

## CERAMO CASE STUDY



# Zoey facilitates online order creation, while allowing Ceramo's sales team to maintain control

### The Company



Ceramo Company, Inc.

Founded in 1945, 50 Employees

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

### What They Like About Zoey

1. Both outside reps and inside reps can use the Zoey App, and the orders all come into a single location.
2. Zoey offers a robust eCommerce experience that can benefit both customers and the Ceramo team.
3. Linking Zoey to NetSuite has been a major improvement allowing for capabilities like live inventory updates. Zoey, offering a first-party integration, was a major differentiator.
4. Flexible attributes on products allows for more robust data on SKUs that make more information available.
5. The onboarding process made things easier to get up and running, ensuring a successful launch.

### The Challenge

Their previous solution, Handshake, was being discontinued, and Ceramo needed a replacement app that could allow their inside and outside sales reps to capture orders on the go.

### The Success

- Zoey was able to offer a clean replacement for an existing mobile sales app solution.
- Zoey not only covered the features that Ceramo relied on with their previous solution, but also additional eCommerce capabilities that will support future business growth, as online ordering has been building steadily over time.
- eCommerce customers first submit Quotes, to ensure a review by their sales team with their customer before the order is processed.

### What Makes Them Special

Ceramo has been in business for more than 70 years, launching their first products in 1945. Their goal as a wholesaler is to help the businesses they work with build their pottery profits, including offering products that have a demand year round.



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## By the Numbers

35%

OF SALES INITIATED ONLINE,  
GROWING 5-10% A YEAR

6

INTERNAL SALES REPS,  
PLUS OUTSIDE REP SUPPORT

### Moving On From a Shuttering Solution

Prior to adopting Zoey, Ceramo used a B2B eCommerce platform called Handshake. Acquired by Shopify in 2019, the solution was sunset in 2021. Customers were given a few month's notice to make the jump to something else.

For Ceramo, this was a discouraging development as Handshake had slowly evolved to become what they had needed, and there was worry they'd have to start again.

Alec Junge, Director of Product and Marketing for Ceramo Company, Inc., said, "We started very early on with Handshake, went through the whole process with them, almost got it exactly where we wanted it, and then they shut down."

As the Ceramo team researched options, they came across Zoey, which offered a solution that would allow for at least some replication of their existing workflows.

"We began to shop around, and then got to Zoey, which came as close to replicate the experience as it was going to be," he said. "There were also bells and whistles that you had that they did not."

### Up and Running Through Onboarding and Support

Having to move from a platform unexpectedly could create headaches in terms of getting migrated, but Zoey's onboarding process offered a critical helping hand.

"We pretty much had a wish list when we came over and doing the setup," Junge said. "The developers were pretty good getting all we wanted synced in. There was handholding before going live, which was very very helpful. They were very patient and very willing to adapt and get things done for us."

The onboarding process was able to ultimately ensure that Ceramo was set up as it needed to be before cutting over from their previous solution. "Having it up and running exactly where we needed it speaks to how it worked out," he said.

After launch, a couple of issues arose, but Junge cited support's ability to resolve it. "There were still a couple of semi-major things to address after setup. We worked through it with tech support and all in all was a very positive experience."

Over time, as Junge and the Ceramo team got to know Zoey and how it's laid out, support has shifted over time from primarily resolving issues to helping work through ideas. "Most of my interactions with support now, I'll be in a meeting, we'll spitball about an idea, and then I'll ask support if something can be done. Where is the switch to this, or how do I turn this on, and I understand once I get the hang of it. It just takes some experience."

## In Their Words

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**Alec Junge**, Director of Product & Marketing, Ceramo Company, Inc.



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## Supporting Inside and Outside Sales Reps

Part of the reason for aiming for an app-based approach was their mix of inside and outside sales reps, generally working together to take in orders.

Junge said, “We’ve got a combination of inside sales reps and outside sales reps. They tag team customers. We wanted to have the functionality of the outside reps go into a garden center and write an order, or an inside rep write an order, and have visibility into all of it.”

While Zoey’s app offered core functionality, Junge said his internal sales reps began to find the Zoey Admin to be a more powerful option, with additional functionality not found on the app today.

“The inside sales reps initially were writing orders on the mobile devices just because that’s what they were used to doing in Handshake - their only input option was the mobile device,” Junge said. “As the functionality in your mobile device isn’t as robust as it is on the computer dashboard, we’ve been finding most of them have been migrating to writing orders on the computer vs. the iPad.”

Their outside reps have been getting comfortable with the app, as with any tech transition, and hands-on training with his team has been helpful, he said. “Changing anything is always difficult. As they’ve gotten used to it and had chances to spend time with inside sales reps at trade shows, get more in depth coaching on it, they’re coming around and having a pretty positive user experience with it.”

## Superior eCommerce Ordering Experience

Along with the app, Ceramo had leveraged Handshake’s online ordering portal. With the switch to Zoey, he’s found Zoey offers a superior approach to online ordering.

“Your offering is much, much more robust than theirs,” Junge said. “The more I work with it, the more I really enjoy it. Software is easy and streamlined and simple to work with. It’s pretty easy to customize. I’m just really happy with that side of it. The shopping experience is very good for our customers as well.”

More than a third of Ceramo’s orders today already start with customers creating a Quote on the site, and then a member of their sales team following up with them to complete the sale. Zoey allows for this with its Quotes to Order workflows.

He said, “Every order we have has a salesperson involved. Customers are only allowed to place quotes, not orders, as there’s a whole lot of variables into packing our products. We’re at around 35%-50% placed via customer initiation online, but that number grows by 5-10% a year. More people take advantage of the technology as they get used to it.”

Paper catalogs still are an important part of the business, which then leads them either to calling a salesperson or starting an online order, so having a robust eCommerce system is helpful.

Junge said, “We have a lot of customers looking at the catalog and picking things out. They can then go to a computer and enter an order. The paper catalog is more a marketing tool than a sales tool. We get it into peoples’ hands and they look at it. Then they contact a sales rep or go online.”

## Direct NetSuite Integration

One of the critical requirements for Ceramo was the need for an integration with NetSuite. Handshake offered that through a third-party connector, which introduced additional difficulties when problems occurred. Zoey’s NetSuite integration is built and managed directly by Zoey, eliminating a middleman.

“That was one of the deciding factors to go with you guys,” Junge said. “It had a more or less native option to do it, whereas everyone else wanted another third-party API involved. We had that structure with Handshake and that just got complicated.”

With the integration, orders can be pushed seamlessly into NetSuite, customers transferred from NetSuite to Zoey, and products in both platforms can be linked. When the occasional glitch happens, it’s easier to resolve.

“Anytime there’s any sort of hiccup, there’s one less thing to look at and see what went wrong,” Junge said. “With Handshake sync apps powering the API, we had glitches with that for at least two or three days where we’d have to reset the API, manually sync things over.”

He added, “With Zoey and the more direct integration, we do have hiccups where a particular order won’t sync or customer won’t sync, but generally there’s been reasons for it, and we’ve been able to force them over when needed. In a handful of cases, we’ll contact tech support, say we don’t know why this isn’t working but we pushed it in. It’s been much much simpler.”

Having a native integration allowed Ceramo to use some of the data in more effective ways, such as handling out of stock issues. Their previous solution could only sync inventory daily, while Zoey offers a real-time connection. “This puts us in a position to be able to disable an out of stock product, saving a lot of time on the back end fixing orders and replacing items that aren’t available,” Junge said.

In the end, although they didn’t start out planning on making a move to a new platform, Ceramo has found their experience with Zoey to be a positive one that has helped their business move forward. Junge said, “It wasn’t a move we were going to make without the shutdown of Handshake, but in hindsight I’m glad we did.”

## About Zoey

Zoey is a powerful eCommerce solution for B2B and wholesale businesses. We offer three major solutions to run a business: A mobile app for taking orders on the go, a self-service web portal for eCommerce, and a web-based admin for product, customer and order management. Our features include net terms and credit limits, sales quote generation, customer groups, access restrictions, and quick order capabilities.



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