

# DEV CASE STUDY

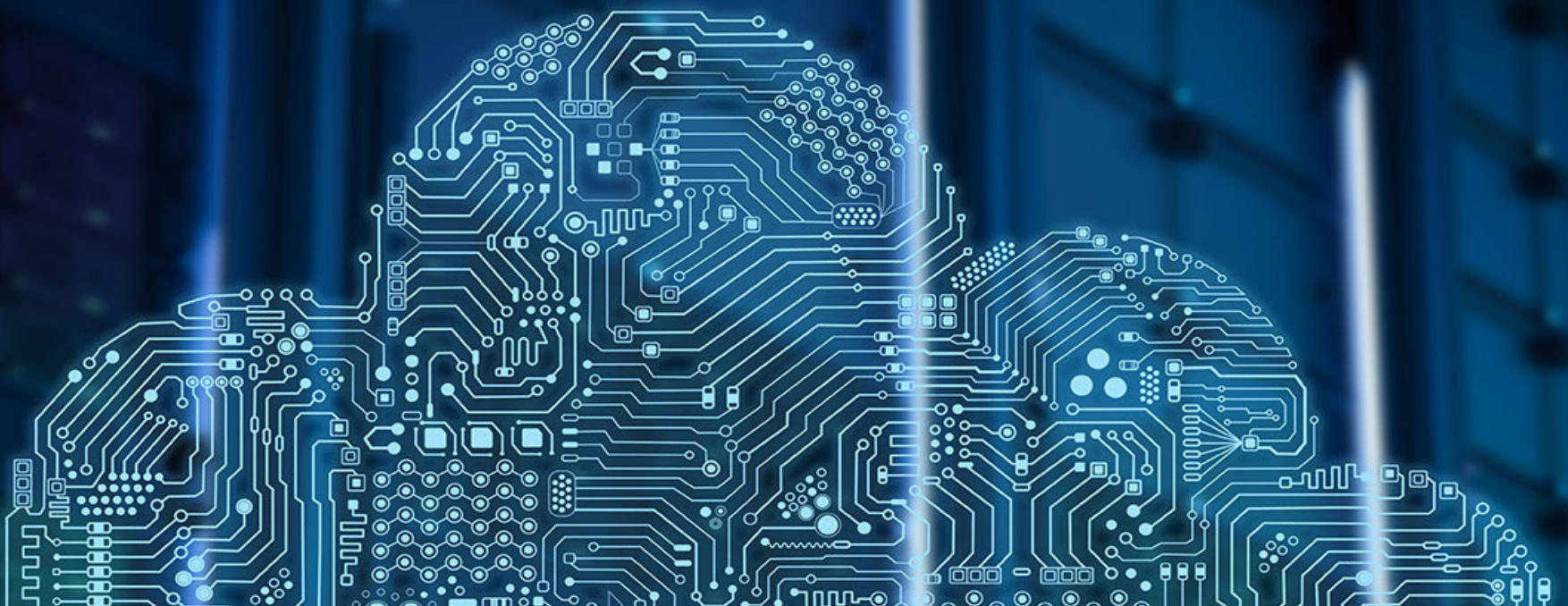
## Building From the Ground Up with eCommerce Custom Development

### A CASE STUDY ON GENIUS ECOMMERCE®

*This is part two of a case study on our sister site Genius eCommerce®. You can read the first part of the case study, focused on custom design, [right here](#).*

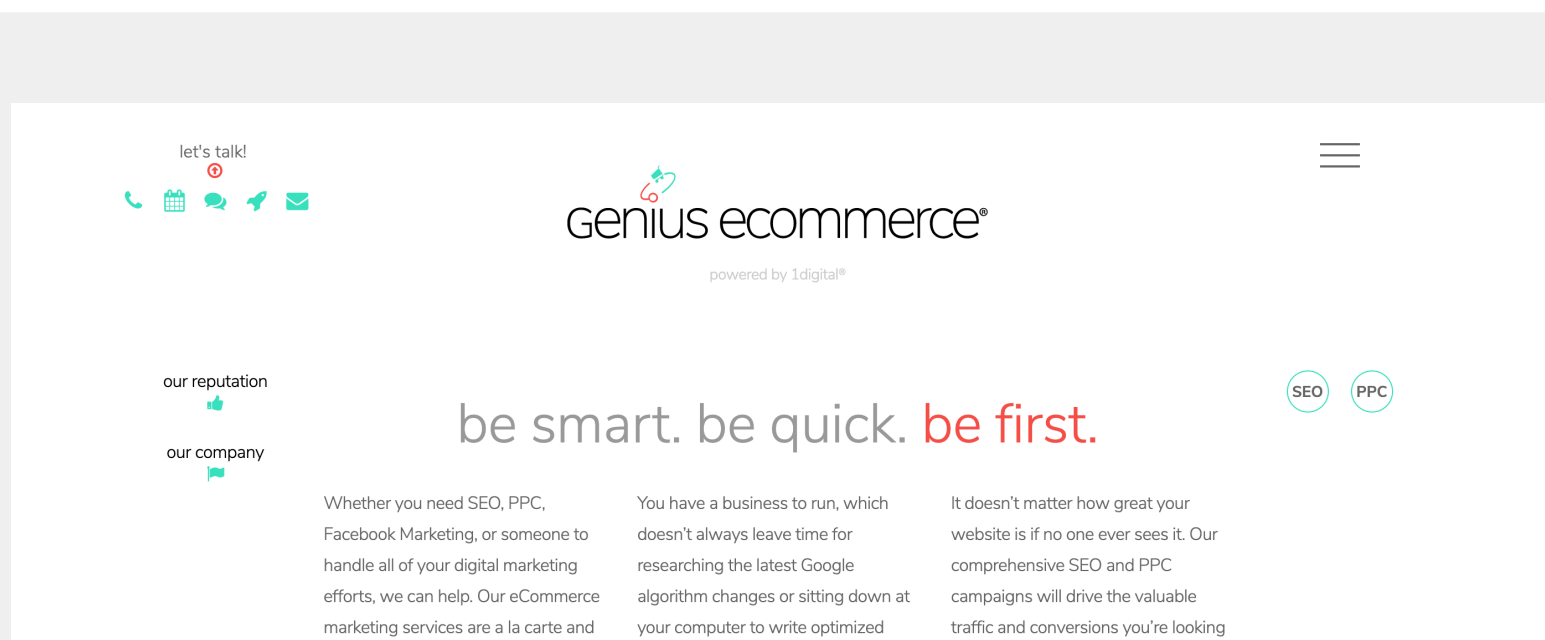
If you were to take any basic sedan you might buy off of any car lot and kit it up for racing, what would you do? You might take out all the seats beside the driver. You don't need passengers, you need the car to be lightweight. You might take out the gas-efficient engine and replace it with a bigger one. You don't need to worry about the price at the pump, you need acceleration. You might change the treaded tires for slick, smooth ones. You don't need to handle in snow, you need to reduce friction. This is the difference between a car built for anyone to use, and a car built for a very specific purpose, and it's also illustrative of the difference between a generalized template website and custom eCommerce development. The kind of site that you get out of the box from any platform is going to be an all-purpose tool for all kinds of businesses, but a custom developed site can be built specifically to do what you need it to do.

Here at 1Digital, we experienced this first hand when developing on the WordPress platform for [Genius eCommerce®](#), [our sister site](#). Genius eCommerce® had existed on a WordPress template for a few years and when we decided to update it, we did so from the ground up. Seeing the process on one of our own sites really helped highlight, for me, the difference between the quick and easy deployment of a template site and the methodical build of eCommerce custom development.



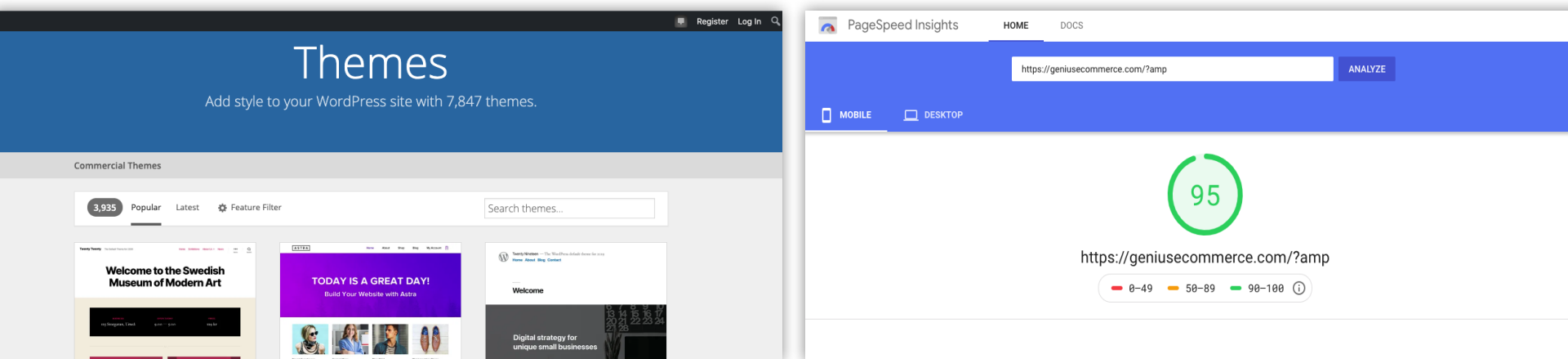
“The problem with the old theme is that there was a lot of code that was weighing the site down, whether we were using it or not,” said Jon Luhrs, one of the principal developers here at 1Digital®. The old version of the Genius eCommerce site was on a prebuilt WordPress theme. WordPress themes, like many prebuilt templates, come with a suite of dependent plugins. “They might have one plugin they ask you to download to run your menu or another that might handle form submissions, stuff like that,” Jon told me. Unfortunately, all those items can add up to a lot of bloat. Theme developers want to make sure that their theme is bought by the most people possible and therefore useable in the most circumstances. This makes a prebuilt theme a jack of all trades and a master of none.

“The biggest thing we wanted to improve in the new version was speed,” Jon said. To do so he got rid of a lot of plugins that would normally come with a WordPress site and built custom shortcodes from scratch to replace them. For example, the old Genius eCommerce site had a page builder called WP Bakery installed. A page builder like this makes it easy to drag and drop content and add a new page to your site from the admin area without going into the code. “These page builder plugins are a dime a dozen,” Jon told me. “They all offer pretty much the same functionality but they also come with a lot of code you might not need.” The advantage of having someone like Jon in your corner, who is trained in custom development, is that you don’t need page building to be made easy for you. Instead, Jon built our new pages from scratch. This made them as lean as possible because he was only adding what was absolutely needed to make the page run.



“It was the same thing for image sliders and testimonial sliders,” Jon told me. Where a WordPress plugin runs inside your page taking images you’ve added to the admin area and loading them in, we custom-built those features with lines of code to make them more streamlined. We also optimized the images themselves for more speed. “A lot of it is figuring out the right settings to export the image from Photoshop in, that will work for its purpose within the page without being too much,” Jon said. A custom development team can help you create the right image files, based on your plan for each particular page.

At the time of launch, the new Genius eCommerce® website is running an average speed score of 98.6 on mobile pages. “This is a pretty big improvement over the previous template and we’ve started to see the site generate some leads,” Jon told me. This kind of score on Google’s Page Speed Insights would be nearly impossible for your average eCommerce store, even with custom development, but that doesn’t mean you should take site speed off of your priorities list. A collection of studies done by Walmart found that when their load time fluctuates between 1 and 4 seconds conversions declined sharply. They found that every 1-second improvement in page load time translated into a 2% increase in conversions on the site.



An eCommerce custom developer can also help a site with future-proofing, especially one that’s relied on templates and prebuilt plugins in the past. Remember, these plugins are created by developers too. That means they have a shelf life. An app may work when you first set up your site, but after a few years, that developer may move on to other things, and stop supporting the plugin that the theme was dependant on when you first set it up. On Genius eCommerce we had a plugin that was customizing how we allow team members to login to our site’s admin area. By the time the Genius eCommerce® site was being built that plugin had stopped being supported for two or three years. “Fortunately that wasn’t necessary to the basic functionality of the site, so I just disabled it,” Jon said. However, when you build code from scratch you don’t need to worry about updates or wondering if the service you relied on will no longer be supported. “If something ever breaks I would rather come up with a different way to do it, rather than download another plugin,” Jon told me. “What saves you money in the short term may end up costing you more down the road, depending on how well it’s supported.”

Genius eCommerce® helped me clarify for myself what I’ve been explaining to our clients for years now. When thinking about custom eCommerce development, as opposed to prebuilt templates, it all comes down to a question about the amount of control you want to have. Templates, with dependant plugins, can be deployed quickly and cheaply. You can have a useable site up in no time. But, as we experienced working with Genius eCommerce, eventually you might want more from your website. When you do it’s going to be both cheaper and easier to make those improvements to your own code, that your development team built, rather than wrangling what you can out of third-party tools.





At 1Digital we specialize in being your extended development team. Whether you're building a site from the ground up, like Genius eCommerce®, or making small steps at bringing your site more and more under your own control one task at a time, our [eCommerce custom development experts](#) can be just a few clicks away. Reach out to us today about all the ways you can get a 1Digital® developer in your corner.

## More 1Digital® Dev Case Studies

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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 Houston 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.

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EVERLASTING MEMORIES: CONVERSION RATE INCREASE WITH BOLT

If you asked any eCommerce store owner if they could make a wish and improve any key performance indicator on their site, most would probably say their conversion rate. It's the metric that's most directly related to how many sales an eCommerce site makes. Merchants try all kinds of strategies to bring that number up, but improving a conversion rate can be tricky. That's because the number of visitors that a store converts can be affected in unpredictable ways by every single part of the sales funnel. The one thing everyone in this industry agrees on, however, is that the easier it is to checkout on your site, the better your conversion rate will be.

Everlasting Memories is a well-respected purveyor of cremation jewelry, photo engraved jewelry, and memorial gifts. Since they opened their doors in 2003, they have expanded their business with two more eCommerce sites including Jewelry Keepsakes, and just last year Messages in Metal, which focuses more on personalized jewelry than memorial mementos. Casey Doran, the owner of all three sites, first contacted the eCommerce design and development team, 1Digital Agency, years ago to move his sites Everlasting Memories and Jewelry Keepsakes from Volusion to BigCommerce.

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CUSTOM DEV CASE STUDY

RESONATE GIFTS: FLEXIBILITY IN CUSTOM ECOMMERCE DEVELOPMENT IN BIGCOMMERCE

When someone says eCommerce a certain type of store jumps to the forefront of most people's minds. A catalog of products, organized into categories, with a cart and a checkout. This straightforward type of online store is what eCommerce platforms are built to accommodate. However, in reality, eCommerce stores can take all shapes and sizes. So what happens when what you need to sell online doesn't fit into these commonplace parameters? This is exactly why 1Digital Agency exists. We specialize in custom eCommerce development so that you can mold and shape your chosen eCommerce platform to your needs, not have the way you do business shaped by their limitations.

Resonate Gifts is a perfect example of selling online, without being common eCommerce. Logan McAlister came to 1Digital Agency with the goal of being able to take orders online. His business is a unique one. He helps realtors keep their clients happy by allowing them to sign up for scheduled gift delivery. He had a WordPress site called Welcome Home Joe with no eCommerce functionality. Clients would simply reach out through the site and he'd find out where, when, and how often he should send their clients a gift. The entire process was handled manually. He wanted to give his customers

## CONSIDERING OUR CUSTOM DEVELOPMENT SERVICES?

### Using Expertise to Maximize Conversion Rate

If you're site needs to be leaner, cleaner, and all around better at taking a visitor and turning them into a customer, you should rely on an expert. We've built hundreds of eCommerce sites. Our experience in this industry has built our sixth sense for what works best. When you partner with an eCommerce Agency like 1Digital your site benefits from those decades of combined experience.

Reach out to our team for a site audit that can help you identify what about your site is working and what could be improved. Our team of great designers, developers and marketers can go over your online presence with a fine-toothed comb. When it comes to something as delicate, complex and important as your site's conversion rate, it helps to have a ringer in your corner.



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BEFORE & AFTER

GET STARTED