Create Celebration

A Digital Commerce Transformation

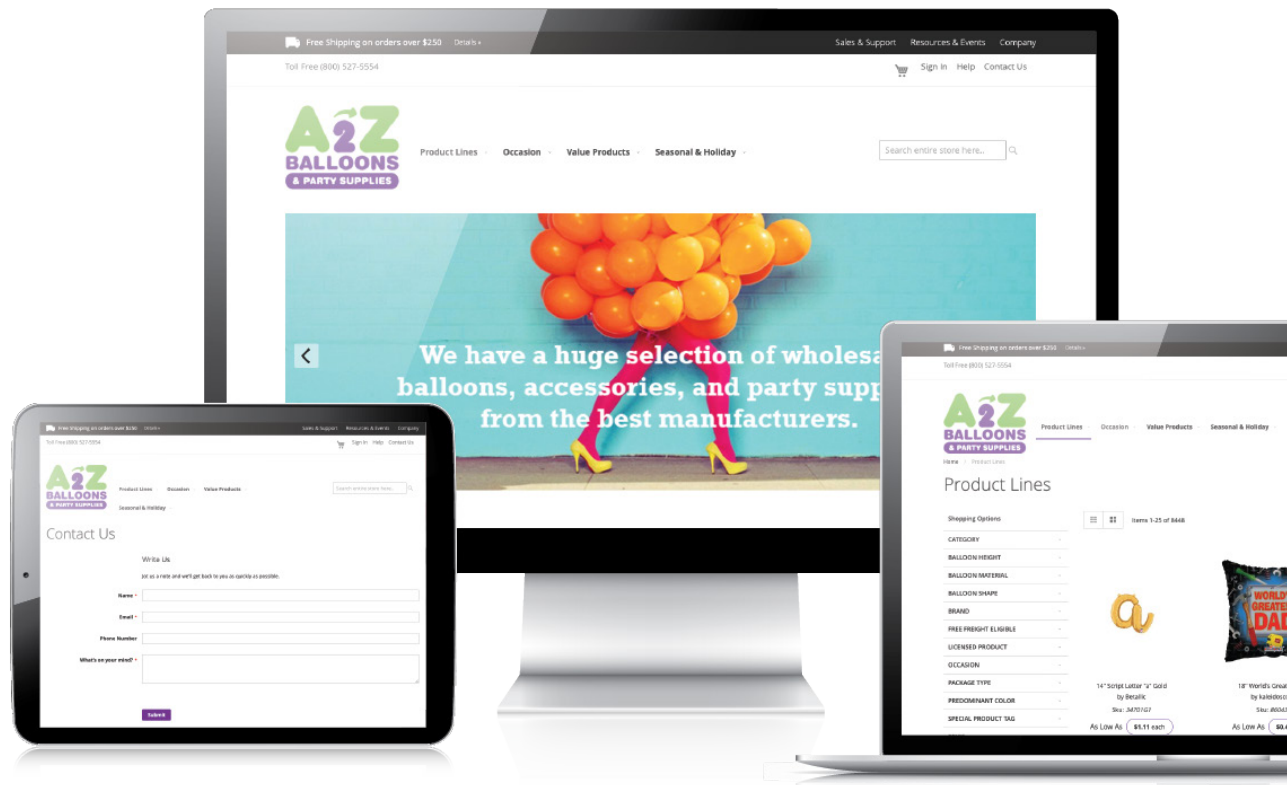# MEET A2Z BALLOONS

Celebrating a birthday? There's a balloon for that. Planning an anniversary party? There's a balloon for that. Planning an anniversary for the first time you celebrated the birthday of your wiener dog? Believe it or not, there's a balloon for that.

There's always a celebration, and everyone celebrates differently. That's where A2Z Balloons comes in. Based out of Michigan, A2Z Balloons sells any possible item for any possible party, but their specialty is balloons.

Party stores, clowns, balloon animal creators (called "twisters"), dollar stores, grocery chains, florists, and event planning companies have all relied on the massive inventory of A2Z Balloons over the years to build out their events and performances with fantastical novelties and balloons.

THE CHALLENGE

A2Z Balloons started out by managing their sales over the phone, speaking directly with new and returning customers to determine delivery dates and bulk order details. With the launch of their online store, A2Z Balloons hoped to make the experience even easier for their customers. Placing B2B orders, even while speaking directly with a representative over the phone, can take an extensive amount of time. Knowing how valuable time is to business owners, A2Z Balloons built their initial website with the goals of shortening the ordering process, allowing customers to more easily navigate their massive inventory, and compile orders themselves.

Over time, managing A2ZBalloons.com - as a customer and as an administrator - became a frustrating experience. Carts would suddenly disappear, customer accounts would be automatically logged out of, and massive inventory pages made shopping difficult.

Any attempts A2Z Balloons made to update the website or address these issues themselves were met with blocker after blocker. Part of their frustration came from the fact that they didn't know where these issues were coming from. Their website was built on Magento, well-known for its reliability.

Skeptical, faced with a growing list of issues and functionality challenges, A2Z Balloons reached out to Bear Group.

" Obviously I was impressed by everything Bear was saying... you've got to be careful, because everyone's saying they're going to offer you the world...Bear just seemed like the most realistic and grounded. "

JAMES DAVIS
DIRECTOR OF MARKETING AND SALES
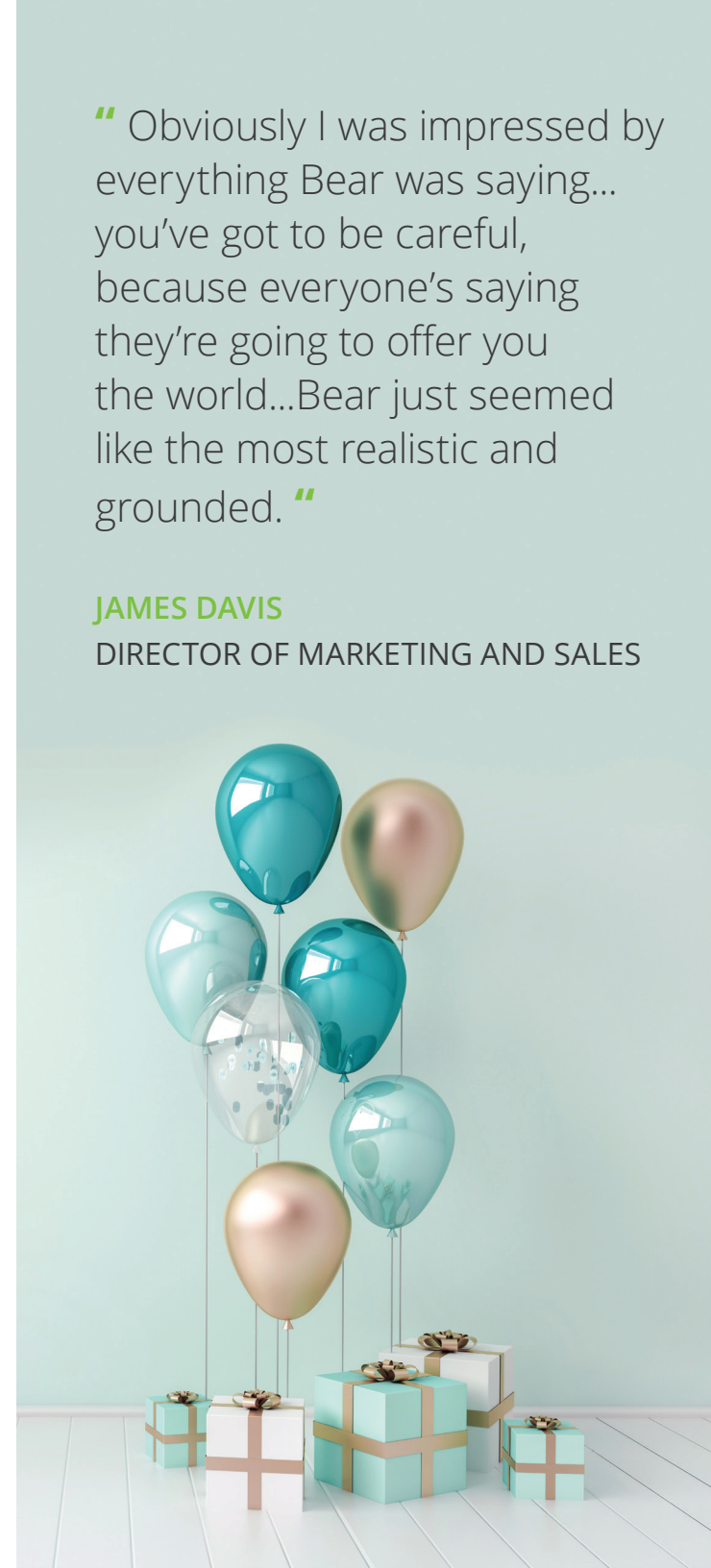
SCOPING THE PROJECT

Building for Business

Before we got to work, we sat down with A2Z Balloons to scope out their project.

We first started with an overview of A2Z Balloons' customer base, internal stakeholders, and brand. We wanted to be sure we understood A2Z Balloons' business as much as possible.

Defining Goals

We then discussed what they imagined their ideal website to look like, defined their goals, reviewed their buglist, and created a list of desired features. We discussed their marketing plan, how the A2Z Balloons website fit into their overall strategy, and ways it could improve. The A2Z Balloons team laid out the issues with their current website and detailed how it was affecting their management team and, more importantly, how it was affecting their customers.

Establishing Connections

Next, we moved on to systems outside of the website that a2zballoons.com had to talk to. We created a systems diagram that plotted integration points, allowing us to map out what systems A2Z Balloons already had in use and which systems they would need to complete their project.

The Pain Points

✓ Any major bugs and breaks on their website had to be fixed immediately.

✓ The website design had to be updated with a more modern look and feel.

✓ User navigation had to be improved with better filtering options and page layouts.
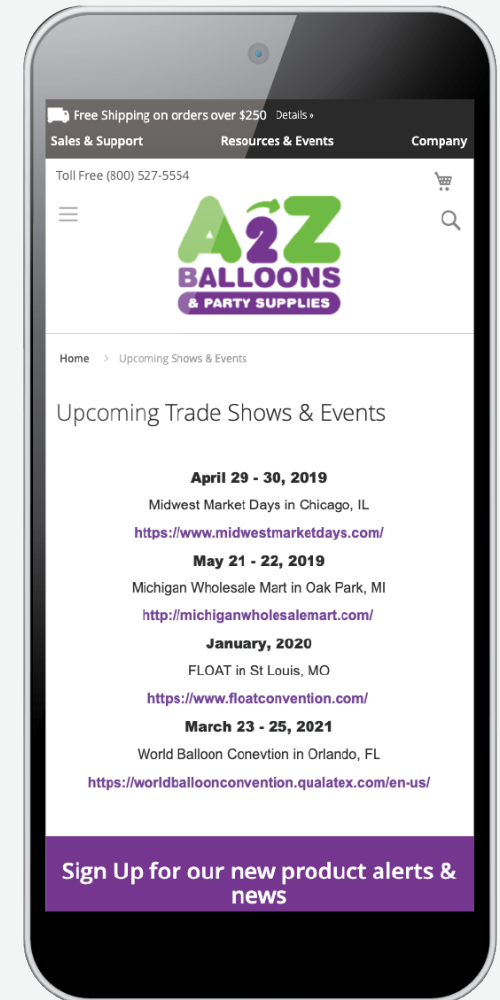
MAPPING THE SOLUTION

We considered each extension, one by one, and determined which were necessary. Anything else was removed.

To ensure that A2Z Balloons would never go offline unexpectedly, we initiated a migration from a self-hosted server to Magento's Cloud.

Our front-end developers, experts in Magento theming and layouts, worked with A2Z Balloons' web design staff to create and build designs.

The issue wasn't Magento. Magento was in fact the ideal ecommerce platform for a business like A2Z Balloons. Improving their website would just require a few points of optimization.

IDENTIFYING THE CRUX OF A2ZBALLOONS.COM

We found the source of their trouble immediately: their Magento platform had been drastically overextended. Operating under the burden of 68 separate extensions, their website had become difficult to manage and operated slowly.
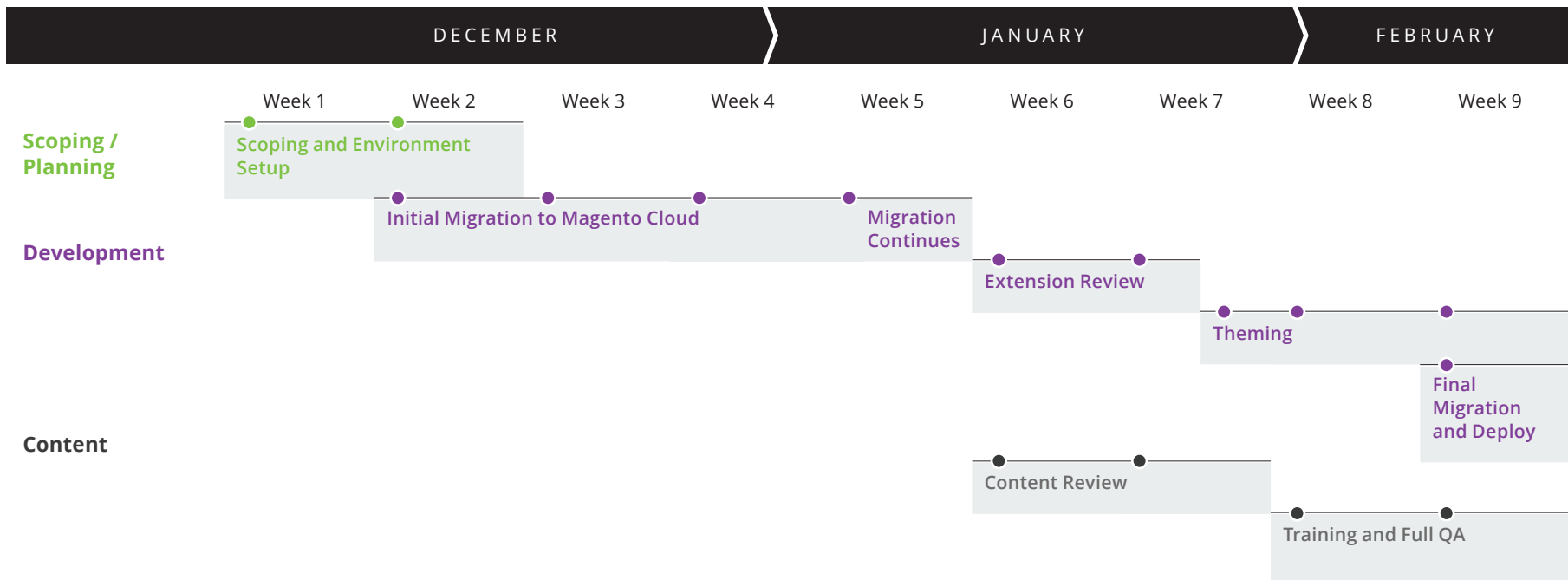
THE PROJECT

The Team

» **Greg Bear**
Solutions Architect

» **Jay Becker**
Development Team Lead

» **Marina Peirano**
Visual Designer

» **Monique Messman**
Project Manager

» **Omelio Hopwood**
Developer

The Timeline

Project Start: December, 2018
Launch Date: February, 2019

	DECEMBER				JANUARY			FEBRUARY	
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8	Week 9

Scoping / Planning — Scoping and Environment Setup

Development — Initial Migration to Magento Cloud — Migration Continues — Extension Review — Theming — Final Migration and Deploy

Content — Content Review — Training and Full QA
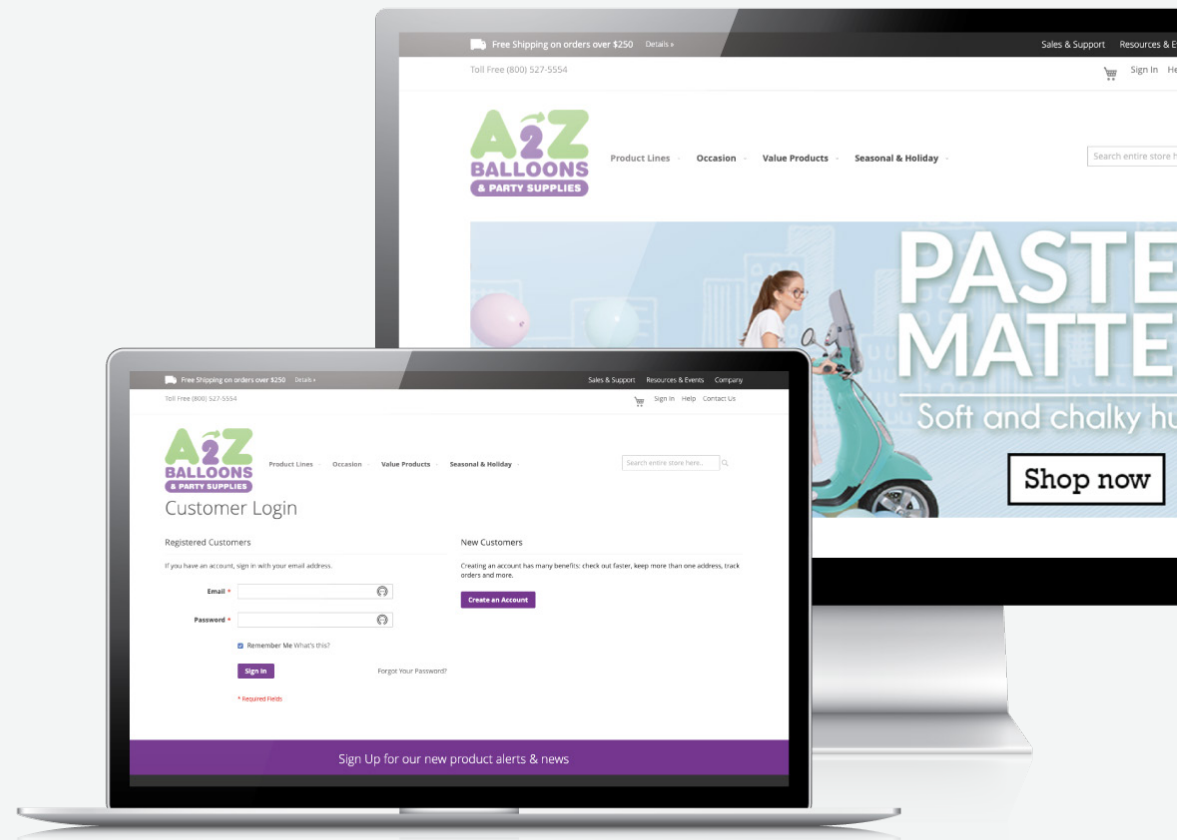
MIGRATING TO MAGENTO CLOUD

The immediate priority for A2Z Balloons was to transfer their website to a more secure and reliable hosting environment that could ensure their website wouldn't suddenly go offline. A2Z Balloons needed a hosting provider they could trust to support their website and respond quickly to issues.

We recommended Magento Commerce Cloud. Magento knows how to support their own software while maintaining security and could also respond quickly to reported issues.

"**They never seemed stressed about anything...I think it was just a level of confidence.**"

JAMES DAVIS
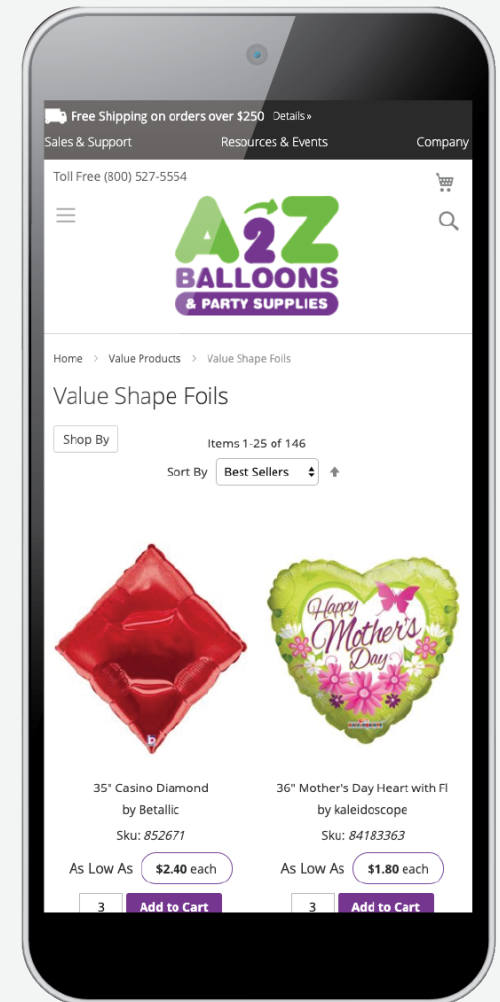DIRECTOR OF SALES AND MARKETING

MAGENTO: EVOLVING FROM OPEN SOURCE TO CLOUD COMMERCE

a2zballoons.com had originally been built on Magento Open Source and they wanted to remain on Magento. By migrating their website to Magento Commerce Cloud, we saw a direct path to an overall upgrade.
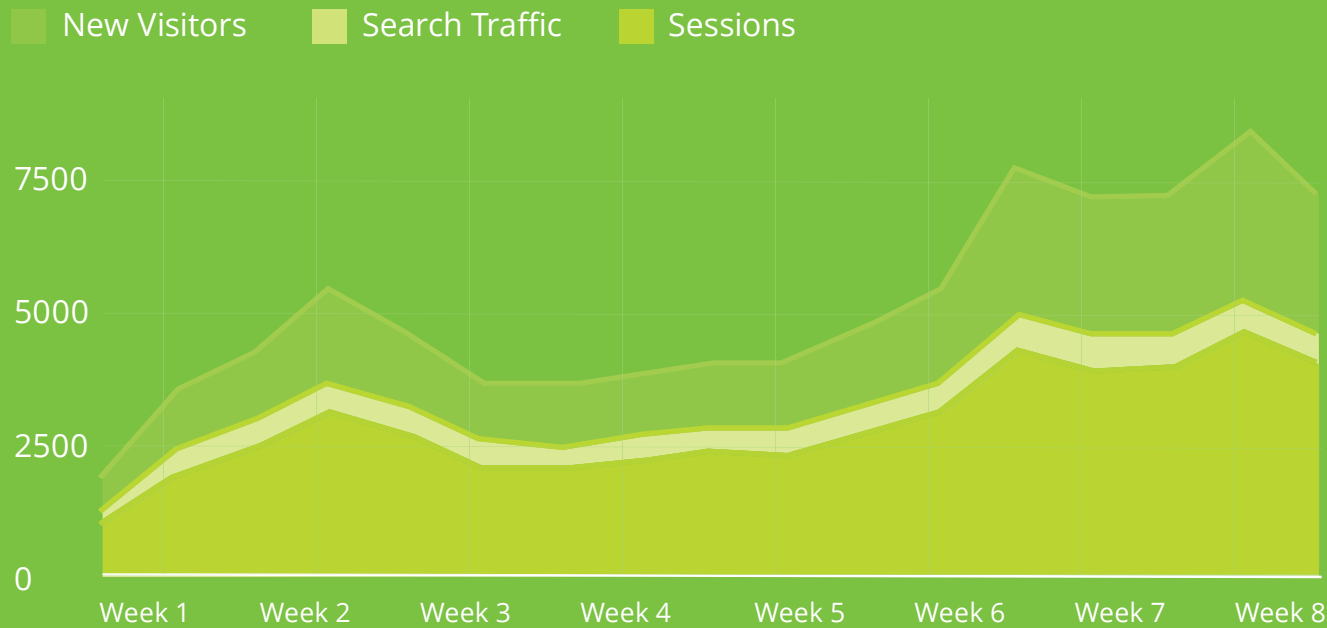
Magento Commerce Cloud possesses the same capabilities of Magento Open Source, with additional features for managing A2Z Balloons' custom wholesale store, as well as direct support from Magento's team.

Magento Commerce Cloud Key Capabilities:

- Custom product detail pages, and no limit to custom attributes.
- Management of pricing and SKU's.
- Loyalty and rewards management, including gift cards and discounts.
- Creation of customer accounts.
- Customer service tools and phone ordering support.

- Business intelligence tools.
- Secure extensions for payment gateway, tax, and fraud screening.
- Strong API, supportive of integrations with other ERP, CRM, and accounting systems.
- Management of product bundles and grouped products.

WEBSITE AUDITING PROCESS

Legend: New Visitors · Search Traffic · Sessions

Y-axis: 7500, 5000, 2500, 0

X-axis: Week 1, Week 2, Week 3, Week 4, Week 5, Week 6, Week 7, Week 8

68 extensions

TO

15 extensions

⬆ **20**% Rise in organic search traffic each month since launch

Average page load time dropped to **4 seconds**

INCREASING EFFICIENCY

We began working on A2Z Balloons' new website on a private staging server in order for their current website to remain live throughout our build. Next, we started with the most immediate source of their issues - removing excess extensions. We started with their website's core, carefully evaluating each extension before we added it back in to the website. In the end, we were able to cut A2Z Balloon's Magento platform down to less than 15 extensions - from 68.
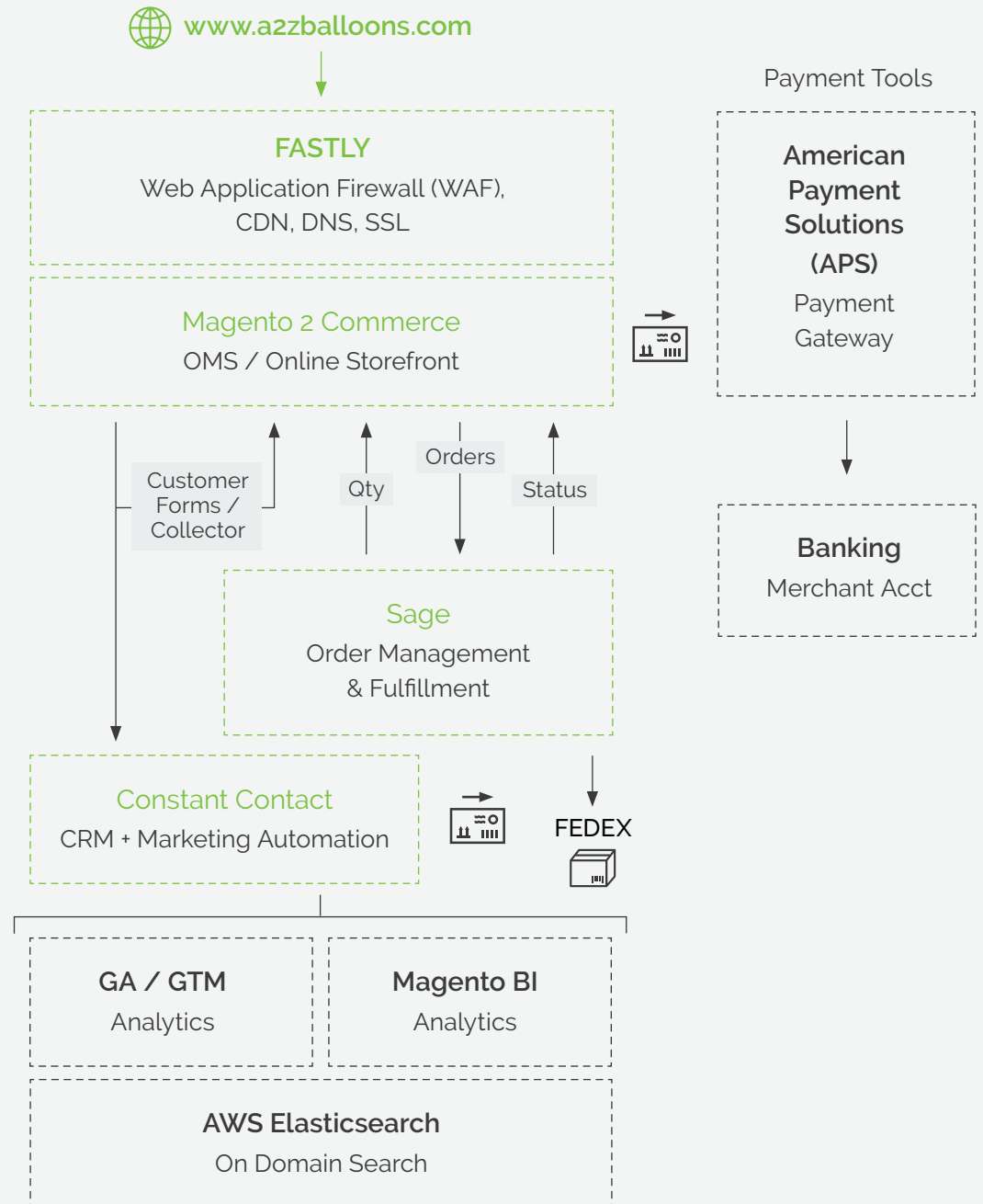
A STRAIGHTFORWARD UPGRADE

We took a programmatic approach with A2Z Balloons' migration, using an extension provided by Magento to move A2Z Balloon's data from their Magento Open Source platform to their new Magento Commerce Cloud platform.

We went through the entire website, page by page, to make sure everything was in its correct place and pages were formatted.

What Was Moved

- A2Z Balloon's product catalog, product attributes, images, and categories
- Customer and user accounts, usernames and passwords
- Customer order histories

www.a2zballoons.com

FASTLY
Web Application Firewall (WAF), CDN, DNS, SSL

Magento 2 Commerce
OMS / Online Storefront

Payment Tools

American Payment Solutions (APS)
Payment Gateway

Customer Forms / Collector

Qty   Orders   Status

Banking
Merchant Acct

Sage
Order Management & Fulfillment

Constant Contact
CRM + Marketing Automation

FEDEX

GA / GTM
Analytics

Magento BI
Analytics

AWS Elasticsearch
On Domain Search

SYSTEM INTEGRATIONS

Payment Gateway: Braintree

We swapped out A2Z Balloons previous payment gateway for Braintree. PCI compliant and already a part of Magento, the use of Braintree simplified checkout management for A2Z Balloons.

Sales Tax: TaxJar

We removed the extension that A2Z Balloons had previously been using to calculate taxes and instead used TaxJar. TaxJar required no setup fees, has free sales tax calculations, filing, and accuracy guarantees, and offers a relatively seamless integration with Magento via their extension and API documentation.

Shipping Rating: UPS Magento

A2Z Balloons had been using UPS as its carrier for product shipments, but it wasn't integrated with their Magento platform. We integrated the two systems together to enable automation.

WAF/SSL/CDN/Caching: Fastly

We implemented Fastly, a Web Application Firewall that provides security and protection against bots, customer data breaches, and DoS attacks. Its optimization features also improved site performance and speed.

A SUCCESS STORY

The New A2Z Balloons website launched on schedule at the beginning of February, 2019. Mobile responsive, optimized for user navigation, and much faster than before, the new A2Z Balloons offered a secure and straightforward experience for their customers.
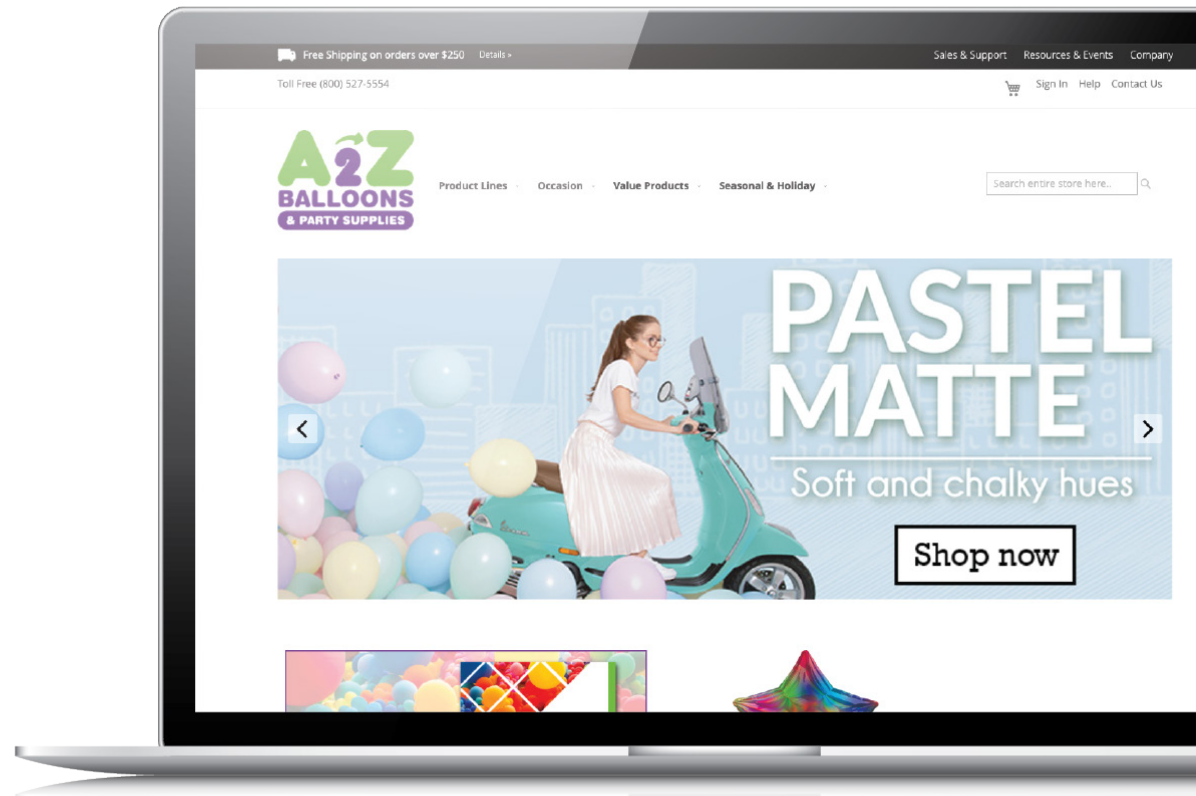
The goal at the heart of the project had always been discovering and enabling whatever could make their customer's ordering process easier. After the launch of the website, A2Z Balloons was happy to find that they had accomplished that. "The customers are enjoying it a lot more...it's a lot faster for them," said James Davis, the Director of Sales and Marketing at A2Z Balloons.

Securely hosted on a trusted server, and operating without any of the major issues or bugs that had plagued their team before, the A2Z Balloons team are fully confident in their website. Rather than dealing with frustrating wait times or problems to be addressed, they now have direct and reliable access to support. "When changes need to be made it isn't a giant costly ordeal," said James.

" I'm happy because the customers are happy. "

JAMES DAVIS

DIRECTOR OF SALES AND MARKETING

Committed
to Code

Bear