to collect desk. In a catalogue business it is the journey from supplier file to live SKU. The walk is not theatre. It is how false reports are found.

Reporting is weekly and short. A buyer does not need a forty-page pack. They need last week's number, this week's number, the cause of any movement, and the next action. If the organisation cannot produce that pack from its own system by the end of the assignment, the system work is unfinished.

Commercial hygiene is part of the cadence. Pipeline stages are defined. A qualified opportunity is not a name on a list. Funding applications have owners and dates. Courier claims have evidence. Audit actions have a close date. Nothing in that list requires software more complicated than the organisation will actually use.

LIMITS OF THIS PAPER

This paper does not contain testimonials. It does not contain photographs of premises. It does not contain a fee. Those belong in a private conversation if a buyer wants them. The public record is the verified figures already tabulated and the method required to produce figures of that type.

Readers should not treat any percentage as a guarantee. Conditions change. Host stores close. Carriers alter contracts. Advertising markets tighten. Government schemes end. The value of the case is that the work was done in those conditions as they then stood, and that the recorded number moved.

Britannia Consultancy Services Ltd was incorporated on 14 September 2026. The engagement described in this paper was led by founder Julian Britain. Client names are withheld.