

Michael presents

ANALYTICS

You need this more than you know!

Everyone, please take a leap of faith in this. This tool looks like rocket science but it's not. There is fantastic information just a few clicks away but you have to take the plunge. Best of all, it can be done after-hours at home with a glass of wine and only five minutes invested. That's how this piece started; a glass of scotch, some analytics and then I just had to write this!

We had our annual teacher's evening last night, but last year's event was a day earlier, so how do I see a quick comparison? Roll two days into a single graph that compares both days (two clicks), then break the results down by customer type (one click) and voila! We did 13% more than last year with teachers.

Next, I am interested to see how the daily sales are shaping up this month. Choose a one-day start-end period and then click previous periods. There you have it... Monday to Monday and so on for the month of December. That took 30 seconds to do.

How's your margin holding up with Ingram orders and our sad Canadian dollar? Choose the past 60 days sales then click suppliers. The breakdown will show you exactly how your profit margin and volume has changed over last year (and previous years if you click Previous). This assuming that you pay attention to your Exchange rate in the Supplier file on a monthly basis so that Receiving can properly estimate your costs.

Check your category sales for the past 30 days with two clicks. Go colouring books, go! Then see what non-fiction titles are selling this year over last? Click the coloured points in the sales graph to reveal the mysteries. Dang, wish we had Chris Hadfield this year!

How's the year shaping up? Click 365 days and there you have it. Then click Suppliers to see who has been your best friend this year. Pay attention to the margins and also notice how much more or less stock you are/were carrying. Our Book Depot sales are up over 125% from last year AND the margin is great at 60% AND the inventory invested to make it happen pales in comparison to others. We used Analytics last year to figure this one out, and this year we now have cash in the bank because Analytics gave us the courage to go big on this supplier. I also received a really nice assortment of chocolates from Book Depot... yummm!

This year we shrunk magazines by 40%, moved the section and then added 20% more greeting cards. Did it work? Magazine inventory is down 40% (more space for other stuff and less money invested overall) but sales are only down 15% for mags. Greeting cards are a bit up but when we do a breakdown by supplier (we have two major ones), one is way up and the other is down (we expect because of the visibility difference between the lines). Without Analytics it would have been mostly a hunch. More greeting card fine tuning is now in progress. And more Scotch sipping...

I could go on with more examples but the point is every one of you can gain from this very powerful tool even when you are peaking in sales and feel like pooped puppies by the end of the day. Some of our more successful stores tell us Analytics is the most powerful tool they use to increase profit. But it's still a big unknown for most of you. Please, hit W to get to your webstore, make sure you are logged in and click Reports --> Analytics. At the very least you will see December's sales to date, which will likely inspire you to drill down just for curiosity's sake. Didn't work? Dial hotline 250-763-4415, hit Alt H, and let's get you fixed up while you tend to your customers looking for that perfect colouring book. Later, when you get home, grab a beer and start exploring.

Next year, and now that you've had a taste, we'll take you to the next level of this amazing piece of rocket science.

- Michael "The Analyzer"

