



Rack Room Shoes Uses Snap36 Studio Equipment to Save Time, Money, and Hassle



Industry: Footwear

Pain Points

- High shipping costs
- Slow turnaround times

Results

- Moved production from outsourced vendor to in-studio
- Doubled production capabilities from 250 to 500 products per week

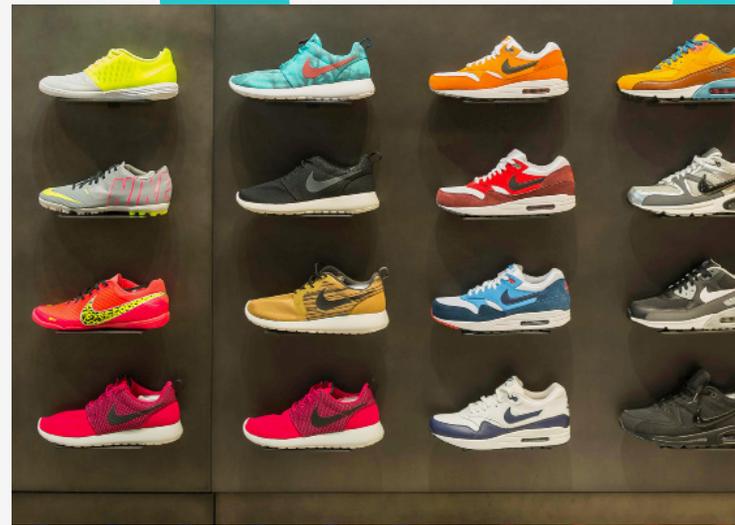


Online shoe sales are kicking it into high gear, and Rack Room Shoes and Off Broadway Shoes are major players in a \$12 billion industry. Headquartered in Charlotte, N.C., the companies offer more than 500 nationally recognized and private brands of shoes, handbags, and accessories.

To grab the piece of the pie, these two retailers must be able to compete effectively in a crowded industry, manage inventory in its brick-and-mortar and virtual shopping spaces, and provide an engaging, user-friendly experience for customers.

Achieving all of these goals isn't easy, particularly when it comes to the extremely "visual" footwear sales market, where consumers want to touch, see, and try on shoes before making a purchase.

Known as innovators in the shoe industry for more than 90 years, Rack Room Shoes and Off Broadway Shoes are using Snap36's footwear equipment solution to automate their product photography process and create consistent, quality, and complete visual experiences on any device.



From Outsourcing to In-House

Before investing in its own photography equipment, Rack Room Shoes was previously outsourcing the task to two different providers. While they were getting the job done, but the process itself was cumbersome, time consuming, and expensive.

Jason Adams, e-commerce administrator for Rack Room Shoes and Off Broadway Shoes, said the companies needed a fast and reliable way to photograph their products without having to send them to a third party. They were waiting weeks for those samples to be returned—often in 70-pound boxes that accumulated high shipping fees.

In addition to lengthy turnaround times that delayed getting products back in store and images up online, their vendors often fell short of weekly product throughput goals and regularly missed the mark.

Although goals and expectations were set at 500 products a week, vendors only captured 250 products per week—and only when pushed—said Adams. Outsourcing was also inflexible in that it confined Rack Room Shoes to predetermined style guides that couldn't be updated.

Adams initially tested an Ortery machine, but determined it wasn't versatile enough to efficiently and consistently capture the company's range of products. Adams said lighting was a constant issue and 'the size of the box drove me nuts.' While photographing smaller items like socks and athletic shoes wasn't too difficult, when it came time to photograph tall-shafted boots, both the lighting and the equipment itself proved ineffective.

Doubling Production Capabilities

Now when it's time to shoot products for the web, Adams' department either receives the products as factory samples or directly from stores. The shoes are entered into a database, checked in, and then put on a cart that's wheeled down to the photography studio. Once the images are approved, they are dropped into a "completed" folder.

"I write a script that grabs all of the images and uploads them to a specific 'sets' folder for everyone to use," says Adams. The marketing department, for instance, can access that folder at any given time and grab whatever content it needs. This streamlined process has allowed Rack Room to double its photography production capabilities, and to manage all of its handbag, scarf, sock, and accessory shots in-house.

"We would have to take the lid off the Ortery box to photograph the boots, and then try to figure out how to get the lighting correct. Then I'd be in there for days using Photoshop on the pictures, trying to make sure each image turned out right. We said to ourselves:

This equipment isn't happening.

Jason Adams

ECOMMERCE ADMINISTRATOR



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