

CIMCIG Construction Marketing Awards 2015

Category: BEST USE OF WEBSITE

EH Smith Architectural Clay Products Website – www.ehsmithclayproducts.co.uk

INTRODUCTION:

EH Smith has, uniquely among builders' merchants, a dedicated team who work closely with architects to assist them in the early development phase. We help architects with the specification of bricks, the shape and look of the building, and then assist them with the selection and sourcing of the right products.

In 2014 we built a dedicated website to help increase our engagement with architects, but also to drive new enquiries. We were confident that providing a slick visual demonstration of our products and services would be highly effective in communicating with a target audience who, as a rule, do not like to be directly sold to.

Our aim was not only to continue interacting with our current clients, but to find an innovative way of putting both ourselves and our products in front of traditionally hard-to-reach London practices. Ultimately the aim was to position ourselves as a specialist independent merchant with access to the widest selection of materials and expertise in the market.

HOW WE WENT ABOUT IT:

In designing the site, we thought carefully about what it needed to achieve and differentiating it from our other sites. It needed to create a pathway to preliminary conversations rather than a basic hard sell.

Having helped architects specify building materials for nearly 100 years, we were acutely aware of their preferences for receiving and absorbing information. Architects like to read about interesting or unique projects, learn how boundaries have been pushed and discover new materials or techniques that might now be available. EH Smith's digital strategy has been entirely created around feeding this requirement, through the new website and the monthly emailers.

It is vital that architects feel confident in our expertise and that we can sustain the high levels of service we claim to provide. For this reason it was imperative to showcase as many relevant case studies as possible, keeping these fresh and up-to-date.

Not only does the site include over 1,000 types of brick to choose from, it's been designed to contain as many architecturally interesting case studies as possible – there are around 80 already uploaded, all containing strong imagery and detailed project and product descriptions. New case studies are added regularly. The case studies enable users to search not only by product, but also by project – fast becoming the route to grab an architect's attention. The positive feedback on this innovative product awareness method has been outstanding and has undoubtedly increased enquiries. Architects also appreciate its value as a reference site that reflects the ever changing trends in architecture.

To dovetail with the website, the digital marketing strategy also incorporates a monthly email newsletter which highlights individual case studies and the products used, driving traffic and enquiries to the website. This positively aligns EH Smith with some of the industry's most exciting projects and leading architectural practices. The emails currently are sent to over 15,000 architects each month, with the list of subscribers continuing to grow.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS:

Since we launched the website last year it has generated over 100 live project enquiries; bearing in mind the scale and nature of some of these jobs, this is an enormous achievement. The site's very first order made £30,000 profit. Orders which originated from the site have totalled over £700,000 in turnover in the last year – that's just the jobs that have completed! For a site that only cost around £7k to develop, these figures demonstrate a significant return on investment.

For a specialist website it has experienced an impressive rise in online presence in just 12 months. It ranks top of Google for several competitive national keywords and continues to build on traffic results. It experiences extremely positive user interaction and behaviour results, e.g. users spend over 8 minutes* (average) on the case study pages, more than eight times the Google average.

Traffic has seen a steady increase, with unique users per month reaching 1,826 in May 2015. Visitors have increased by 332% in the last 9 months alone, with 62% tracked to central London architectural practices. The site currently attracts an average of 230 new *additional* unique visitors per month, with organic search traffic increasing by 73% in the last 6 months. Again, for a specialist website generating architecturally significant project leads, these stats are huge.

Analytics and the use of LeadForensics tracking software has shown us that much of the traffic / enquiries come from London practices – many of them architectural household names. Although traditionally very difficult to get in front of, the combination of the website as part of the digital strategy has already proved to be extremely successful. We are receiving enquiries we never before thought possible, all because of the innovative styling and engagement concept of our new website and digital strategy.

Gary Bowles, EH Smith Specification Manager, commented "As a builders merchant, getting that initial architectural enquiry is often the hardest thing to do. The website has become an incredible tool, helping us secure live enquiries and direct contacts. It has become an industry leading reference site, not to mention an invaluable sales and support device. The impact it has had on the business, in a highly competitive market, has been enormous, entirely transforming our route to market."

*8.18 minutes on case studies. Google average = <60 seconds.

Note: See attached website stats report from our Web/SEO company to demonstrate traffic, engagement and measurement.