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**INTERNATIONAL GROWTH RETAILER**  
**OF THE YEAR**

**Retail**  
**Week** 2016  
**AWARDS**  
with **ORACLE**

**Winner: Graze.com**

# Research and adaptation put Graze on the US map

**T**he immense pull factor of the lucrative US consumer market continues to entice UK retailers. But for every brand that has made it big in the States, there are plenty that have come back licking their wounds.

In 2013, Graze.com took the leap. Eyeing a potential market estimated at US\$500m (£356.5m) annually, the natural foods retailer set about an audacious push to draw in customers, while working out how the whole thing could be managed well from a logistics perspective.

The scale of ambition involved, the distribution challenge of a very different postal system, the headaches of establishing a new supply chain, and marketing the product to a new customer base were all big issues – and opportunities – for the UK company.

It was the extent of Graze's ambition, and the skill with which it confronted the challenges, that made a big impression on the judges.

One judge said: "It's a really exciting story, they've been so audacious. When you look at how much they had to do to get this launch right, it's really amazing. I found it so compelling to read. They're true entrepreneurs – I always like to support businesses like this."

Graze, in which investor Carlyle Group bought a majority stake in 2012 for a reported £50m, started the complex task of researching the market and laying down the foundations ready for a December 2013 launch.

What started from sending 100 emails to friends in the US quickly turned into a viral sensation as consumer interest rose.

That was evident in the fact that just 24 hours after the first email went out, the company found itself with people in 48 States keen for its product. Within a fortnight that had translated into 20,000 customers – a number that continued to grow rapidly.

What also impressed the judges were the technological leaps that took place behind the



scenes, without which the launch would not have been possible. An intense period of research, data-crunching and some clever distribution innovations produced what Graze calls 'the brain', a smart logistics system that has allowed the retailer to adapt to US supply chain characteristics.

One of the judges commented: "It wasn't just

about product and marketing, it was about logistics as well. They're a fantastic business.

"They had so much to think about and get right in terms of the customers and logistics, otherwise this launch wouldn't have been a success. It's also one of the best examples of personalisation you will see."

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