



Lara Shelton
La Plates.com

La Plates.com Serves Up Style and Success with Volusion Ecommerce Software

Flexible platform allows personalized plate maker to grow business; selling 20,000 plates in less than two years

La Plates.com, the successful online retailer of personalized melamine plates, uses Volusion's ecommerce platform to power her growing online business. In just two years, Lara Hazelett Shelton's business recently surpassed 20,000 in plate sales and her high-style designs can now be found on the dining tables of many A-list celebrities, as well as the First Family's!

Finding Flexibility

A teacher for more than 8 years and mom of two young boys, Lara was looking for a flexible business that allowed her to stay at home and raise her children. Lara is an avid collector of china and loves to entertain family and friends with a fabulous place setting. Once she had children, she wanted to continue entertaining in style, but with kid-friendly material. She decided to launch an online business selling stylish melamine plastic plates that can be individually personalized in a number of ways.

Not being a technical person, she needed something that was easy to use and didn't require a programmer or web designer. Lara researched several shopping cart providers and found that Volusion offered not only the flexibility she needed to provide shoppers unlimited product options, but just about everything she needed to open the online store.

Fast Facts

- Experience La Plates by hosting a trunk show or E-Party.
- Celebrity families like the Afflecks and Arquettes are fans of La Plates kid-friendly plates.
- La Plates is an active member of the community and gives back to 19 organizations, including Design-on-a-Dime Benefit and Spotlight on Art.

The Right Platform

Lara tested out the Volusion software using the company's two-week trial and found it to be extremely user-friendly. She launched a fully functional ecommerce site within one month without relying on expensive design firms or internal technical staff. Lara now sells more than 20 different patterns that can be customized with 16 colors, 8 fonts and an endless number of monograms. The platform allows her to easily add products and new categories on the site as her business grows without requiring coding.

Volusion offered the following features and benefits that were critical to the success of the project:

- **Customer Service** - 24x7 customer service allowed Lara to call for help at any time of day. Lara found the Volusion tutorial videos and team to be invaluable.
- **Integrated SEO** - Site is easily search engine optimized resulting in top-ranked Google pages for her target key words without third party SEO programs.
- **Color Swatch Functionality** - Lara loaded swatch images that represent her products' color options. This feature makes it easy for customers to quickly view plates in different colors.
- **Product Zoom** - Enhanced merchandizing feature allows La Plates customers to instantly magnify product details.
- **Integrated CRM** - With an advanced ticketing system and all-in-one admin area, La Plates can manage the entire order process and customer experience from a single area of the store.
- **Email System** - Built-in email system to easily communicate with customers in one central location.
- **Unlimited Scalability** - The easily-scalable architecture with advanced load balancing & dynamic resourcing helped La Plates meet its demanding spikes in traffic garnered from national media coverage.

Our Site



In two short years, LaPlates sold a whopping 20,000+ melamine plates using Volusion. Many of these plates have made their way to the dining tables of several A-list celebrities, including the White House!

Flexibility was one of the core drivers in starting this budding online business. Lara, teacher and proud mother of two young boys, was looking for a business that allowed her to stay at home to raise her children.

Lara's business needed a shopping cart solution that was easy to use, as she did not have a technology background. More importantly, selling customized plates required a flexible platform - shoppers needed to choose from an endless variety of designs, colors, fonts and patterns.

Lara was able to launch her fully-functional ecommerce site within a month, without relying on expensive design firms or an internal technical staff. Today, LaPlates sells more than 20 different patterns that can be customized with 16 colors, 8 fonts and an unlimited number of personal monograms.

- **Mission Critical Hosting** – With 100% redundancy, virtualized hardware-independent systems, and continuous data backups with data clustering, Volusion offered La Plates the same technology infrastructure that powers systems for financial institutions.
- **Stringent Security** – Data is secured against theft or manipulation with integrated IP blocking, 24x7 surveillance and advanced encryption. PCI/CISP certification also ensures maximum protection of card-holder data. Volusion provides La Plates with a guarantee that their customers' credit card information is securely collected, protected and stored.

Spreading the Word

Once Lara's business was up and running, getting the word out was equally important.

Lara implemented a number of marketing tactics that have proven successful:

In addition to the Volusion built-in SEO, Lara uses the Volusion e-newsletter tool to keep her clients up to date on new designs and products.

Lara also understands the power of public relations. She proactively reached out to share new product information with home décor and parenting publications such as Southern Living, Bazaar, Cookie, Self and Lucky, as well as the CBS Early Show.

Getting noticed by "preppy" and "mommy" bloggers has proven to increase online sales.

Lara accomplished this by sharing her sales pitch to top blogs that cover new products.

Landing celebrity endorsements has certainly been a boon to business. Lara has friends in LA who've delivered La Plates to celebs for special occasions or displayed their products for award shows like the AMA or the Grammys and word has spread. And when a celebrity is stopping through her hometown on a book tour, she'll drop by with a La Plates original for them. According to Lara, once celebrities love your products others are sure to follow suit.

"I didn't have a business plan and the flexibility of the Volusion software has allowed me to add new products and market them appropriately as my business has grown."

"Volusion's SEO tool is great. I'm not a technical person and I've gotten a lot of SEO. We're currently ranked five using our Google keywords."

"I don't think we would have grown as fast without Volusion. Their platform gives me the flexibility to expand product selection and give customers endless options."

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