Jesse Johnson knows a thing or two about first impressions. They're the gold standard he has set as a second-generation owner, along with his brother, Richie Fraley, of Rich TV & Home Center in Portsmouth, Ohio. Customers rave about Rich TV, consistently citing fast delivery, outstanding service, friendly and knowledgeable staff, and competitive prices. It’s no wonder Johnson expects the store website to deliver the best first impression when prospective customers start their shopping process.

Johnson considers richstv.com the window to his store, a business founded in 1994 by his father, Rich Fraley. At that time, Fraley had lost his job from an appliance store that was going out of business. According to Johnson, his dad had two choices: move or start his own business. A move from the depressed, old steel manufacturing town along the Ohio River was contemplated, but instead Fraley started Rich TV in his basement.

It didn’t take long for the business to outgrow the basement and expand its product offering from electronics to appliances and mattresses. In 2019, the store reached a milestone, celebrating 25 years in business. Here, Johnson, a WebFronts® Level 4 and RetailDeck® customer, shares how after a year with another web provider, he returned to RWS. Ever since, he has leveraged the power of digital to attract prospects to his store and convert them into customers.
**Q:** Who are your competitors?

**Jesse Johnson (JJ):** We’ve been in a depressed market for a number of years; our local competition is a Lowes and a regional chain store. Most of our competition now is online. It’s evolved over the years...When folks came in, we had to educate them. Now, they come in with a ton of information from their web searches. That’s a benefit of having an RWS website—we can be that information source for them, showing we’re competitive with everyone else.

**Q:** What’s your biggest challenge as an independent retailer?

**JJ:** Our biggest obstacle is the misconception we’re higher priced. We need people to know we’re competitive. If you can break through that barrier, once they come in the door we have a good shot at having them as a customer. In the appliance business, the majority of folks want to touch and feel products before they buy. Our site needs to be the window into our store, the first impression that draws people in—professional-looking, easy to navigate and full of information.

**Q:** You left RWS at one point and returned. What happened?

**JJ:** We were an RWS early adopter, one of the first 20 that did the MEGA (now Nationwide Marketing Group) WebFronts beta program. When we changed buying groups, we left RWS and moved to another platform. We had been using the RWS system for so long, when we switched platforms our analytics showed less traffic, and the SEO and organic search weren’t as good. We had to advertise more to bring people to the store.

When we tried digital advertising, our site traffic increased but still, no results. People didn’t stay on the site; it couldn’t support the digital advertising. After a year on the other platform, it was costing us money—not making us money. RWS was so superior to what we were using. We returned to RWS in the summer of 2016.

**Q:** What, in your opinion, are the greatest benefits of the RWS platform?

**JJ:** The flexibility of the RWS site gives me the ability to change pricing on a dime. I can set up my market parameters and react to market conditions on the fly. The sheer amount of information the RWS database provides on model and skew numbers is beyond anything. Automated national promotions and rebates are at my fingertips. And with the ability to deanonymize, the customer is sharing their email with us and we can see what they’re looking for.

**Q:** How important is your website to your business?

**JJ:** Our website is first and foremost; it’s the launching pad for everything we do. We have more people coming in the store saying they’ve been to our site. We have more calls to the store directly from the site. We use our site as a selling tool, carrying around our tablets, pulling up information on the fly rather than having to go to vendor sites. Between our Level 4 site and RetailDeck, it’s a great pairing of the two.