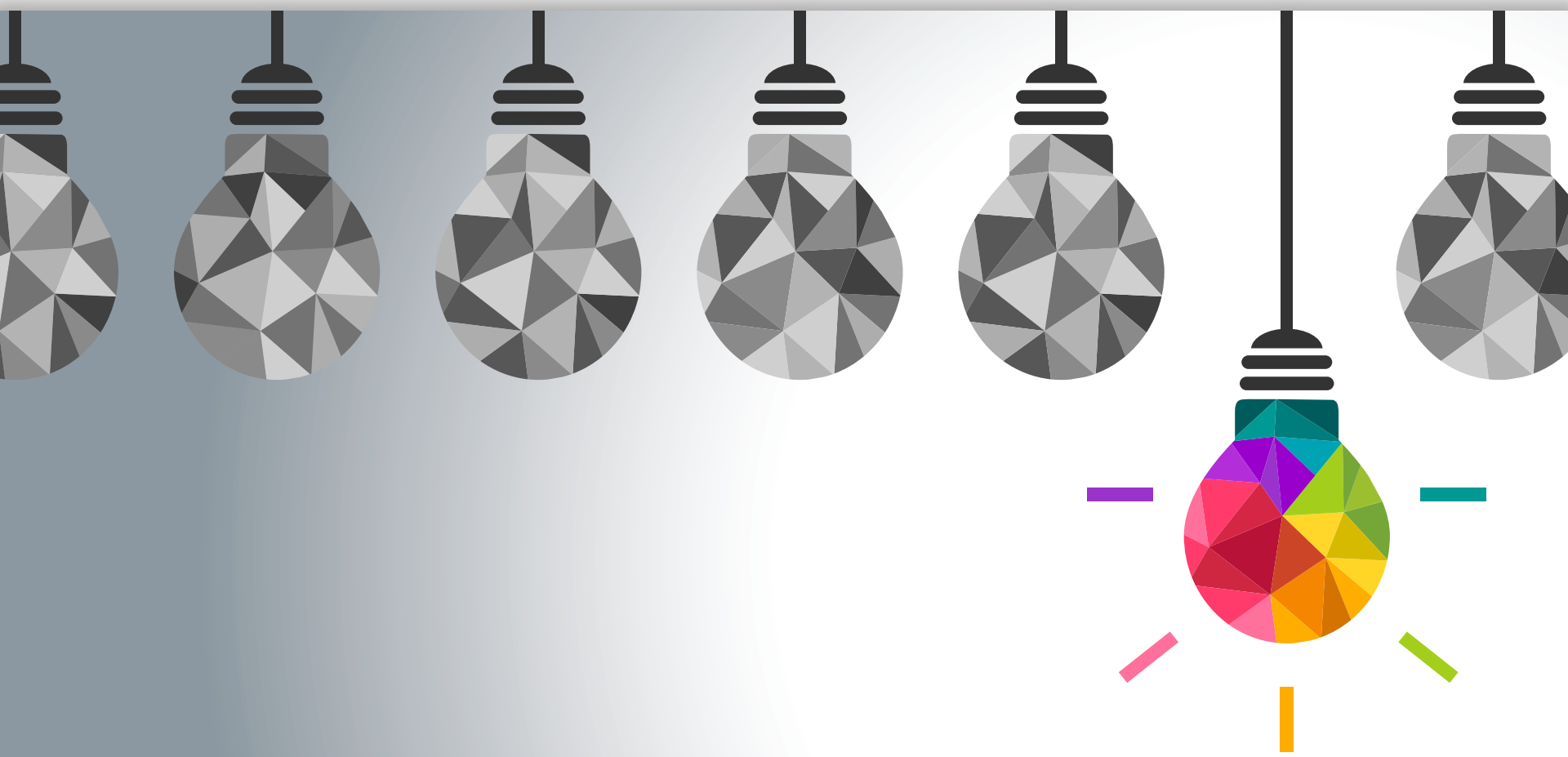


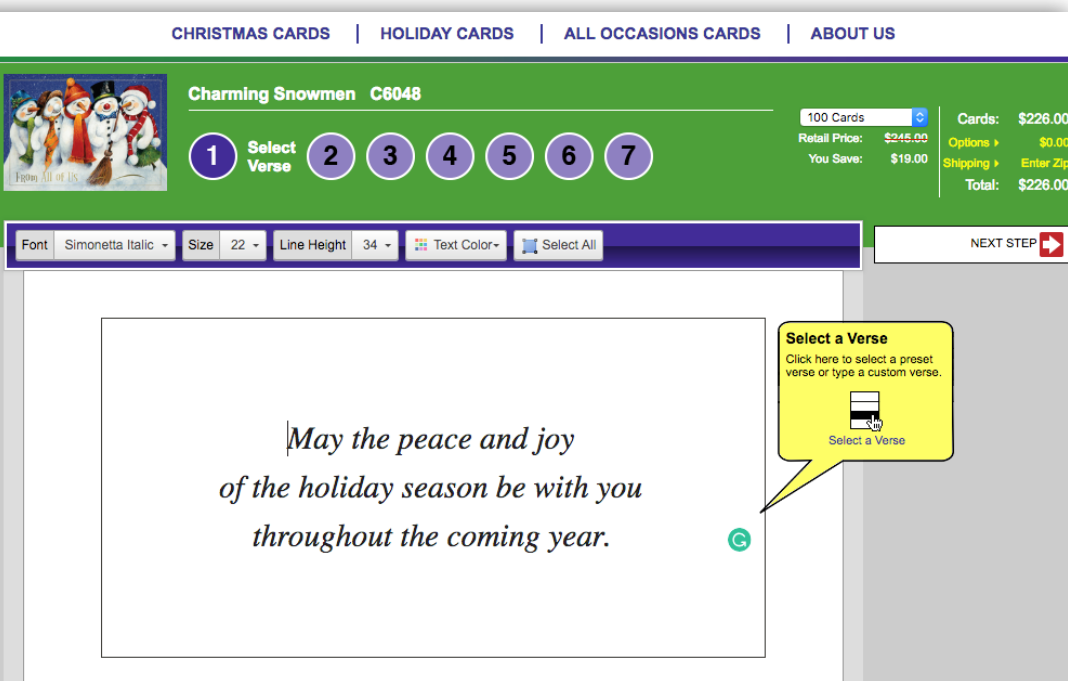
ADVANCED DEV CASE STUDY

CARDS FOR CAUSES: HYBRID CUSTOMIZATION IN BIGCOMMERCE DEVELOPMENT

Hosted eCommerce solutions are fantastic tools, but sometimes their need to serve a mass audience can hinder their usefulness for businesses with uncommon requirements. Barry Robb, the business manager at Cards for Causes, first reached out to 1Digital Agency because his business was growing, but his eCommerce site was weighing them down. [Cards for Causes](#) is a Huston based company which allows it's customers to easily give gifts to charity in a friend or loved one's name. The ordering process for these cards is long and involved. It requires the customer to customize their card from the ground up, choosing from myriad options at every step of the ordering process. Cards for Causes had built themselves a proprietary site in order to accommodate this involved process, but they were having problems with scaling. Their ordering process worked well for them, but they sacrificed in almost every other area of eCommerce to get it. Every time an update to the proprietary site was necessary, making the change was a long and expensive process. Each time they did this Cards for Causes was putting off dealing with their real issue, the site they'd had for years could no longer keep up with their growing business.



When Barry got in contact with 1Digital he had an interest in BigCommerce development. He had used the platform before so he knew he could work with it. He knew that, as a SAAS platform, BigCommerce could scale automatically as their site needed more bandwidth, stronger security, and took more orders. He also knew that nothing like their current ordering process came with BigCommerce or any existing



eCommerce platform. So he called 1Digital to see if we could build it.

Whenever a merchant comes to us with very specific, very advanced requirements we like to spend a lot of time digging into the details. In order to know if it was even possible to rebuild the Cards for Causes ordering process with BigCommerce development, we had to first learn everything about it. Our account managers had multiple meetings with the Cards for Causes team over a period of 5 months before

the project began, during which they explored the current functionality. Each answered question would bring up more questions and eventualities to consider. We take the time to learn this much before providing a plan of action because we try to make the scope of work in our proposals as detailed as possible. The more concrete the scope is the more we can reduce surprise costs later when things come up which weren't originally planned on.

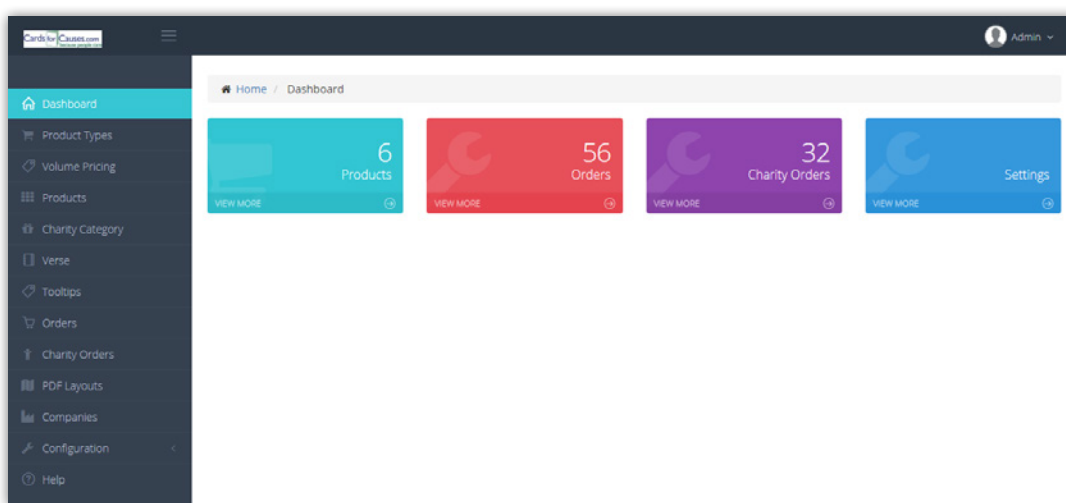
One thing we tried to anticipate for Cards for Causes during this scoping process was a good way to future-proof their system. After all, that had been their problem in the first place. They had a system which worked perfectly when it was built but was not able to adapt to their changing business. Barry had expressed that though the company focuses on cards at the moment, they may start selling other customized products in the future which would need some of their customization elements but not all. For example, in addition to the customer's message inside, a customized card requires options to be chosen for the card's envelope. Something like a customized mug, on the other hand, would just need the message. Envelope options would be a useless barrier to order completion for those customers. So we elected to make their system modular. Their new product management interface would be created of several modules which could be turned on or off as needed for each product type, giving Cards For Causes more flexibility for future products in the simplest way possible. To achieve this, we planned out a hybrid system, partly BigCommerce and partly something all our own.

The 1DBox Custom System

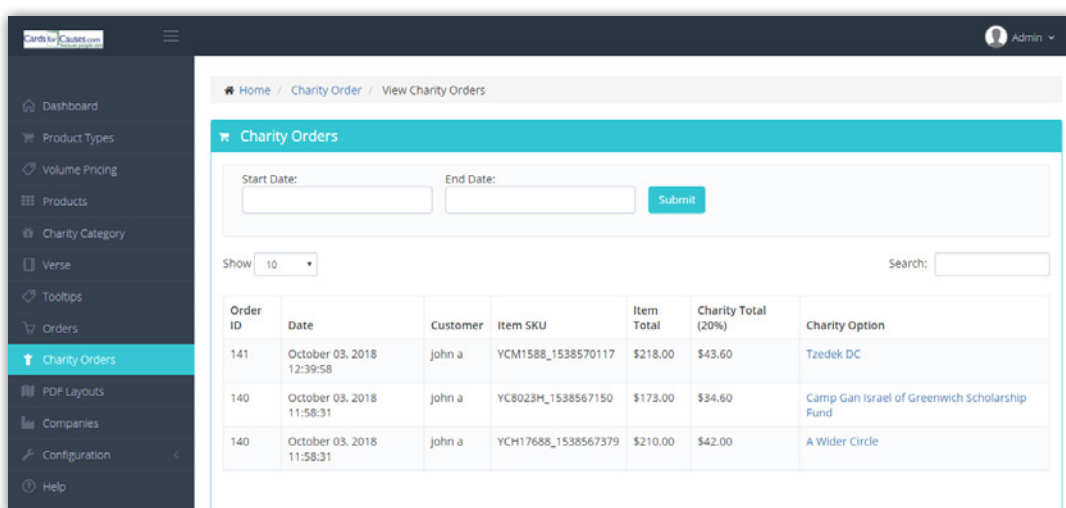
When trying to achieve truly unique requirements with a hosted system like BigCommerce, sometimes we need to color outside of the lines. BigCommerce stores are cloud-hosted, which means that though

you may own and run your BigCommerce store, they provide the server space and the security for every BigCommerce site. You are a semiautonomous part of a larger ecosystem of BigCommerce stores. On the upside, your BigCommerce site will be safer and more reliable. This also means that BigCommerce is going to set down limitations which every store must abide by, in order to protect the larger ecosystem of hosted stores. When you have a set of requirements like Cards for Causes had there simply won't be a way to achieve them using the somewhat limited sandbox that BigCommerce provides.

When that's the case we build a wholly custom system, our 1DBox dev tool kit. Our 1DBox tool is usually hosted on a Linux server rented by the client. In this separate space, not controlled or hosted by BigCommerce, we have free reign to do almost whatever we like. We then make use of BigCommerce's open API (a set of routines and protocols which help computer systems interact) to connect our 1DBox system to the rest of the BigCommerce store. This is a method we would use for complex customization not just on BigCommerce, but on any hosted platform (Shopify, Volusion, etc.) with strict development limitations.



1DBox Dev Tool Kit Dashboard



In the case of Cards for Causes, the 1DBox system we built includes an easy to navigate dashboard which we created and designed. This dashboard is accessible to the Cards for Causes team via a username and password login and allows them to manage their products. This dashboard is not dissimilar from their BigCommerce admin area, it just contains tools custom built for their process.

The dashboard consists of 12 separate modules, each of which deals with a particular part of Cards For Causes product customization and ordering process. From more banal eCommerce items like grouping products into product types and

setting volume pricing, to items more specific to the Cards for Causes business model, like managing verses which can be written inside cards or adding customer's charitable donation options. The system also tracks orders which are placed on the store through the BigCommerce cart features.

The custom system also has another built-in API connection with the specialty printer who actually creates the physical cards that are ordered on the site. Before any order is sent out, the Cards for Causes

team has a chance to review it, make changes from within the custom dashboard and then manually send the order to the printer who creates the card and sends it off to the customer.

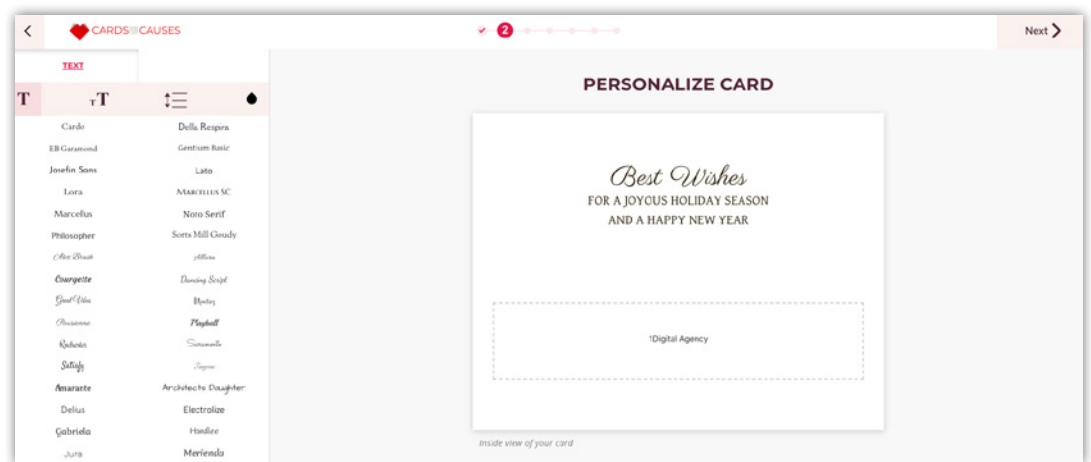
This system is workable because it is modular. Each of the 12 separate areas in the 1DBox system can have their effects

applied or not applied to a particular product type. Meaning that the Cards for Causes team can make each new product they add to their line as complex or as simple as they want. And because this system is functionally open source, if they need to add more modules in the future, no system limitations will prevent them from doing so.

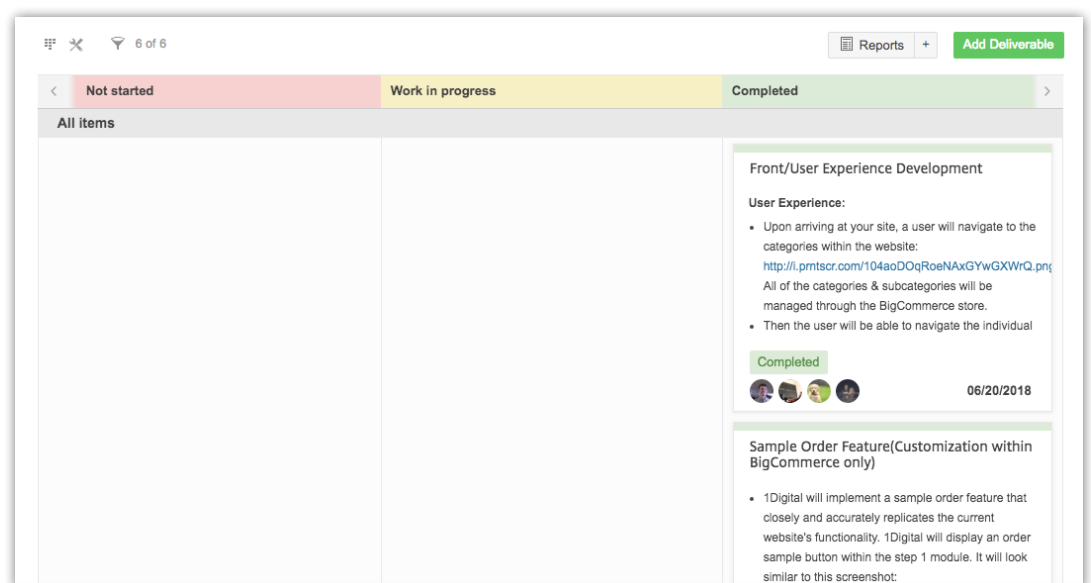
The Process

The process of building a complex custom system is not quick and easy. In cases like these, we essentially need to create an auxiliary eCommerce platform that works seamlessly with the one the client is already using. The upfront work required a lot of back and forth to get the scope of work correct but during development, there can be a long period during which the client may feel kept out of the loop while our development team is focused on their work. During this period we like to keep clients updated by reporting back to them via the Deliverables section of our project management system.

The scope of work is broken down into understandable pieces and we report on the progress of each piece as development goes along. In this case, each module corresponded to one deliverable. This way the Cards for Causes team could keep track of how far along our development team had come for each section of their project.



Customized multi-step function possible with 1DBox



After development comes QA and Testing. With a task as specialized as this, QA can often take as much time as development to complete. With Cards for Causes, we began a second series of meetings which were half training session, half quality check. We would begin by walking their team through the use and maintenance of the new 1DBox system module by module. Each time they would see something which didn't quite work with their process. We'd investigate and then alter the system. By the end of several weeks of checking, and reworking, the system was exactly what the Cards for Causes team

was looking for. As we often do for projects like this one, we created an instruction manual so that the Cards for Causes team had documentation on the proper use of their new system and could train new employees to use it in the future. The manual for this system ended up being a 33-page document.

For 90% of the merchants we work with, a SAAS platform like BigCommerce is enough. This third party system development is a rare necessity. However, if your business needs a combination of the stability, safety, and price of a hosted platform, as well as the unrestrained freedom of an open source system this hybrid solution is a great way to go. If the way your business works is unique, talk to the [BigCommerce development experts](#) at 1Digital Agency about expanding the capabilities of your hosted platform with a third party system. Going along with the crowd has its benefits, but if you need something that is crafted especially for you, 1Digital can deliver.

READY TO PUSH THE BOUNDARIES WITH OUR ADVANCED DEVELOPMENT SERVICES?

Using Expertise to Maximize Conversion Rate

If you think you're out of options, that the customization you want just can't be done, you owe it to your business to give us a call. [Our eCommerce developers](#) built this tool, and they can shape it in almost any way they need to. We created the 1DBox Dev Tool Kit to provide

eCommerce merchants on SAAS platforms with an option to stay in the platform they love and still do the work they need to. Tell us about what you need to accomplish and 1DBox Dev Tool Kit will take care of the rest.



1DIGITAL MARKETING AGENCY
20 NORTH 3RD STREET
SUITE 301 (DANIEL BUILDING)
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19106

INFO@1DIGITALAGENCY.COM
888. 982. 8269 | 215. 809. 1567

BEFORE & AFTER

GET STARTED