

GRIT CASE STUDY:

BOOKSACTUALLY

Shifting our bookstore to the online platform



The arts sector, traditionally reliant on live audiences and retail, has been significantly impacted by social distancing measures. In this case study, retail bookstore BooksActually shares how they have leveraged their intangible assets in their pivot to an online store.

Closer to Our Customers: The Online Bookstore Experience
GRIT in the Arts Sector

When Singapore announced its Circuit Breaker in April 2020, bookstore owner Kenny Leck was not surprised. He and his team at BooksActually had already begun preparing for the worst in January, before the pandemic reached Singapore’s shores. The team promptly closed its physical space in Tiong Bahru and moved to online sales, and few months later, Kenny made a second announcement that the online shift would become permanent. Writing on Facebook, Kenny thanked the local community for their support, and noted that the pandemic has given BooksActually the push it needed to fully convert into a digital storefront.

Kenny and his team have seen their shift online as an opportunity to grow the store’s reach and sales. Their move builds upon 15 years of bookselling experience and a brand known for its high-touch shopping experience. Not only does BooksActually design its own packaging paper and write personalised book recommendations based on each order, it also maintains an active Instagram presence and regularly reposts customer unboxing photos to its 38,000 followers. Recognising the potential for expanding their reach online beyond their customer base, the team filed a **trade mark** application in May to secure their brand name and logo.

“Our push towards a registered trade mark is in line with our ambitions to grow the BooksActually brand and business into an international entity.”



(Photo provided by BooksActually)

A registered trade mark grants the owner exclusive rights to use their logo, and protects the representation of their brand from misuse. “Our push towards a registered trade mark,” Kenny shared, “is in line with our ambitions to grow the BooksActually brand and business into an international entity.” The team is currently considering registering its trade mark in other countries, so as to secure a foothold in key overseas markets.

This is complemented by BooksActually's focus on building **customer relationships**. Since moving online, BooksActually has seen an explosion in enquiries, as customers write in to ask about their orders and stock availability. Rather than relying on generic email templates to address customer enquiries, BooksActually directly answers every email. "Consciously or unconsciously, as long as our customers know that they are dealing with someone who is really based in BooksActually and not a call centre, our interactions take on a new dimension."

Kenny recounted a recent customer interaction where a first-time purchaser had written to thank BooksActually for their use of unique book wrapping paper. For Kenny and his team, these conversations offer "nuggets of information" that can be used to further personalise the shopping experience for customers. Maintaining these close relationships with customers will strengthen BooksActually's **reputation** for attentive service, another intangible asset critical for the store as it seeks to stand out online.



(Screenshot taken from BooksActually's Facebook livestream on 23 October, with owner Kenny sharing latest book recommendations and giving a peek of the new event space.)

Looking forward, BooksActually plans to adopt a hybrid approach and hold physical events in its new premises, even as it drives sales online. The team hopes that this mix of online and physical events will provide opportunities for BooksActually to leverage its brand to reach out to new customers, while strengthening its existing relationships. In short, to grow stronger through its intangible assets.

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About GRIT

Growing with Resilience through InTangibles (GRIT) is an inter-agency initiative to partner businesses and communities to better manage and monetise their intangible assets and IP in the COVID-19 environment and beyond.

The GRIT initiative is a joint initiative with the following agencies:



Please find out more information, resources, as well as access to various related grants at <https://www.ipos.gov.sg/resources/grit>.

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