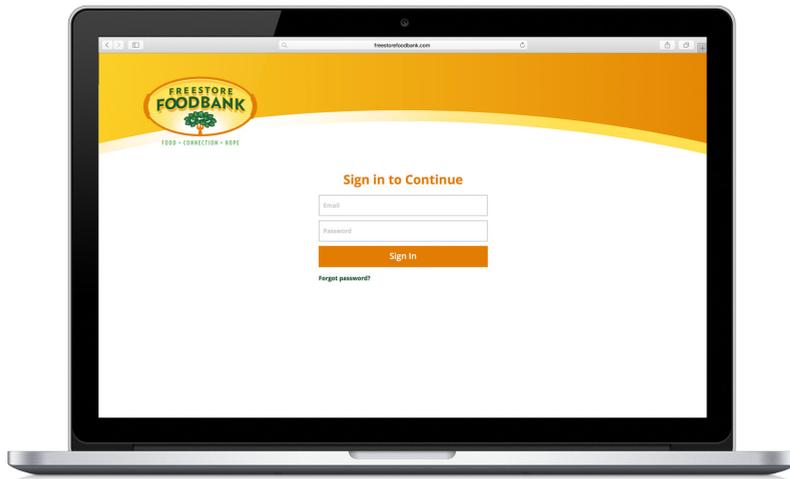


# Freestore Foodbank

**A MAGENTO CASE STUDY**



## ABOUT FREESTORE FOODBANK



Freestore Foodbank is a non-profit foodbank that supplies food to shelters and programs in need. Any program that provides meals for impoverished communities or individuals in crisis can buy or receive food from Freestore to distribute in their region. Located in Cincinnati, Ohio, Freestore services agencies in regions of Kentucky, Indiana, and Ohio.

Freestore began in 1971 when Frank Gerson saw useable items being thrown away at his job at Cincinnati's incinerator. He collected those items and distributed them to disadvantaged families. That one-man operation has grown to an organization that distributes 20 million meals annually.

Their inventory comes from three sources:

- » Food donated through federal and state programs (TEFAP)
- » Food purchased with donated funds
- » Donated food gathered through drives

With 100% of their customers being non-profit, Freestore is unlike other eCommerce initiatives, as **their ultimate goal is not to make money but to end hunger.**

## THE BUSINESS CHALLENGE

When agencies previously needed to order food from Freestore Foodbank, they had to call into the warehouse and place their order with one of the customer service representatives. This was a costly and time-consuming way for customers to get what they needed. In order to continue to serve their agencies in an efficient manner, Freestore Foodbank decided to implement an eCommerce site to capture orders online.

An eCommerce implementation would make it easier for agencies to get the food they so desperately need. An easy-to-use and accurate ordering system was a must, and a seamless integration between the eCommerce system and Freestore's existing ERP system, Exact Macola, would be necessary for fulfillment.

In addition to placing orders, the eCommerce system would need to manage the pickup schedule for those orders. Agencies tend to pick up their order rather than pay to have it delivered to their location, so orders need to be ready at the right time and only a certain number of people would be able to pick up at once.

## TECH TALK

---

### eCommerce

Magento Open Source 2.1.6

### INTEGRATED WITH

### ERP

Exact Macola

Some of Freestore's inventory is food that is donated by state and national TEFAPs (The Emergency Food Assistance Program), and those items have certain restrictions as to who can acquire them. If the state of Ohio donates food, then those items can only go to agencies in Ohio, for example.

Unlike most clients, Freestore's main goal is not to make money, but rather to push inventory out the door. The success metrics for this project, as determined by Freestore, were:

- » Increase food output year over year by the equivalent of 25-30% of 2015 volume
- » Provide an overall positive experience for Freestore Foodbank customers who are leveraging the eCommerce portal: this includes accurate and timely transactions and a simple user experience



## WHY MAGENTO?

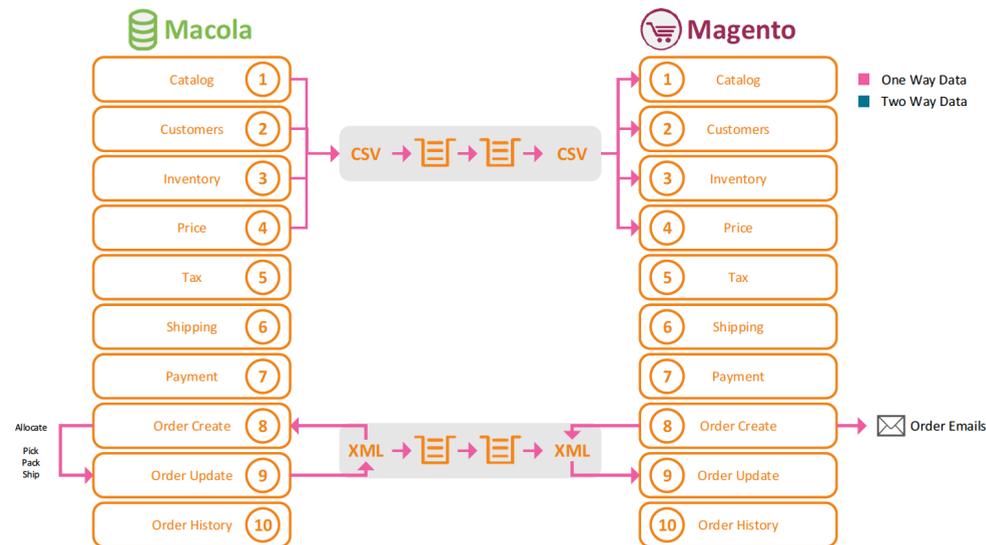
Freestore Foodbank had some unique eCommerce requirements that factored into their decision when choosing an eCommerce platform. They decided on Magento because of the flexibility it provides to add custom restriction codes and ability to schedule a pickup, as well as its ability to automate the flow of data between Magento and their existing ERP system. Magento also addresses their eCommerce needs like reduced call volume, order accuracy, and real-time inventory information.

# THE BRITESKIES SOLUTION

## Integration

Magento Enterprise 2.0 was implemented and extended with various customizations (see below), and integrated with Freestore’s existing Exact Macola ERP, a system that is free for non-profits. While Exact Macola works great as an ERP, it is not set up to integrate with Magento. This was a challenge for our team, but certainly something we were prepared for.

A common issue that our team has run into in past integration projects is subpar data. Often, the data is not organized or stored correctly, or is missing information necessary for the new site. With the Freestore site, however, extensive data was not needed, so the information provided was all that was needed for the integration, which was a great bonus for our team.





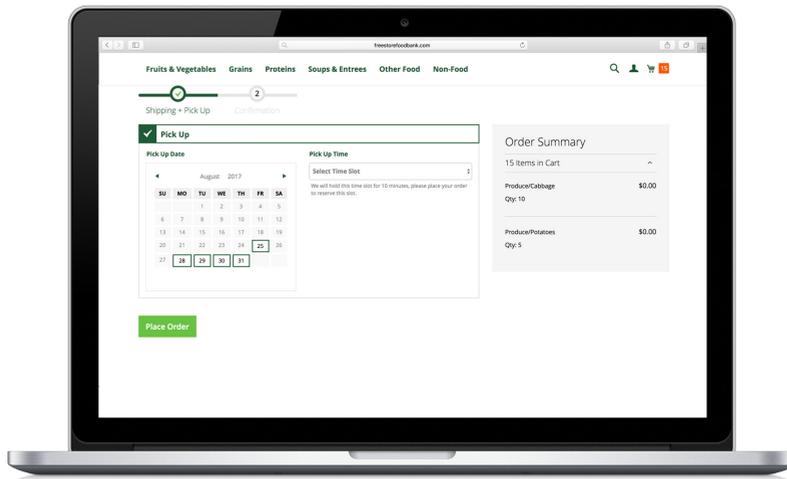
## TEFAP Products Module Creation and Customization

With much of Freestore's inventory being donated by national and state TEFAPs, a customization was required to allow only those eligible for TEFAP items to add them to their order. Further, if an agency is eligible for TEFAP items, they have access to a certain amount of the provided TEFAP inventory based on the percentage of impoverished people in their service area. These requirements led to our team creating a two-fold restriction module.

Because they serve agencies in Kentucky, Indiana, and Ohio, Freestore receives national TEFAP inventory as well as items from all three states. Freestore customers who are a TEFAP agency for Ohio, however, can only have access to Ohio and national TEFAP items, so ineligible items need to be restricted from what that customer can see. Then, based on which county in Ohio that agency serves, the eligible items are restricted even further. The Briteskies module follows an algorithm that fairly and equitably gives each agency the ability to acquire their eligible TEFAP items.



Perishable items like produce and meat are high-demand TEFAP products, but sometimes agencies will not take all that is available to them. For those situations, our module gives each agency the opportunity to buy all that is available to them and no more until everyone has made their selections. Then, if there are extras of those high-demand products, they are liquidated to any eligible agency that wants them.



## Order Pickup Scheduling Customization

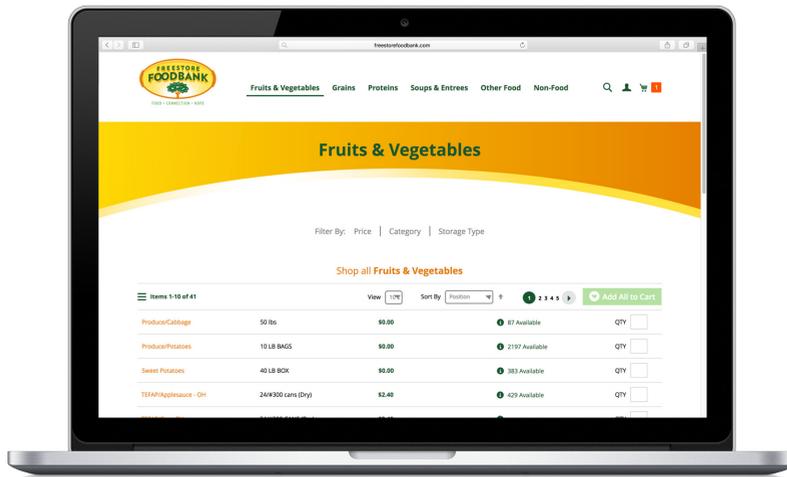
Due to budget restraints, many Freestore customers choose to pick up their order instead of having it shipped to them. Additionally, those doing the pickups are usually volunteers with their personal vehicles, as opposed to a service with a large truck. These variables required a custom order pickup scheduling section of the checkout process.

When placing an order, customers can select a pickup day that is at least three days in advance. There are four available pickup slots every half hour from 8:30 am to 11:30 am, and then again from 1:00 pm to 3:30 pm. Agencies can add to their order up to a day and a half before their pickup time. All of these variables are tracked in the customization to ensure that customers are selecting a valid pickup time.



The next day's pickup schedule is sent to the warehouse via Magento each evening so that orders can be finalized for pickup and to manage expectations for the following day.

## Site Design and Navigation



One of the overall goals of the project was to provide Freestore Foodbank customers with a refreshed, efficient, and thoughtfully-designed order placement portal. One unique aspect of the Freestore site is the lack of Product Detail Pages (PDPs) and product imagery.

Because agencies are simply looking to stock their shelves with what is available, the Freestore site does not need as much detail as traditional eCommerce sites. If a Freestore customer is in search of canned corn, they are not interested in a written description of the corn, product images, or even a brand name. Instead, they are interested in getting the corn they need for a price that works with their budget. As such, each page simply has a list of product names and a quantity box along with a limited description of the product (example: corn, 16 oz. can, pack of 28).



The checkout is another function of the site that was streamlined for Freestore's specific needs. Freestore does not accept payment online; instead, they receive an order then bill the agency later. So, the checkout process only required the customer to fill their cart, select a ship or pickup date, and hit order.

While the site is rather skinny, with most of the typical eCom-merce functionality removed, Freestore did still want the ability to do merchandising and marketing. Other sites would use these capabilities to upsell and make more money, but Freestore is using them to push food that they have on hand. Whether that's a perishable item that needs to go before it expires, or simply something that has not had a lot of interest, the marketing spots allow Freestore to notify their customers of available items.



## THE RESULTS

Unlike other eCommerce clients, Freestore's goals weren't focused on profit so much as customer service. They wanted to give customers an accurate and timely transaction system, and their current statistics show they have achieved that:

**88% of users are repeat customers**

**50% of users have placed over ten orders**

**7.5% of users have placed over 50 orders**

Freestore's customers are returning to their site to make multiple orders, which is a big win for the Freestore team. Additionally, because of the success of their Magento site, Freestore has been able to redistribute their ordering staff and free up some resources.

With these promising initial results, the Freestore team is already thinking ahead to phase two of their Magento site.



## ABOUT BRITESKIES

Briteskies works with merchants to seamlessly develop eCommerce solutions for B2B or B2C sites. If you are looking to implement a new eCommerce environment, upgrade your current eCommerce site, or need to integrate with your back office systems, our certified consultants have the functional and technical expertise to assist you in achieving your business goals.

We are proud to be a Magento Professional Partner, an IBM Advanced Business Partner, and an Oracle Gold Partner. Our talented team consists of certified developers in Magento, JD Edwards, and WebSphere Commerce, as well as IBM i Application Specialists.

## CONTACT BRITESKIES

216.369.3600 | [info@briteskies.com](mailto:info@briteskies.com)

[www.briteskies.com](http://www.briteskies.com)

2658 Scranton Road, Suite 3  
Cleveland, Ohio 44113