

## CASE STUDY

How premium raw pet food supplier Natures Menu used Hive to grow and retain online basket and subscription customers in 2020



**Natures  
Menu**  
REAL IN EVERY WAY

Expanding a traditionally bricks and mortar business to grow online sales is always a challenge, but it was one Natures Menu knew they had to undertake to avoid missed opportunities. The company has been selling its vet-approved raw dog food since 1981 and had enjoyed success in small communities that really valued what they fed their pets. Natures Menu started out traditionally by selling their food via third-party high-street pet stores and they gained a loyal following. The past decade had shown that Natures Menu were also able to generate sales via their branded websites. After attracting investment in 2019, they **embarked on a transformation strategy to overhaul their digital offerings** with a view to **growing their direct-to-consumer online delivery subscription model** business through 2020 and beyond.

Having already taken the initiative to improve their online platforms, the arrival of the Covid-19 lockdown suddenly meant this **new online sales platform became a major source of their revenue**. The next challenge was that they needed to make sure they could keep this new influx of customers coming back.

Using the customer data they had already captured, they planned to finesse their email communications to encourage subscription take-up. For that, the messages sent to their customers had to be as appropriate as possible. For example, cat owners tend to not be interested in subscription offers for dog food, and marketing messages aimed at large dogs won't work for small dogs. The company needed **marketing software that could differentiate between their customers' interests** and let them send **personalised marketing emails and follow-ups**. It also needed to be able to react to changes presented by the Coronavirus pandemic.

They chose Hive to help, and the concept of a 'single pet view' was born.

## The Challenge

How do you successfully transition a business to take advantage of online subscriptions when the majority of your customers are used to buying your product as a one-off purchase in high-street stores? This was the question that premium raw pet food supplier Natures Menu was wrestling with back in 2019. After receiving investment to grow their business they had rebuilt their website and ecommerce capability, but the company knew they had to focus on increasing their customer subscriptions by building online loyalty.

**“We're now sending the right emails at the right time to the right group of people.”**

The data from their online sales was sitting in a database, and they had no easy way of interrogating it. This meant they couldn't ensure they were sending relevant messages to their customers, and had only crude ways of measuring the success of those campaigns. As Julia Guy, Natures Menu's Digital Channels Director, explains: "We didn't really have a CDP system at all, and we needed one to create better targeting with our emails to drive engagement and ultimately revenue. We wanted to create subsets of our contact database in order to send different communications based on our customers' pets, and their pets' needs, further personalising our email messages, but weren't in a position to do so."

She adds, "We also wanted to drive up subscriptions, but you need to use very different language to someone who already has a subscription compared to someone who doesn't. Equally our lapsed customer logic was based on email opens, rather than on them being genuinely lapsed. We didn't want to be emailing loads of people that have already got a subscription saying we'd love to have you back just because they didn't open an email for a while! We also wanted to drill down into the data for personalisation of our messages: does the customer have a cat or a dog? If it's a dog, is it a puppy, or a small, medium or large dog? Is it their birthday? We wanted to be able to include the dog's name in the email, and things like that."

**“Hive has given us the foundations to totally transform not just our marketing, but our understanding of our customers and their behaviour.”**

Natures Menu's newly focussed online ecommerce platform and subscription model went live in October 2019 and became particularly important when pet shops were closed during the pandemic lockdowns. Their high-street pet food sales first grew massively due to panic buying, then went markedly down as their customers could no longer travel to pet shops. Natures Menu's customers turned to their website



**EASILY  
SEGMENT  
CUSTOMERS  
SO THEY WILL  
ONLY RECEIVE  
RELEVANT  
MARKETING  
MESSAGES**

## Some benefits of Hive Marketing Cloud



**NURTURE  
AUTOMATED  
CUSTOMER  
JOURNEYS  
TO INCREASE  
CUSTOMER LOYALTY**



**SEE THE  
EFFECT OF  
CAMPAIGNS  
AND EASILY  
MONITOR YOUR  
RETURN ON  
INVESTMENT**

and their online sales grew considerably. Building on this online growth was suddenly key to the on-going success of the company, engaging and keeping those new customers was then the next challenge in making the online subscription model work.

### The Solution

Natures Menu chose Hive to help with these marketing challenges, but why? "We knew what we wanted," Julia explains, "we needed the ability to drill down into our data to send more relevant and personalised email communications, but we hadn't actually gone outside looking for any software to do so yet." By chance, Julia was

introduced to Hive through a previous trusted business contact and it was a perfect fit for what they were looking for: "It kind of fell into our lap!"

From day one Julia found the interrogation capabilities of Hive incredibly useful: "It's great. We're still populating Hive with customer information from different sources - there's lots of different ways people can tell us about their pets - but now we know whether our customers have got a dog or a cat, or multiple pets, what breed it is, its date of birth or an estimate of its age, and its name. This is gold dust to us."

However, that's just top-level information, and Hive offers so much more granularity: "Now, if we want to segment our audience," says Julia, "we can just drill down and down, and spin things around, and

then create these custom audiences which remain dynamic. This is quite an incredible piece of software; you just grab the various audience traits you want and name it. And then anyone who later joins the mailing list with the same criteria automatically goes into that segment.”

As well as the reduction in customer analysis time, and increase in granularity, Julia is also impressed with how quickly her team can create a campaign or prepare for likely changes in the market: “In late 2020, as we could now target customers geographically, we had emails on standby waiting to go out to people that moved into Tier 3. Once the Prime Minister had made the announcement, all we had to do was move the little geographical pointer to the 10-mile radius of that area, hit send and the customer had it in their inbox! They were reminded pretty much instantly that they could buy our product from us direct, that we offered next day delivery and that they could subscribe to receive it regularly.”

**“Now, if we want to segment our audience, we can just drill down and down. This is gold dust to us.”**

It also meant they could prepare and react to other news and events quickly. Julia tells us, “Our black Friday campaign worked really well. Our revenue from email is increasing all the time as we become more refined with what we’re doing.”

The support Hive Marketing Cloud offers for its users garners Julia’s praise too: “It’s not a case of you’ve bought the product, so now you’re on your own. The support team is incredibly responsive and very knowledgeable, as well as friendly and approachable - they work with us.”

## The Bottom Line

Hive Marketing Cloud has helped transform Natures Menu’s online business. The company had already taken the initiative with its timely decision to improve their digital offerings pre-pandemic when they suddenly increased their online orders by 70%. Hive was there to help them retain those customers by using personalisation to increase customer loyalty and convert one-off purchasers to their subscription model.

As Julia tells us, “We recently had a strategic review with another supplier and they were blown away by how successful our digital communications now are. They told us that we were above industry benchmarks across all our metrics, and that we’d massively increased our engagement and our revenue from click-throughs. A lot of that must be down to Hive because we can be more targeted and much more personalised - we’re now sending the right emails at the right time to the right group of people, basically.”

## The Conclusion

Natures Menu looked to Hive Marketing Cloud to help increase and retain their online customers

to complement their traditional high-street sales model. Their decision was timely, as the pandemic created a boom and bust in shop sales, with panic buying driving up high street profits, but then reducing them during lockdown as all the shops closed for long periods.

As Julia says: “The first two months of lockdown accelerated the company’s digital transformation by about five years and Hive was a big part of that. At the end of summer 2020, the bricks and mortar side recovered and went back to its normal levels, but the direct consumer side stayed up as well. Both channels are now thriving.”

**“Our revenue from email is increasing all the time as we become more refined with what we’re doing.”**

So would Julia recommend Hive? “I’ve already recommended Hive to others. It has given us the foundations to totally transform not just our marketing, but our understanding of our customers and their behaviour. It gives us the insights to inform the decisions that we make and the communications that we send, and we’re only just starting to use it to its full potential.”

This year will be Natures Menu’s 40th anniversary year – and now they are all set to soar to new heights.



Natures Menu started as a small family business in 1981, and we've been flying the flag for real pet food from day one. Our Norfolk HQ is packed with real expertise, real skill and real craft #RealInEveryway. A passionate team who are proud to offer an unrivalled range of raw and natural pet foods for cats and dogs. We use locally sourced ingredients wherever possible, and put healthy nutrition and real food at the heart of everything we do.



Hive Marketing Cloud puts enterprise capability into the hands of marketers in medium sized businesses to accelerate their marketing revenues by enabling them to deploy highly personalised, sophisticated, multi-channel marketing from a single technology platform; based on customer intelligence. The Hive platform can surface all of its clients' data for an improved, relevant, customer experience that converts.

# See our platform in action

Book a demo and we'll show you how our other ecommerce business clients are making marketing more personal and results more impressive.

## Contact us:

**t:** +44 117 911 6911

**e:** [enquiries@hivemarketingcloud.com](mailto:enquiries@hivemarketingcloud.com)

**[hivemarketingcloud.com](http://hivemarketingcloud.com)**

