



https://www.paypal.com

## Customer Case Study | FlyLady.net



### Product

Personal coaching service and retail

### Challenge

To find a payment service that would scale with the business.

### Solution

PayPal

### Results

- **High growth.** Went from one employee and 10 subscribers to 22 employees and 225,000 subscribers.
- **Quick setup.** Easy implementation took less than an hour.
- **Efficient fulfillment.** With PayPal's reports, sales are analyzed and 200 orders are processed daily.

**“People are always asking me how to do business on the Internet and I tell them ‘PayPal is the only way.’”**

— Marla Cilley,  
FlyLady.net

[FlyLady.net](#), located in Brevard, North Carolina, provides an email-based service that offers personal coaching to 225,000 members who are determined to improve their organizational skills. Additionally, the company publishes and sells books, calendars and other items through its website and by mail order.

**The Challenge:** A burgeoning online business needed a payment service customers would use and trust.

In 1999, Marla Cilley was talking with a friend who had asked for her help. In the process, Marla discovered she had something of value to offer and decided to create an email group for one-on-one coaching.

Demand for Marla's service grew quickly. “The first day, 10 people signed up...the next day there were 25 ... and in a month's time, there were 111 people.” To handle the exploding demand, Marla switched from an individual coaching model to mass publishing – creating a unique service that sends users regular email reminders and tips.

By early 2001, Marla's email list had grown to 60,000 subscribers and she was ready to sell organizational products as an online business. FlyLady.net, the name inspired by Marla's passion for fly-fishing, started off small. “At first, we didn't have anything to sell. We didn't have any products. But over time we came up with idea after idea to help our customers get organized.”

At the outset of her online store, Marla worked with family members to create a mail-order fulfillment process and established a merchant account to process payments. “The first thing we sold was a little FlyLady cartoon magnet. And right away, we started getting emails from our members asking us to take payments online through PayPal.”

While Marla had never heard of PayPal, she had wanted to build a business model where most of her sales came through the website. “Mail orders just cost us a fortune ... our processing fees are 4.9%.” Marla decided it was time to learn more about PayPal and getting online.

### The Solution: PayPal

After the initial FlyLady.net magnet offering, Marla made arrangements with a Canadian publisher to sell the company's calendar and wanted to accept payments for the popular product online.

After comparing PayPal to other merchant accounts, she decided her customers were right. From the lower fee structure to the ease of implementation to the security of the system, PayPal met all of Marla's requirements. “I had never really purchased a whole lot of things on the Internet ... I was just quite the novice. But we looked into PayPal, went with it, and now it's become the standard in Internet business.”

Today, FlyLady.net offers a wide array of products through its website and has 22 employees and a million dollar payroll. When asked about this growth, Marla replied, “We're just in shock. And so much of it is because of PayPal.”

### Staying on track with PayPal

Marla's team was able to implement a PayPal Buy Now button for the calendar in less than an hour. Using PayPal's built-in reporting tools, Marla quickly designed a fulfillment process for her operation.

Each day, Marla's staff logs onto PayPal to download their transaction history (in CVS format). That file is then pulled into their own desktop software and the data is quickly

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parsed and sorted to create sheets of shipping labels that double as packing slips. “In the summer, we’ll process 700-800 labels in a single download and average 200 orders per day.”

Once these label sheets are created, they go off to the warehouse where employees pull together orders based on package type (instead of one order at a time). “It’s really quite an efficient process.”

Marla uses PayPal to monitor daily sales and business trends. “We get an email for every order that comes in and I can quickly get a good feel for our sales just by watching the email volume.”

And with PayPal’s reporting tools, Marla is able to look at overall sales history and spot historical trends. “I pull reports and have them broken down by month so I can look back and compare the number of orders [for the same time period].”

### Protecting her business

One of the things that really attracted Marla to PayPal was its security features. “When I was starting out, I talked to my bank about setting up a secure server and it was just too much trouble. The beauty of PayPal is that you don’t need a secure server sitting in your basement. PayPal has the credit card numbers in its database. My employees never see them, so there is nothing on my servers that I need to worry about protecting.”

For Marla, PayPal’s security was a big reason she was able to start an online business. “Without PayPal, I would have spent thousands of dollars [building online security]. People ask me all the time how to do business on the Internet and I tell them, ‘PayPal is the only way.’”

### Responding to merchant needs

As a long-time PayPal user, Marla has seen many service improvements and has come to appreciate the way PayPal works with merchants like her.

For example, “When we were first getting started, I needed all of my employees to be able to access our PayPal account online.” Marla contacted PayPal and was pleased that the company’s service team was not only receptive but also willing to work on a solution. Several months later, PayPal rolled out a Multi-User Access function for the growing number of customers like Marla.

Last holiday season, Marla was pleased to be a beta user of PayPal’s new checkout that allows buyers to make payments through PayPal without signing up for an account. “We rolled that out in October and our sales immediately went up. Right now, we’re estimating that 1/3 of our business is coming in [through this checkout method].”

### The Results: Explosive growth and national success

From FlyLady.net’s initial group of 10,000 members, the service has grown to serve almost 225,000 customers today. This remarkable success has been documented by Time, Woman’s Day and a host of newspapers around the country.

Marla also turned much of her web content into a book, Sink Reflections, which sold more than 40,000 copies and was listed on Amazon.com’s top 100 for four months.

As her online business has expanded, Marla has become a PayPal evangelist. “I’ve gone from not knowing anything about Internet shopping to teaching other people how to use PayPal. As we’ve grown, they’ve grown and the beauty of it all is they continue to listen to my needs.”



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