

# Atelier Millinery: Head and shoulders above the rest with Worldpay

Atelier Millinery is a boutique hat-maker based just off London's iconic Carnaby Street in the West End.



It began life in May 2010 when ex-management consultant, Georgina Abbott decided to open a space where she could teach creative classes in a bid to recreate the atmosphere of classes she attended herself at nearby department store Liberty when sewing was her hobby. Soon after, she began also selling the finished article to customers, and today the shop offers a range of products and services, from "ready to wear" hats to bespoke millinery and even the raw materials which ambitious customers can use to create their own headwear.

## Early days

Owner Abbott originally envisaged a shop at street level in order to generate footfall but soon realised that as a destination business location was not as important as with many other small businesses. However, space did become an issue as Atelier Millinery grew, with furniture and stock constantly being moved around the shop to create more room, so the business finally relocated to larger premises in November 2012.

The business model created by Abbott is that the milliners and tutors

used by Atelier all work for themselves and use the site as a hub. Because millinery is a small and fairly disparate industry with no trade associations, it has forced the firm to engage heavily in social media, for example reaching out to individual milliners via Twitter and using LinkedIn to engage with various colleges teaching millinery.

## Offline to online with Worldpay

A cost-effective, reliable and secure payments solution for face-to-face transactions was a must-have from the start. Atelier chose a Streamline mobile card machine solution which scores highly for reliability and speed of settlement and offers fraud protection, all at low cost.

The portable solution also gave it the flexibility to take payments into other areas of the store when needed. Georgina Abbott, owner of Atelier Millinery tells, "As a small business, I found that offering my customers the option to pay by card has improved their shopping experience and generated an overwhelmingly positive impression of my store. Today, card payments have become indispensable – around 90 per cent of

Atelier customers pay by card." As the business grew, Abbott found it necessary to launch a web site to offer a more complete multi-channel experience to her customers. Launched in October 2012, the first iteration was a fairly basic starter site – easy to get up and running but without the capability to sell goods and services.

The completion of a second version has given Atelier's web property a more professional look and feel with professional photo shots, and an extensive range of products, with payment processing also handled by Worldpay. Training workshops and courses were made bookable for online visitors by integrating with online ticketing service Eventbrite.

**Worldpay's Business Gateway 350 package was easily integrated into Atelier's existing payments set-up with 24/7 support service and an easy-to-use, intuitive web portal.**



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All major credit and debit cards are supported as well as PayPal, and customers can visit the website from any mobile device too. There are also options for advanced fraud screening, multi-currency transactions and the ability to let customers pay subscriptions or instalments, for the low starting price of just £19.95 per month.

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## **Card payments become indispensable**

“Setting up the website really took me out of my comfort zone,” said Abbott. “We launched the website last year in October which was just a completely different experience as there was loads of work and lots to learn.”

However, although online sales are still relatively slow, having a website has significantly increased bookings for the firm’s creative courses. In terms of face-to-face transactions, Atelier Millinery has only experienced one problem with its card machines but this was resolved swiftly with a quick helpdesk call and a replacement part.

**Online and offline card payments** have become an indispensable part of the business today and help create a positive customer experience which is generating a great deal of repeat custom and word-of-mouth referrals.

## **Advice for small businesses**

“Have a really good look at what your competitors are doing in your sector and keep things really simple,” said Abbott. “Don’t expect to be an expert overnight, but get good advice and keep in touch with customers regularly.”

She also urged small business owners to negotiate hard on everything. “Think about your cash flow because everyone knows it’s a key part of the business plan but I don’t think I really knew how crucial it would be to manage this,” she added.

“Especially when you’re giving up full-time work, you really need to think about how long it will take for your business to start taking money.”

When it comes to renting a shop, Abbott recommended small business owners not to commit to a long lease and to avoid costly refurbishments, keeping displays as functional as possible to reduce outgoings.

Abbott also advised negotiating hard on stock and rent – both in terms of price and payment terms. “Can you vary the timeframe? Or pay up front and get a discount? Remember it is not always about the price,” she said.

“Can your suppliers fund promotions? Could you consider doing a part stock, part sale or return arrangement? And consider your delivery terms. Identify what is worth the most to you and then go for it.”

## **Future plans**

Atelier Millinery has gone from strength-to-strength and will be collaborating with men’s hatter Bates at the Goodwood Revival in September, where they will be running the women’s department of the shop at the festival.

It also plans to grow the range of workshops on offer in store in the future, to complement the successful classes currently on offer, such as the Fascinator Recipe Workshop where students attend for the day and leave with a headpiece they have made themselves.