Reflektion

Ascena Retail Group Grows Revenue and Builds Customer Loyalty with 1:1 Personalization at Scale

ascena
retail group inc.

LANE BRYANT

CATHERINES

6% ↑
Increase in Conversion Rate for Recommendations

11% ↑
Increase in Conversion Rate for Full Page Search

13% ↑
Increase in Revenue / Visit for Site Search

Founded more than a century ago, Lane Bryant is the most recognized name in specialty plus-size clothing today. The brand puts a decided emphasis on fashion—not merely size. Through a unique apparel offering focused on plus-sized women across generations and identities, Lane Bryant has been passionately dedicated to helping all women and girls love fashion while inspiring them to live confidently every day.

Serving more than 600 locations in the United States and shipping internationally, Lane Bryant has earned strong brand loyalty from its customers. Lane Bryant is part of the Ascena Retail Group—a collective of several iconic American brands that include Ann Taylor, LOFT, Lou & Grey, Catherines, Cacique, and Justice.

Seeking to Provide the Most Relevant eCommerce Experience

Fashion clothing is very personal, which is why Lane Bryant's success in serving their online women shoppers depends on addressing their fashion needs in a very personalized manner. Lane Bryant's online shoppers expect an individualized dress discovery experience like they might expect when visiting a store and to be understood as individuals at every digital touchpoint.

Reflektion's AI/ML engine constantly listens to customers' behavior and intelligently responds to shopper's purchase intent in real-time for maximizing site conversions and engagement.

In 2017, the Lane Bryant eCommerce team was grappling with the reality that their typical online visitor wasn't experiencing a truly individualized and connected shopping experience. This was not only impacting conversion and online revenue, but also customer loyalty. What Lane Bryant really wanted was for women to be able to come to their site feeling deeply understood, and if a woman were to type in something like "button-down shirts in size 16," they wanted her to be able to find an attractive selection instantly.

Ramesh Ayyagiri, Manager of Product Strategy for Lane Bryant and Catherines at the Ascena Retail Group, recalls, "Two and half years ago, we were working with another eCommerce personalization provider, but we hit a wall and couldn't get them to address additional business needs. Their recommendations were monolithic and couldn't personalize for our shoppers' individual fashion needs."

To reconnect with their customers' needs, Lane Bryant needed to deliver a hyper-relevant and connected online shopping experience to every woman shopper. Lane Bryant started searching for an innovative and proven business partner that could address its evolving business needs with a modern, end-to-end personalization suite. While exploring potential solutions, Reflektion's AI-powered personalization platform was internally recommended by another brand in the Ascena Retail Group.


Reflektion Engages Shoppers with In-the-Moment 1:1 Personalization at Scale

Reflektion's next-generation eCommerce personalization platform caught the attention of Lane Bryant due to its superior design and capabilities. The platform is architected with an anonymized customer profile database that not only keeps growing, but more importantly, interacts with cutting-edge, patented AI/ML algorithms to deliver truly connected and individualized experiences across eCommerce search, recommendations, pages, site content and emails. The AI/ML engine constantly listens to customers' behavior and intelligently responds to shopper's purchase intent in real-time for maximizing site conversions and engagement.

Reflektion proved its value to Lane Bryant through scientifically designed A/B tests that demonstrated superior conversion rates and engagement— beating the competition by a significant margin. In the end, Reflektion was the clear solution of choice. The Ascena leadership was so impressed by Reflektion's market vision, product roadmap, and customer focus that they also chose to implement Reflektion for improving online customer engagement for Catherines.com, a sister brand of Lane Bryant.

Reflektion's solution for Lane Bryant and Catherines personalizes the site search (including both preview search and full page search) and product recommendations. These capabilities work together to create a deeply engaging, concierge-like eCommerce experience for every single visitor, which delights customers while increasing eCommerce conversion rates.
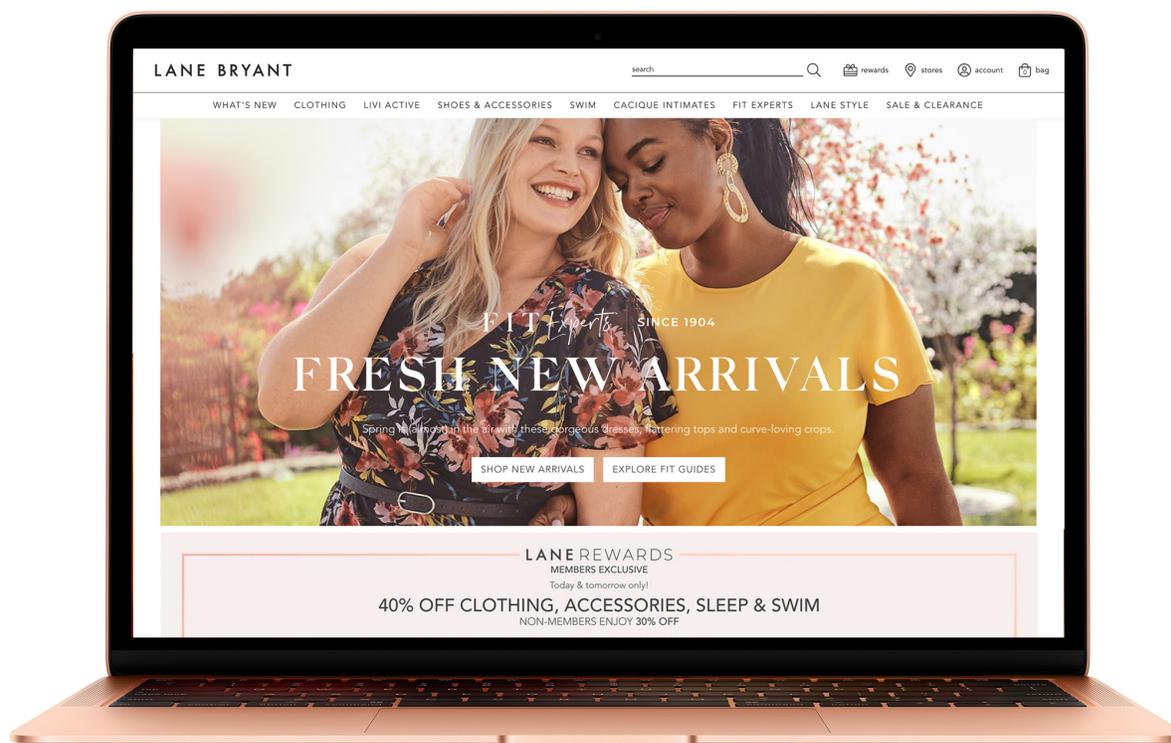
Lane Bryant & Catherine's Experience Unprecedented Business Results

Upon selecting Reflektion for transforming their eCommerce experience, the Lane Bryant & Catherine's team partnered with Reflektion's customer success team to swiftly deliver key functionality in time for the 2017 holiday season. Taking advantage of Reflektion's flexible administration controls, the Lane Bryant team easily defined its personalization strategy by using the Reflektion Customer Engagement Console—and the platform's AI immediately began optimizing the moment-to-moment interactions of their online shoppers.

"Instead of digging through nested navigation to find what they needed, first-time shoppers are now able to hone in to the apparel they want to buy right in the search bar or in the search results page because the Reflektion AI was curating the results behind the scenes based on their individual interests and real-time purchase intent," says Ramesh. "Moreover, our shoppers experience a highly connected customer journey from search to checkout. This is a major advancement in the delivery of our digital eCommerce experience."

As shoppers interact with Lane Bryant and Catherine's site search or click on recommended fashion choices, Reflektion's AI learns from each click and presents more and more specific choices to the customer based on what it gleans about the customer's intent. These 1:1 personalized experiences resonate very well with their apparel shoppers, with conversion rates jumping by 6% for recommendations and by 11% for full-page search. Moreover, revenue per visit increased by 13% for site search. Women visiting Lanebryant.com and .com feel just as engaged as if they were walking through the doors of a physical retail store and being presented curated options by a concierge.

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"Reflektion enabled us to deliver 1:1 personalization on each click for our online customers. This capability enables us to stay ahead in the marketplace and engage more closely with online shoppers. Reflektion's performance and customer support has always been solid and reliable," says Ramesh. As a testimony to this, Lane Bryant and Catherines were able to provide seamless personalization experiences to their growing base of eCommerce shoppers during the peak holiday periods and deliver exceptional response times.

Stronger Together: An Evolving Business Partnership

Having gained confidence in Reflektion's capabilities, Lane Bryant expanded their usage in an innovative fashion by leveraging Reflektion's personalization capabilities to enhance their customer service experience via a chatbot service. Once a customer places an order, Lane Bryant's digital assistant or Facebook Messenger chatbot encourages the shopper to explore other products, in addition to providing order status updates. Utilizing Reflektion's 1:1 personalization APIs in the background, the digital assistant or Facebook Messenger chatbot suggests highly relevant and 1:1 personalized products to the visitor when, for example, typing "I'm looking for a swimsuit for a vacation in Miami."

"This is very different from the usual site search since the chatbot provides even more context and flavor," says Ramesh. "The upsell conversion rate of this channel has been 6–7% and the average dollars spent is on par with what we are seeing on the site—which is significant." Encouraged by these promising results, Lane Bryant is now working closely with Reflektion to further enhance the chatbot integration to improve the business impact.

Lastly, the Lane Bryant and Catherines brands are seeking to leverage Reflektion's individualized approach to create more personalized and relevant category pages for their sites. The Reflektion Pages solution will enable them to not only present 1:1 targeted products to each customer and automatically create nested category pages, but also keep these pages "fresh" for search engine optimization to increase conversion rates. Merchandisers will have unique granular contextual controls over the products shown for category pages, which can be tweaked by several visitor attributes—channel, device, zip code, gender, referring URLs, or any combination.

"Looking back, we didn't just buy a product when we chose Reflektion," says Ramesh. "We forged a true business partnership when selecting their platform that has kept Lane Bryant and Catherines on the leading edge of plus-size apparel brands."