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Interesting times these. As the world falls further out of love with Amazon, myriad marketplaces are stepping up to woo both merchants and end customers. A fair few of these competitors are on the way to developing into significant players, raising funds from canny investors, and extending their reach into new markets. **What differentiates them most from Amazon is the absolute pledge never to compete with their merchants**, which has been one of the most irritating bugbears for businesses selling on Amazon. It is hard to accept that demand is being monitored and products assessed for their viability for 'house' brands and the swathes of Chinese sellers who can emulate products in a trice and undercut even the most competitive of businesses. It is this sheer unfairness as well as the often eye-watering fees that make Amazon's business model uniquely questionable on moral grounds.

Add to this the way in which Amazon sidesteps its tax liabilities then no wonder that merchants are seeking alternatives with more ethical business models. It is also why more merchants are developing their own marketplaces via brand and white label partnerships. Nor is the developing world of marketplaces limited to DTC offerings, with increasing number of trade only options springing up to link producer and wholesalers with small retailers, often also providing

credit. With live tradeshows having been paused, there are numerous initiatives trying to plug this gap.

The ones to watch right now are Next with its Total Platform development which complements its third-party brand Label offering. This looks set to fly and is already pulling in brands which have rebelled against the punitive fees which John Lewis has recently seen fit to impose on its online concession brands. Given JLP's faltering performance and fall from grace most will surely fare far better with Next. Then there is OnBuy – a British business – which with newly secured development funding will be focused on expansion, and other operators like Fruugo who offer a relatively painless route for UK merchants wanting to enter smaller markets (non-Amazon dominated) in Europe.

Beyond this, there is a world of partnership opportunities yet to be developed between merchant businesses and others which will provide significant mutual benefits. If ever there was a time to be open minded and ready to explore new routes to market, to new products and new profit streams it is now.

JRH

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# Next post strong Q2



**N**ext has attributed its strong second-quarter growth to pent up demand for adult clothing together with the hot weather across the end of May and beginning of June which drove consumers to splurge on summer clothes. The retailer also noted that consumers were dipping into the cash they had saved during lockdown and with many planning to holiday in the UK, there was more money around to spend on clothing. Full price sales in the 11 weeks to 17 July were up 18.6 per cent on the comparable pre-pandemic period

two years ago, reflecting strong online demand along with ongoing recovery of store sales since re-opening was permitted in April.

The performance of overseas online was up by 61 per cent with UK LABEL third party brands (including Lipsy sold in stores) up by 64 per cent.

The business has said that it will be repaying £29 million of business rates relief to the government.

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## Farmison chooses more2

Farmison, the UK's leading online butcher, has chosen more2 as its new growth partner. Based in Yorkshire, Farmison gives home...

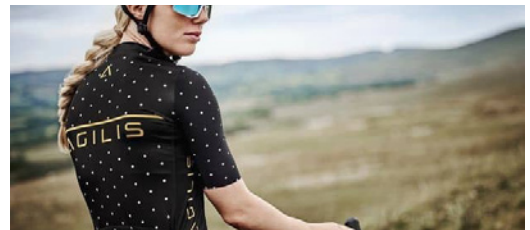
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## AMARA appoints its first CTO

Matthew Butlin AMARA has appointed Matthew Butlin as Chief Technology Officer (CTO) which is a brand-new role for the business....

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## Rugby icon launches AGILIS sportswear range

Wales' record try scorer and former IRB World Player of the Year Shane Williams MBE has launched the AGILIS sportswear...

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## ASOS sales jump despite Covid pressures

ASOS has reported a jump in sales despite volatility in demand and global supply chain pressure. Revenue increased by 27...

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## John Lewis announces job cuts across all stores

John Lewis and Waitrose are set to shed around 1,000 jobs as moves are made to rationalise its store management...

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## Cath Kidston appoints Chief Commercial Officer

Suzanne Egleton Digital first retailer Cath Kidston has announced that Suzanne Egleton has been appointed as Chief Commercial...

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## The Moot Group raises £5m seed funding

The Moot Group (TMG), an eCommerce tech has announced it has secured £5m in seed funding. The round, led by...

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## Klarna makes social shopping acquisition

Klarna has acquired Hero, a social shopping platform that was established in 2015. The deal is expected to extend Klarna's...

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## Halfords enters software market with launch of Avayler

Halfords has entered the B2B software market with the launch of Avayler: a new business, offering Halfords' proprietary software to...

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## Cox & Cox appoints Marketing Director

Frome-based luxury homeware brand, Cox & Cox, has announced the appointment of Paul Strudwick to its senior leadership...

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## Hotel Chocolat issues trading update

Hotel Chocolat Group plc has released a post-close trading update for the 52 weeks ended 27 June 2021. It has...

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## Sofology launches sustainable upholstery rental service

Offering the choice of well designed pieces, at an affordable price, for as long as customers need them, Sofology's Loop...

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## Whistl announces Parcelhub expansion with new Leicester depot

Whistl has announced that Parcelhub has opened a Leicester based 10,000 sqft depot at Meridian Business Park, just off Junction...

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## AO revenue hits £1.6bn after 'step change' year

Electricals retailer, AO has reported a 62 per cent increase in revenue driven by demand for larger fridges, chest freezers...

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## YouGarden acquires Gardening Direct

YouGarden, the multi-channel retailer of horticultural products, has announced the acquisition of Gardening Direct, one of the UK's...

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## OnBuy raises £35M in Series A+ funding round

Online marketplace OnBuy.com has announced the closing of £35 million in series A+ funding through VC and strategic technology investors...

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## Decathlon UK opens its website to new partners

Decathlon UK has invited new partners to join its marketplace, bringing together a specially curated selection of brands to help...

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# Buy it Direct boss calls for investigation into international shipping ‘cartel’



By Nick Glynne, CEO,  
Buy it Direct Group

Nick Glynne has called for the CMA to investigate international freight lines. This comes as freight costs soar, denting retailer margins and making price increases and product scarcity inevitable. Nick who operates £436m turnover Buy it Direct, is one of the UK’s largest importers said “Demand for consumer goods has soared over the past 18 months with people unable to spend their money on travel and other activities, yet there has been a growing shortage of containers and shipping availability in that time.



“The self-perpetuating cycle has gotten out of control. Factories in China and the Far East don’t have any warehousing capacity, meaning they only produce what they can ship immediately. This, coupled with the reduced capacity in containers and ships, which are controlled by a small handful of global freight companies, has increased the cost of a container from circa £1,800 pre-Covid to more than £12,600 now.

“It’s hard to avoid reaching the conclusion that the international shipping companies at the centre of this have deliberately reduced capacity over the past 12 months capitalise on the surge in demand. There are solutions available to the lines but it is clearly more profitable for them to fuel the scarcity and make greater profits on their current fleet.

“Consequently the freight cost, a key part of a product’s overall price, has increased enormously. For example, where the freight element for a single washing machine was £10 around 12 months ago, it is now more than £70 per item, cutting margins and pushing the price of products up for everyone in the supply chain, including the end consumer.

“A quick look at the big five shipping companies’ share prices will tell you all you need to know about the problem, and should be an urgent matter for the Competition and Markets Authority.”

“As a result, retailers in the UK are left needing to decide whether to continue importing goods and hoping they can sell them at this higher price, or holding off and waiting for the shipping crisis to subside. Either way, this will mean that the prices of some large consumer goods will inevitably go up before the end of the year, while others will be increasingly hard to get hold of.

“Otherwise, we’ll be in a position for the foreseeable where goods are not being made and there’s no guarantee on when products will arrive. This is a problem for all retailers and other importers of large goods, and one that’s only going to get worse if it isn’t addressed.”

Buy it Direct Group, supplies white goods, furniture, bathrooms, hot tubs and electronics through its various eCommerce brands, including Appliances Direct, Laptops Direct, Better Bathrooms and Furniture 123. The retail group was founded in 1999.

# 7 order fulfilment challenges for e-tailers and how to overcome them

By Claire Umney, managing director, Breathe Technologies

**UK online sales grew 74.4 per cent year on year to January 2021. Consumers have had to shop online out of necessity through the pandemic, but the online spending surge has since showed no signs of slowing, marking a permanent shift in buying habits. In fact, our recent research with 1,500 consumers found 82 per cent said they expected to maintain or increase current levels of online spending.**

**T**hese increasing volumes has made managing deliveries and returns, while trying to ensure accuracy and improve sustainability, even more challenging for e-tailers. The key is to strike the right balance between customer delight and maintaining an economically viable operation, and central to this is an agile, flexible and streamlined order fulfilment process. Here are the most common order fulfilment challenges facing e-tailers, and how they can overcome them to deliver on their customer promises.

## 1 Matching technology to the needs of the customer

Maximising the volume of orders you can fulfil requires robust physical and digital technology within warehouses and distribution centres. Many businesses we work with know they need to automate to hit the levels of fulfilment the market demands, but do not always know where to start. It can be perceived as daunting or cost prohibitive, but you do not have to go from zero to 100 per cent straight away. Robotics for example, offer a level of flexibility, scalability

and fantastic ROI, which makes them an attractive and affordable solution to compete in the eCommerce space.

## 2 Satisfying the call of 'I want it now'

Failure to deliver to customer expectations can mean losing sales to competitors – our research found that a third of consumers would rather buy elsewhere than suffer an extended delivery service. Retailers like Amazon are setting the pace with increased shipping options of same-day and one-day delivery. A delivery management software platform that integrates all your carrier partners will ensure you can; remain flexible to keep your operations moving through surges in demand, lower your costs by selecting the optimum carrier to meet performance metrics and improve accuracy to get it right first time.

## 3 Managing peaks

Making sure your order fulfilment processes are set up to cope with everyday order volumes can be a challenge itself,

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but seasonal peaks will only add to the pressures retailers are facing. Ignoring the opportunities that automation provides and not making better use of existing warehouse systems limits your ability to flex around operational fluctuations. To manage increasingly complex operations effectively in today's uncertain times, retailers need smart end-to-end systems that integrate software and machinery and provide accurate, real-time data to support agile decision making.

## 4 Multichannel selling

With over half of global eCommerce sales occurring on marketplaces, it is not surprising that brands are trying to establish a presence in these channels. But as well as opportunity, marketplaces present huge challenges too, with strict performance metrics driving the need for seamless fulfilment processes. Failure to adhere to these can result in hefty fines and even termination of the opportunity to sell via that channel. This is why software needs to be front and centre of your warehouse, integrated with each and every process. Software that optimises your throughput across

picking, packing, labelling and despatch, and integrates with multiple carriers and marketplaces, enables you to meet your service level commitments.

## 5 Return to sender

Returns policies are a major brand trust factor. Make it easy for consumers to return goods, and you encourage them to buy. For many customers, returns are now considered part of the buying experience. The downside for retailers is that reverse logistics can be complicated and expensive. Retailers need to understand what is being returned before it reaches the warehouse to allocate resource and process the return efficiently. Using an established software solution that provides visibility across the returns management process streamlines the operation and cuts costs, making it possible for retailers to offer customer-friendly return policies.

## 6 Understanding the friction within your order fulfilment process

Order fulfilment is complex, encompassing everything from point of sale to delivery to the end

customer. Supply chains that incur delays, stoppages, blind spots, manual errors or data silos, will have a level of friction which prevents businesses from being agile and able to match the needs of the customer. Removing barriers to growth through automating workflows and effective system integration can drive efficiency gains, reduces mistakes, and ultimately enhance sales opportunities.

## 7 Keeping up with the pace of change

For the eCommerce retailers looking to stay ahead of the curve there inevitably will always be a new operational model to consider to tackle changing consumer demand. Already we are seeing the acceleration of dropship programs to provide customers with access to stock outside of the standard stores and warehouses. Likewise, the introduction of micro-fulfilment is likely to be the 'next big thing' for retailers. With each challenge comes an opportunity and the successful retailers will be those that take the holistic view of operations across both physical and digital automation to determine where efficiencies can be made.

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# Three CX strategies to create loyal subscription customers

By James Frampton, SVP and general manager EMEA at SugarCRM

**In this rapidly changing retail environment, accelerated by lockdowns and store closures, the customer journey has transformed dramatically. In particular, companies are contending with much longer sales cycles and a greater dependence on digital. And these changes could very well be part of a permanent shift that will reshape the customer experience (CX) as we know it.**

This is precisely why businesses need to get their subscription services right. I think it's fair to say that the subscription economy is certainly here to stay. Gartner, Inc. found that 70 per cent of organisations have already deployed or are considering deploying some sort of subscription service. That means seven in 10 organisations are no longer looking at one-time sales or repeat purchases but rather an ongoing relationship that needs to be continually nurtured.

With the subscription business model now appearing in almost every industry, it's time to examine how companies can better create loyal subscription customers by delivering a streamlined, effortless experience for those customers at every touchpoint.

After all, the rise of the subscription economy has fundamentally changed the dynamic between buyers and sellers. For sellers, it's no longer about winning a bid or making a one-time sale. You have to continually earn customers' loyalty to keep earning their business. Because buyers can cancel their subscription at any time, organisations now need to prioritise customer experience and focus on serving rather than selling.

Here are three CX strategies companies can leverage to better calibrate the customer journey:

## 1. Service first

Focus on service first, and sales will follow. In a subscription business, your goal is to not only sign up a customer but keep the customer over time. In fact, most subscription businesses don't see full payback on their customer acquisition costs until the second year of a subscription. As a result, the customer experience after the initial sale becomes even more important, as it sets the stage for customer loyalty and retention.

However, balancing a "customer-first" approach with a "sales culture" across the company is sometimes a difficult task. Some people equate a sales culture to one focused simply on maximising revenue. The key, however, is to ensure that every employee is always focused on delivering value in every customer interaction with a positive attitude and a kind word. And never pass up the opportunity to thank your customer for doing business with you.

Most companies that succeed in a subscription model have figured out how to make every interaction valuable and leave their customers with

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a smile on their face and the knowledge that the company they are doing business with has their best interests in mind. When a company does this well, customer loyalty is high and the contract renewal is very likely.

It can be challenging, though, to always know how to add value to every interaction. This is where digital CX technology can fill the gap with integrated playbooks, suggested knowledge articles and AI-powered assistants for putting the right information into the hands of sales and service reps at the right time.

## 2. Get aligned

Customer experience is not a result of one interaction with a department or a single individual. Instead, it's formed through a kaleidoscope of experiences with a brand — from initial research to purchase to onboarding to ongoing support. Yet in many organisations, marketing, sales and service teams still work in silos. They don't have the same success metrics or even collaborate regularly. As a result, these departments struggle to align efforts, which is a shame since a unified effort is precisely what's needed to improve the customer experience.

It can be frustrating for a long-term customer to speak with a customer service agent and be treated like it's the very first interaction the brand has ever had with them.

One way to align efforts is to provide agents with access to a consolidated buyer's journey

— one that shows not only the customer's account history but also the most recent interactions, such as which emails have been opened, which links were clicked and which self-serve actions were taken. This holistic view of the customer could provide the context needed to resolve issues quickly and put the full context of the customer experience front and centre.

When a company chooses a CX tech stack, it's imperative to have a fully integrated marketing, sales and customer service solution. The best CX tech stacks come from one vendor, with all of the data and process integration already worked out in advance. Subscription companies can only thrive and grow when they have a single view of the customer for both creating frictionless customer engagements and analysing the end-to-end customer journey.

## 3. Anticipate your customers' needs

To truly serve customers, you need to stay constantly connected to them. Just as a car with GPS knows where the driver has been and where the vehicle is headed next, you need to understand exactly where customers are in their journey with your company. This approach enables organisations to anticipate and fulfil customer needs even before they realise they have them.

When customers call the contact centre, visit your website and open emails, they're providing you with

valuable insights. Customers are leaving a digital trail everywhere they go, but few companies today are fully connecting these dots to correlate this data and surface insights that could help them pinpoint customer needs.

This is where innovations in time-aware CX can come in. Instead of looking at what stage of the buyer's journey the customer is in right now, there is an opportunity to look holistically at the full scope of experiences: where customers have been, how they've responded and what they need next.

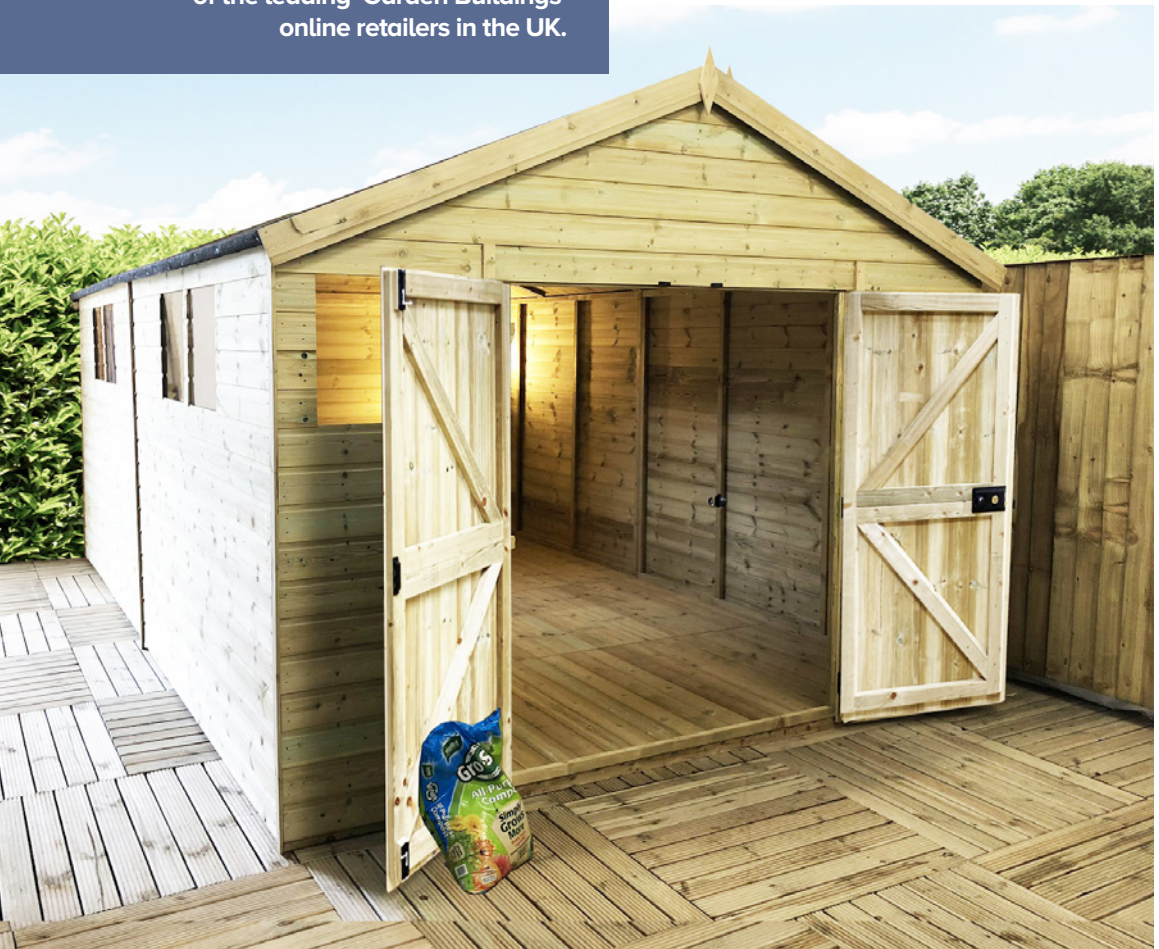
To accomplish this, companies that are building a modern CX tech stack should prioritise time-based analytics and artificial intelligence as part of their solution, to ensure the platform does the work, rather than themselves. Gone are the days when accurately tracking what happened in the past was enough. To succeed in today's hyper-competitive world, companies must leverage advanced analytics in order to stay one step ahead of their customers.

Serving customers in the subscription economy is all about cultivating customers for life. At a time when customer journeys are in upheaval, most of us would gladly trade a one-time spectacular experience for a world of effortless interactions. Companies that support their customers and communities in a real and authentic way will likely see dividends in the post-Covid-19 economy.

# Dealing With Demand

Since launching on ManoMano in November 2019, UK based family business iLikeStores Ltd has enjoyed a 15 per cent increase in sales, alongside achieving £800,000 in sales within their first year of the collaboration. Alongside ManoMano's dedicated expert guidance and access to a large DIY, Home & Garden customer base across Europe, iLikeStores Ltd are now firmly established as one of the leading 'Garden Buildings' online retailers in the UK.

In 2008, brothers Russell and Edward Smith founded the iLikeStores business in Bedford with one main aim – to provide quality garden and bedroom equipment at affordable prices to the nation. Thirteen years later, iLikeStores now has a team of 80 employees and are performing at the highest level of service, offering express UK delivery. As ManoMano specialises in the DIY, Home & Garden sector, it was a natural choice to collaborate as it offered a brilliant opportunity to reach a captive customer base.



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### Dealing With Demand

The past year has seen unprecedented demand for home and DIY products, with sheds being one of the most popular lockdown garden items. The pandemic saw the introduction and rising popularity of the ‘Shoffice’ – a shed office - which saw eager DIYers transform their garden sheds into office spaces and more - bars, gyms, chill out zones – as a way to manage spending more time at home. ManoMano saw sales of garden sheds increase by 472 per cent in last year, with iLikeStores as one of its biggest stockists.

Managing the growing demand is one of the many areas that ManoMano can support its sellers. The marketplace gives each seller a dedicated Account Manager who works closely with the business to help optimise performance - by providing tailored business guidance and market or data driven insight – and forecasting. This has never been as important as it was last year, and the ManoMano team worked closely with iLikeStores to ensure the business was able to cope with the demand, ensuring stock was always available despite

the nationwide shortage of sheds that was experienced earlier this year.

Additionally, ManoMano helps to manage customer services, particularly when it comes to delivery. iLikeStores offers express UK delivery and works closely with ManoMano to ensure it maintains a fast and reliable service.

### Plans to Grow

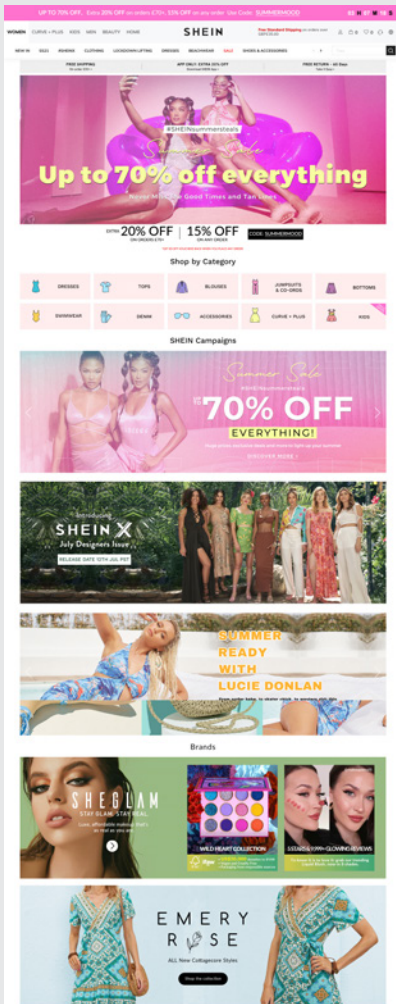
Since the beginning of the partnership, the growth shows no sign of slowing down. The family business has recruited two dedicated employees to work directly with ManoMano to manage customer demand.

The rise in popularity for outdoor buildings is just one of many reasons why the iLikeStores business continues to grow. The founding brothers intend to use this opportunity to expand their manufacturing services which will include taking on a new factory later this year. The expansion gives them the chance to expand the product range and in turn, broaden the customer base.

# European fashion retailers risk losing everything

By Julian Grindey, Partner, Sigma Efficiency

An ultra-secretive Chinese e-tailer is leaving the global fashion industry lagging behind.



Shein is a trail-blazer in 'real-time' retailing, surpassing the 'ultra-fast fashion' players like Boohoo and ASOS. So what must we learn from Shein, before they claim world domination?

Firstly there are ten stand-out features you need to know about this retail disrupter:

- Shein is the world's fastest-growing e-commerce company.
- It has the second most downloaded shopping app in the world.
- It's website ranks No.1 for web traffic, putting them ahead of; Nike, Zara, Macys, Lululemon, Amazon and Adidas.
- Shein operates in nearly every major international market.
- It's sales reached \$10 billion in 2020; growing over 100% per year for each of the last 8 years.
- The company is based in China yet it spurned its local market in favour of selling abroad.
- Valued at \$5 billion in January 2019 - just 18 months later its market cap. had increased to \$15 billion.
- Influencers from Katy Perry, Rita Ora and Lil Nas X have helped make Shein's clothing common place in every Gen Z wardrobe.
- Shein makes Amazon's pricing look expensive.
- It's compared to fast-fashion or ultra-fast fashion brands like Zara, H&M, or ASOS, but... it's much faster.

Even more impressive when you consider their success is in global Fashion retailing; a radically different and inherently risky category, presenting unique challenges:

- **Short product life-span** - clothes are seasonal by nature and fashions change faster than ever creating financial risk.
- **Regional variants** - what's popular in Europe may have little similarity to what's trending in America.



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- **Managing huge variety** - A basic t-shirt might come in 10 colours, 6 sizes, and 2 necks. That's 120 SKUs to manage for just one product.
- **Labour intensive** - garment factories aren't full of robots, they're full of people with sewing machines who need to be valued and respected.
- **High returns** - items bought online may not fit correctly or look as good as the customer had hoped, until AR (augmented reality) becomes common place this is a costly area.
- **Predicting Demand** - a retailer needs to warehouse inventory that accounts for all of the above, across a huge number of different products.

Shein rises to the challenge, standing taller than the crowd in 6 distinct ways:

- 1. World class customer insight** – combining 3rd party data (plugs directly into competitors' websites and Google Trend Finder to understand what's in-fashion) with 1st party; linking its in-app and on-site user behaviour to forecast demand and adjust inventory in real-time.
- 2. Integrated supply chain** - its supply chain management software enables it to produce a wider variety of relevant products cheaper and quicker than competitors; factories only run Shein's software which means that (like Apple) they have total real-time production transparency.
- 3. Agile process** - Shein feeds that data into a massive in-house design and prototyping team who create product from drawing board to production, then online in as little as three-days because all areas of their business are tied into their ERP (Enterprise resource planning) system so they instantly update manufacturing plans based on who's looking at which product page every hour.
- 4. A 'virtual' vertical** - located at the epicentre of China's fast fashion manufacturing capital Guangzhou and having built up years of loyalty with its suppliers, it operates in a similar way to Apple - as if it does all of its own manufacturing; it can start with incredibly small batches and respond quickly once a product is live.
- 5. The Retail science of Algorithms** – relying

on data and algorithms, supplemented by human insight. The demand prediction, fast iteration, small batches, and manufacturing relationships means that Shein eliminates waste and delivers low prices on quality, trendy items.

**6. An addictive UX (user experience)** - fashion mobile ecommerce experience comes down to four things. Shein smashes them all 'out of the park':

- Low prices.
- Great products that are refreshed thousands of times a day.
- Lots and lots of reviews, with pictures, video and engaging content.
- Using every trick in the book to build the customer base and retain them.

Shein's strategic 'flywheel' is spinning so fast because they recognised what China is good at – manufacturing. They've learnt to develop technologies to master their blind spot - Retail.

These are the key ingredients for shein's 'secret sauce'.

### Conclusion

Anyone who can predict demand more accurately, test more nimbly, and dial up production of popular SKUs faster than others, thereby reducing; waste, inefficiencies, and markdowns, will hold a huge advantage over competitors.

Predicting the future suggests the logical interim conclusion is manufacturers going direct on a global scale, cutting out all the middlemen, and replacing local know-how with algorithms. It's hard to imagine a company better placed for retail's near-term future than Shein; they can manufacture, write code, and market to global consumers as well as anyone in the world.

They were not the first ultra-fast fashion company, but they have already overtaken Boohoo and ASOS sales combined in less than 8 years.

How will Boohoo, ASOS, Indetex and Uniqlo react if they are to preserve their ground?

# EU VAT changes – is your eCommerce business ready?

By James Hyde, CEO, James and James Fulfilment

**Doing business with Europe has become so expensive and onerous since Brexit that a vast number of UK eCommerce businesses have simply turned off all EU activities.**

**Managing the different VAT thresholds and rates across each EU country has certainly added to the admin burden and cost of doing business – so how much difference will the new Import One Stop Shop (IOSS) make?**

As the European Union pushes forward with its plan to change the way VAT is accounted for on cross-border B2C supplies, UK eCommerce businesses need to be aware of the sweeping reforms being introduced on 1 July 2021 by the 27 member states. Designed to make it easier to account for local VAT in the consumer's country, the new rules are also targeted at cutting loop holes and reducing the substantial value of VAT fraud.

For UK eCommerce businesses that have wrestled with the need for different VAT numbers – as well as VAT thresholds and rates – in different member states, the creation of the Import One Stop Shop (IOSS) single EU VAT return is broadly welcomed. Allowing businesses shipping goods from their home country to customers across the EU to report all pan-EU sales in one place, the IOSS is an extension of the 2015 Mini One-Stop-Shop (MOSS), which successfully trialed a single EU return for B2C sales of digital, telecoms and broadcast services.

The process is relatively simple – a business simply needs to go online and

register for an IOSS number. However, to do so requires an existing VAT number – and if a business does not already have that in place, it will require fiscal representation to acquire the number and currently, this process is taking up to eight weeks.

## Reducing Thresholds

The other significant change is the withdrawal of the €22 import VAT exemption on small parcels – something that has been used - intentionally or mistakenly - by companies to avoid VAT in the past. From July 1st VAT must be charged at the point-of-sale for consignments not exceeding €150. Companies using the IOSS simply need to ensure VAT is calculated at the point of sale and goods will be automatically passed through customs. However, any company that has overlooked this change and continues to send lower value items into Europe will face a nasty surprise because both VAT and an admin fee will be applied, and the cost will be presented to the end customer.

For those that register in time, the use of the IOSS will create a more efficient process for quick and easy customs clearance – which should reduce delays and

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avoid unexpected admin fees from both customs and carriers. However, to ensure goods pass smoothly through this new 'green channel' UK eCommerce businesses must ensure all commercial invoices include the correct IOSS number.

Furthermore, much of the burden of compliance to the new EU VAT regulation has been passed on to the carriers, who have only just released their technical specifications, which include electronic invoice formats. Therefore, in addition to ensuring the correct IOSS number has been attained, companies will need

to determine how to create invoices in the correct format with the right information to avoid expensive customs delays.

#### **Get Ready**

Getting this process right will remove a huge component of the additional costs that have made trade with the EU far less profitable since Brexit. It will avoid the customer experience disaster that occurs when €10 admin fees and unexpected VAT liabilities are imposed on each transaction. The onus is therefore on UK eCommerce businesses to get this right – whether that is attempting

to determine the technical expectations of carriers and amending IT solutions in time, or finding a fulfilment partner that can automate the process, ensuring all commercial invoices are created in the correct format, with the correct data.

And time is against UK business. With just a matter of weeks before the changes are made – it is those companies ready on July 1st that will be best placed to exploit the lower cost of sale, rapidly reinvigorating EU expansion plans that have been sidelined since January, to steal a march on the competition.

# Breakthrough Creative: Storytelling

By Brent Niemuth, J Schmid, USA



I've spent the last 35 years of my life doing one thing—thinking of creative ways for brands to get noticed.

This includes crafting campaigns that connect emotionally with people, designing experiences online and offline that delight the customer, and telling brand stories that make people want to be a part of something, not just buy something. And I've had the honour of doing it for some of the coolest brands in the world.

Brent Niemuth is joining the roster of expert presenters at the *virtual* DCA Autumn Conference on 14th October 2021 — you can see the programme as it builds [here](#).

Finding ways to break through creatively is not an easy task. The best ideas are usually the riskiest. The most memorable campaigns are often the boldest. The problem is most brands avoid risk. Playing it safe is, well—safer. Most brands think they're being bold, when in fact, they're just blending in. But today, just being bold or risky is not enough. Today's consumer is looking to align themselves with brands they believe in. So how do we make that connection?

Brands that share their story—letting people know what they believe in, where their products are made, what inspired their founders,

how much quality matters to them—these are the brands that are winning today. And storytelling is their secret.

Telling stories has always been the way people connect with each other since the beginning of time. The Bible is a collection of stories. Movies are stories. Books are stories. Great songs tell a story. Stories are the way human beings communicate. In fact, science has confirmed what we've long known to be true: we're hardwired for stories. A story activates parts in the brain that allows the listener to turn the story in to their own ideas and experience thanks to a process called neural coupling. The brain releases dopamine into the

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system when it experiences emotionally-charged stories, making it easier to remember. We connect, engage and are moved...to tears, to laughter, to anger, to action...through stories.

The fact is, storytelling works in marketing. Period. Great brands have been using this technique for decades. And today it's even more important since consumers want to know who you are, what your brand values are, and what makes you special BEFORE they consider buying from you. And don't just think of storytelling as long copy explaining things in great detail. A story can be conveyed in a few punchy headlines, or quite often, a story can be delivered through powerful images. In fact, great photography can be the BEST way to tell a story (remember, a picture is worth a thousand words).

Here are a couple of my favorite brands that use storytelling effectively.

Stio is an outdoor apparel brand based in Jackson Hole, Wyoming ([www.stio.com](http://www.stio.com)). Their location in Jackson Hole is a major part of the brand's story. It's where they live, where they play, and where they design and test their products. They don't just sell an idea of the mountain life, they live it. They do a great job of making a connection with people who also want to live this life by telling stories about things they believe in, such as the environment and family and their western heritage. They come across as authentic and believable. They don't just sell their products, they romance them. They go into detail about how they're designed and where the inspiration came from, why they choose certain materials, and why protecting nature is important. Stories, stories, stories.

Another brand who uses storytelling well is Cherry Republic ([www.cherryrepublic.com](http://www.cherryrepublic.com)). This

unique brand celebrates Michigan's Montmorency Tart Cherry through its 200+ cherry-based products. Their mantra of "Life, Liberty, Beaches & Pie" sets the tone for everything. Their quirky, lovable personality comes through in the downhome stories they tell. Just reading through their Core Values posted on their website makes you want to support them, believe in them, and buy from them.

We're all desperate for new, effective, breakthrough creative ways to delight our customers. Storytelling is one of the most powerful ways to breathe life into your brand. Do it right, and you'll not only earn the consideration of new customers, but you'll give them a reason to keep coming back.

I'll leave you with this final thought from marketing guru Seth Godin — "Marketing is no longer about the stuff you make, but about the stories you tell."

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# Six essential things you need to do to grow and retain your email database

By Phill Manson, Director, PAASE Digital

**eMail marketing is an essential tool for eCommerce businesses. Despite some saying it is outdated, it's a channel that could successfully increase your revenue by over 1000 per cent.**

**B**ut a good strategy is nothing without a good database. And you can't grow a database if it's leaking! As a business, it is essential that you understand who is buying your product and where the opportunities are, so that you can effectively grow and retain an email database that has revenue potential. Here are six essential things you need to think about if you are to grow and retain your email database:

**1 Focus on quality**  
Yes, we are going to bang on the 'quality over quantity' drum. Many businesses fall into the trap of believing that a large database will result in a significant growth in revenue. Which could be true to some extent, but if the right people aren't on your list, all you have to show for it is a vanity metric. After all, 10,000 subscribers who aren't remotely interested in your product will not result in a sustainable email marketing strategy, but if you have 1,000 good quality subscribers who have already shown interest in purchasing your product or are already loyal customers, you are more likely to drive

growth long-term and retain these subscribers.

So how do you attract these high quality, high intent subscribers? Utilising tools like social media advertising, paired with a powerful lead magnet will result in the type of people you need on your list. Social media should not be overlooked as a tool to target and search for your ideal customers.

**2 Use segments, not lists**  
Far too many businesses manage their database with lists rather than segments. Not using segmentation is a missed revenue opportunity to engage the most dedicated subscribers.

Optimise your database by identifying which of your subscribers are most engaged, then isolate them. The same goes for identifying which subscribers are not so active, so you can reduce the sending frequency or change up your methods and hit them at the right time with an irresistible offer. Segmentation ensures that you are not sending irrelevant emails to your subscribers, which can result in a higher retention.

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### 3 Grow your list in a relevant way

This is essential to attracting the right subscribers. Grow your database in a way that feels authentic and relevant. The 'Refer a Friend' schemes work really well for some businesses, but for others it doesn't make sense. Facebook retargeting, social media collaborations and co-branded campaigns or competitions are all great methods to grow your database in theory, but if they aren't relevant to your business they won't feel authentic to your audience and you won't attract the right subscribers, or you'll risk not attracting many people at all.

For example, if you are running a co-branded campaign, you need to work with a brand that compliments your business and whose customers are likely to be your customers. For example, an airline

collaborating with a suitcase company, shoe designers collaborating with clothing, dog food collaborating with dog accessory brands... You get the picture. It gives potential customers a double incentive to sign up.

### 4 Give something back

To avoid putting revenue at risk, merchants need to own their data by implementing zero-party data collection technology in their stores, like the Shop Quiz and Conversational Pop-ups. Based on these rich datasets, stores can have segmented and personalised conversations with customers across their website, email, ads, SMS and Messenger. Brands that collect data through these direct online interactions will be empowered to build a stronger relationship based on trust and deep personalisation with consumers.

A powerful lead magnet is an essential part of any email marketing strategy and ultimately needs to incentivise potential subscribers to part with their email address. Whether it's a website pop-up featuring a tempting special offer for first time customers - you need to make it strong and relevant for your business. When you've hit them with your lead magnet, it's time to nurture them with a strong welcome sequence that makes them feel more invested in your brand.

Don't forget using a Quiz can also allow you to drive a more personalised experience to your customers by giving them relevant results AND also drive email capture.

Building on this Quiz experience with an integration with a Marketing Tech tool such as Klaviyo also allows you to build out enhanced customer profiles

[Continues overleaf >](#)

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without requiring a customer to have made a purchase (remember that previous purchase behaviour doesn't necessarily indicate a future habit)

### 5 Send useful emails

It's a no brainer but if you are going to retain the subscribers on your email database, you need to send useful emails that result in sales.

Fitness brand, MuscleSquad is a great example of how 'back in stock' notifications can grow a database. MuscleSquad began using 'back in stock' notifications in December 2020, and their email list has grown from 2,000 (August 2020) to 15,000 (March 2020). This works because high intent subscribers who are poised to purchase are added to the database. The list can be segmented based on what product they are interested in and how quickly they move to purchase so they can be hit with targeted emails that are relevant to what stage they are at in their journey. It's a win-win for customers and for the brand.

### 6 Optimise your opt-ins

Are you capturing emails from customers when they check out?

By optimising your opt-ins and pre-ticking the box, you could grow your email list by 40 per cent, just like Sophie Allport did. Many businesses are missing a trick by not using soft opt-in. This area often feels like it lacks clarity in relation to the regulations, but making it easier for people to opt-in to your email marketing is a sure fire way to grow your email list, whilst still complying with ICO regulations for PECR/GDPR.

The guidelines state that you must not send emails to individuals they have specifically consented to receive emails from you; or 'they are an existing customer who bought (or negotiated to buy) a similar product or service from you in the past, and you gave them a simple way to opt out both when you first collected their details and in every message you have sent'. Providing that businesses are clear about their intention to send email marketing communications and the opt-out is clear – ie: please untick this box if you wish to not receive communications - soft opt-in is a very straightforward way to grow a high quality database with customers who are likely to engage with your product or service again.

Remember, Pre-ticked boxes are only banned for the legal basis of consent, not soft opt in, which is the PECR equivalent of Legitimate Interest. For soft opt in, both ticked boxes and unticked boxes are valid and legal. However, to tick to opt out of something, seems completely counter intuitive. It's safer to have a pre ticked box for soft opt in, as it's more obvious what someone needs to do and what the result might be.

eMail is here to stay, but so many brands are missing a trick by not doing these essential activities to help grow and retain customers within their email database. Without a high quality database, revenue opportunities are being missed and growth is only ever going to be short term.





# direct commerce awards 2021 the winners

What a contest it was this year!

Attracting many first-time entrants as well as a significant number of Direct Commerce Awards regulars and returners – all with great stories to share. These diverse entries combined to give our Judges some serious work to do and, as the scores came in for amalgamation and computation, it revealed just how close-run the entries were. In fact, it is fair to say that it was very difficult indeed to call and that every business which entered should be congratulating their teams for outstanding work during what has been an unprecedented trading period. It really underlines how agile and resourceful our sector is and long may this continue.

Please take a look at the businesses which won, that innovated and worked around all the obstacles that the pandemic threw at them. Teams that pulled together whilst adapting to remote working to ensure that customers were well served and remained able to access the products they needed as the nation locked down. The incredible efforts made by all to battle and carry on, to support causes dear to them, and in many cases to significantly grow their businesses. I congratulate and am in awe of you all.

I would also like to express my sincere thanks to this year's panel of Judges, to those of longstanding as well as to Julian Grindey, Mark Higgins, Wendy Slater and Andy Wood who joined them. Not only did they bring a different perspective, they also helped enormously to keep the judging process on track against tight deadlines.

Importantly too, thank you to every business which entered and to the lovely Georgina Hewitt who heads More2 for announcing the winners at our virtual DCA Annual Summit last month.

Here's a loud cheer and bottoms up to everyone involved.

Best wishes

Victoria Revell-Higgins  
Organiser

**PS: If you didn't get around to entering or want to continue your winning streak there's no other great opportunity coming up with our Innovator Awards – see pages 58-59 closing date 1st October.**

# Introducing some of our 2021 Judges

## Tony Adams

Tony is a veteran creative with an impressive track record in developing compelling catalogues and print communications for a raft of retail and B2B brands. He heads TA Design, a specialist agency on the South Coast, with a team which provides a comprehensive service for its clients. Tony is also a longstanding member of the DCA Advisory Board. He cut his teeth on catalogues when working as part of the studio team at Freemans, then one of the UK's Big Five mail order operations which regularly produced catalogues of 1000 pages plus. These days his work is focused on producing catalogues with high brand values and effectiveness for niche brands in categories including gardening, fashion, health, homewares, gifts and industrial supplies.



## Will Dymott

Will is a seasoned direct commerce professional with over 20 years' experience in all aspect of marketing, ecommerce, and mail order retail gained at some of the most respected brands on the web including; Boden, Fat Face, Conran and Figleaves.com as well as heading up the customer insight practice at the international retail consultancy Practicology. Most recently Will has co-founded a ground breaking marketing technology business called Hachikō that delivers a fully personalised catalogue in the parcel with a customers order to initiate that all important next order.



"I thoroughly enjoy judging these awards, the standard of entries were excellent all round, which didn't make it an easy job! As Judges we know we're in such a privileged position when retailers from all corners of the UK choose to present their proudest achievements to us. It's especially true of this years awards looking at what we as an industry have manage to achieve in the face of a, hopefully once in a lifetime, global pandemic".

## Julian Grindey

Julian is an energising Digital Trading Director; skilled in leading transformation, strategy and digital growth. His retail experience was gained in UK and abroad for; Aldi, A S Watson, Matalan and Studio Retail. He has delivered exceptional growth from turnarounds and scale up, in key omni-channel operators, including private label and international product sourcing strategies and is currently working in consulting.



"I have to congratulate all companies who submitted entries for the awards. It was both a challenge and privilege being part of the judging panel. The quality of entries was outstanding which made separating a stand-alone winner a very difficult task. Common amongst many entrants was how leadership teams have developed creative, often innovative solutions to the adversity the pandemic caused. What set the winners apart from the rest was how they used the same creative problem solving skills to address changes within their markets to seize opportunities, thwart competition and win in retail".

### Mark Higgins

Mark was recently appointed by AMARA for the newly created role of chief operations officer (COO).

Prior to this, he spent 24 years at Charles Tyrwhitt, where he was an integral part of the leadership team that grew the business from one turning over £4.5m, to an internationally known multi-channel retailer generating over £225m sales per annum. He has spent the last two years consulting for several high growth DTC businesses, helping them to build, develop and refine operations, infrastructure and customer service. At AMARA he will be working closely with fulfilment, logistics and customer care to manage and advance these functions for improved day-to-day operational performance and future growth globally.



### Wendy Slater

Most of Wendy's career has been in the B2C sector, within direct selling businesses, such as Avon Cosmetics and Weekenders Ladies Clothing, and within direct marketing businesses, such as Flying Brands, Marshalls and Demco Europe. Background in consumer marketing in B2C mature markets, with experience in both traditional mail order and eCommerce. Experience includes transforming brands in the digital space with particular emphasis on modernising brands to attract the next generation of customers. Experienced at Director level within international matrix organisations and with a reputation as a strong leader with a particular skill in managing people. Wendy has now started her own HR consultancy business, specialising in supporting new B2C start-up ventures.



" Really impressive entries from some very interesting and diverse businesses. A snapshot of agile, entrepreneurial British business performing way beyond expectations in what have been very difficult and immensely challenging trading conditions. Well done to all of you."

### Andy Wood

Andy holds over 20 years' experience in B2C and B2B retail that includes, home entertainment, clothing, food, luxury goods and building supplies. As the owner of Chieftain Marketing, Andy thrives on delivering growth in SME's and loves getting under the skin of a business to ensure the most effective marketing campaigns are delivered.



"It was a true honour to be a judge in this year's awards. The competition, as always was fierce, made all the harder with the pandemic, which has facilitated with some radical and necessary changes that perhaps have been accelerated due to the lockdown.

This year, perhaps more than any other, the case studies I judged, not only introduced new channels, new technology and frankly superb innovative campaigns, but some actually pivoted their entire business model to accommodate a new type of customer base, which is incredible to drive such success stories in a year and with the country in lockdown".



# WINNER

## Muck Munchers

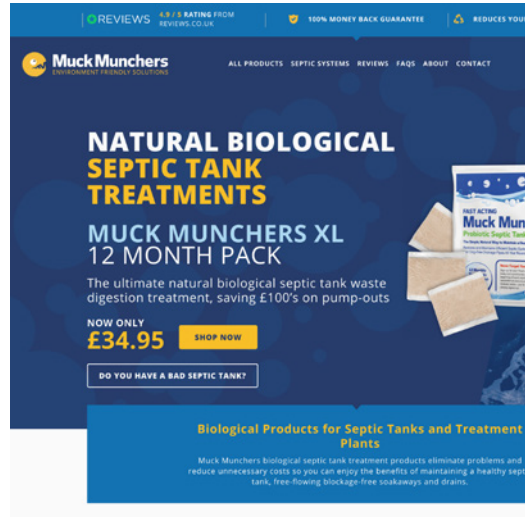
Best Multi-Channel Business or Brand by Turnover Band

Annual sales of up to £5 million Business to Consumer

Bio-Gard Ltd operates Muck Munchers and is a high growth start-up with year-on-year sales running at +61 per cent. This accomplished direct marketing driven business deploys targeted customer acquisition campaigns utilising door-drop and partially addressed mail campaigns to reach its audience of septic tank owners. Its offer, of eco-friendly biological septic tank treatments for primarily country dwelling customers, is sold via a monthly subscription. The business deploys witty imagery and copy via all of its direct, digital and social messaging which very obviously chimes with its customers, bringing humour to a problem solving product.

Royal Mail Door to Door has worked effectively over the years for Muck Munchers. The introduction of Partially Addressed Mailings, gave us the chance both to test the medium as a stand-alone campaign and also to integrate it with door drops. Both approaches proved successful and have become the major source of new customers - the simple reason being that each provides massive roll-out opportunities.

Martin Harvey, Director



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# WINNER

## Muck Munchers in partnership with Whistl

Campaigns & Partnership  
**Best Mail Campaign**  
Business to Consumer

&

**Best Door Drop Campaign**  
Business to Consumer

Bio-Gard Ltd operates Muck Munchers, a successful niche direct commerce business which targets septic tank owners. Its key challenge was to identify further seams of prospects in homes with septic tanks rather than connection to mains drainage. With Whistl and with anonymised customer and sales data, it created Mosaic profiles and a predictive model to identify individual postcodes and postcode areas with high penetration of septic tanks. A 4pp marketing piece was created for door drop media and a proven format used for partially addressed mail. The campaign reached 610k households, generating 2866 orders, with 5 month 48.5 per cent ROI.

Attention to analysis and planning was critical to success for each of these campaign channels.

We were heavily reliant on Whistl Doordrop Media's Insight Team, using our historic customer and prospect data to build profile models using Experian's Mosaic lifestyle segmentation. These models allow us to create purchase propensity ranks for every postcode sector and postcode across the UK. We then further refine this data, working with More Metrics, adding additional open source data, prior to selecting target areas and addresses for each campaign. Without such planning insights these campaigns would not and could not be successful.

Martin Harvey, Director



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# WINNER

## Fruugo

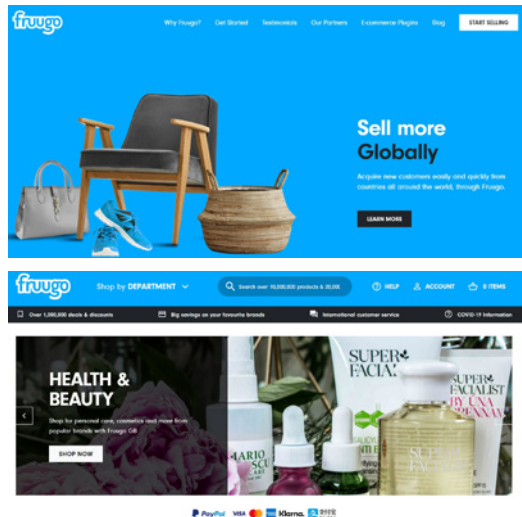
**Best Multi-Channel Business or Brand by Turnover Band**

**Annual sales of £5 - £15 million Business to Business**

2020 was a transformative year for Fruugo which is an online marketplace that connects brands and sellers with consumers all over the world. With order volumes up by 104 per cent YOY and overall transaction value increased by 110 per cent, it removed many of the obstacles faced by merchants selling internationally. By waiving fees and supporting sellers during the pandemic, its work benefited the merchants it enables to sell seamlessly to a global audience via its platform which helps them to manage and simplify translation, tax, and currency conversions.

Thank you to the fantastic Fruugo team that has helped our sellers expand their cross-border business during a challenging year. The team's continued hard work has allowed us to cater to our sales doubling over the past year. We recognise that expanding into foreign markets can be a daunting task for many merchants, so we are committed in our drive to allow more great retailers from around the world to join us to access the boom in ecommerce across the globe.

Håkan Thyr, Chief Revenue Officer of Fruugo



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# WINNER

## Tiger

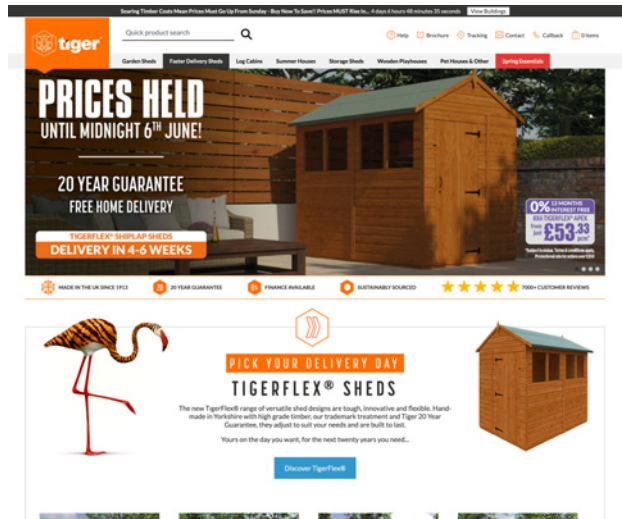
**Best Multi-Channel Business or Brand by Turnover Band**  
**Annual sales of £5 - £15 million**  
**Business to Consumer**  
**&**  
**Best Gardening & Outdoor Leisure Brand**

Tiger, part of Woodlands Home & Garden Group, builds and delivers wooden sheds, summerhouses and log cabins DTC, also selling via Wayfair. Demand soared during the pandemic as consumers improved their gardens and looked to create space for home working. Tiger was well positioned to meet demand, growing sales by 41.6 per cent YOY. It expanded its team, adding more production capacity to meet demand. A new modular range was launched to offer 'bespoke' sheds in kit form to speed delivery.

We'd like to thank the DCA for managing the Summit and supervising the Awards this year, in what are still often difficult and demanding times. We would also like to thank the judges for their time.

Naturally we're delighted to be recognised by such a well-known industry body and to win both awards is a real testament to the hard work, creativity and passion that everybody here has put into the Tiger brand.

Ged Lees, Managing Director, Woodlands Home & Garden Group Ltd (trading as Tiger Sheds)



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# WINNER

## Cox & Cox

**Best Multi-Channel Business or Brand by Turnover Band**

**Annual sales of £15 - £30 million  
Business to Consumer**

For FY 2019/20 Cox & Cox grew by 75 per cent to reach sales of £27m with significant performance improvements across the business delivering strong impact. It had launched new ranges including those in kitchen and paint with paint in particular appealing to those in lockdown looking to redecorate and improve their homes. Own brand desks and office chairs were in high demand along with shelf units for home office use, together with outdoor furniture for which sales were 1800 per cent up YOY.

Thank you for selecting Cox & Cox to win this award. We are very honoured to win it and it is a great reflection on everyone at the business who has worked so hard over the last 12 month.  
Thank you

Audrey Huot, Head of Customer Experience



## Wishing you'd entered?

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directcommerce

**innovator 2021**



Entry deadline 1st October  
Shortlist revealed 11th October  
Presentations & Celebrations 14th October



# WINNER

## WoolOvers

**Best Multi-Channel Business or Brand by Turnover Band**  
**Annual sales of £30 - £50 million**  
**Business to Consumer**

**&**

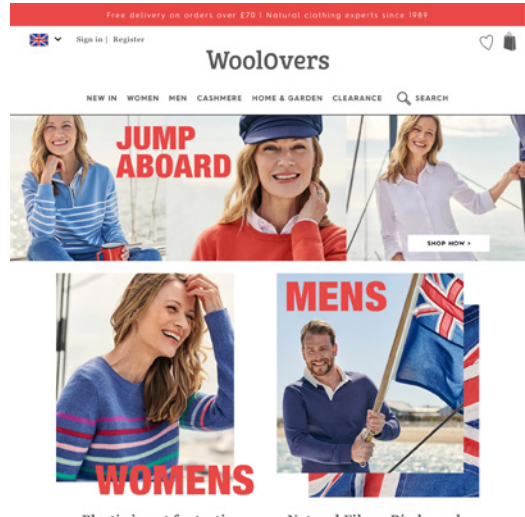
**Best Mature Market Brand**

The WoolOvers Group is on a mission to serve the over 50s with colourful eco-friendly knitwear and natural linen clothing with the emphasis on quality as well as sustainability. Having acquired Pure Collection it has grown and diversified its ranges and its reach, with new customer recruitment in the UK and in its core international markets soaring. Deploying a blend of striking direct catalogues with increased circulation, off the page advertising, and digital communications, the business is driving sales and buy-in for its sustainability stance which covers all areas from packaging to garment labelling, sourcing to reducing energy use across its business.

Thank you so much both these awards. Due to the pandemic, we like so many others have had hurdles to jump but our teams have pulled together and carried on working through it successfully.

We are proud to champion the more mature customer with both Woolovers and now Pure Collection also and will continue to do so.

Lizanne Harris -  
Communications Manager



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# WINNER

## ProCook

**Best Multi-Channel Business or  
Brand by Turnover Band**

**Annual sales of over  
£50 million  
Business to Consumer**

ProCook is an accomplished, high growth multichannel retailer which markets quality kitchen and dining products in the UK and Europe. Despite the impact of lockdowns on its store chain the business achieved an impressive 26 per cent increase in its sales over 2019 to reach a figure slightly shy of £60m. It had moved to a 24 hour schedule for its pick pack operations to accommodate COVID secure working for its team and introduced daily company-wide briefings during the pandemic.

2020 was incredibly challenging and required the dedication and focus of our entire team for us to navigate it successfully. Winning another Direct Commerce Award for the fifth time in a row is fantastic recognition of all of the team's hard work. This award really goes to our people who we'd like to thank as well as the Direct Commerce team who have been extremely supportive of our growth. Throughout 2020 we adopted a 'values led' approach to business decisions that provided a guiding light for our leadership, always balancing the opportunity to delight our customers against the numbers. We believe this approach has been key to our success. Our incredible growth has happened over a number of successive years culminating in an amazing result for 2020 that has set us up for an exciting future.

Stephen Sanders, CEO



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# WINNER

## Iceland Foods

Best Multi-Channel Business or Brand by Turnover Band

Annual sales of over  
**£100 million**  
Business to Consumer

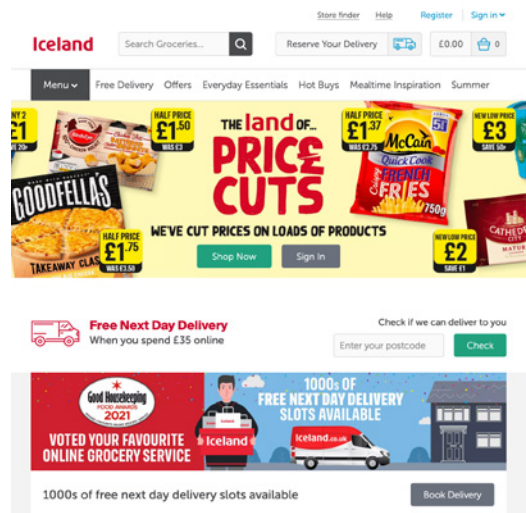
Iceland which works on the underlying principle of 'Doing it Right' for customers, colleagues, communities and the planet, put this straight into action as the pandemic struck. In mere weeks it increased availability of delivery slots, developing new technology to support and service its vulnerable customers and worked with government and the NHS to prioritise millions of people across the country. The resulting 375 per cent increase in delivery capacity provided the ability to deliver over a million orders per week.

Iceland Were able to leverage their home delivery capacity during Covid to enjoy huge growth and their teams responded very swiftly to change.

Julian Grindey, 2021 Awards judge

Iceland's response to Covid 19 is to be applauded, it's very clear that last year Iceland dropped everything in order to respond to the pandemic and feed the nation.

Will Dymott, 2021 Awards judge



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# WINNER

## Huboo Technologies

Best Exploitation of Technology

Businesses with sales up to £25 million Business to Business

Online retailers of all sizes can access a complete end-to-end fulfilment service with intuitive software providing transaction management, QC, stock control, order tracking and billing data, integrated with popular sales channels and marketplaces with Huboo. This, along with data analysis, speeds processing of retailers' orders directly in real-time. Huboo's software is backed by dedicated warehouse teams who work on set client portfolios.

We're delighted to have won the Award for Best Exploitation of Tech (B2B). When we started Huboo our goal was to transform the fulfilment market with our innovative full stack software solution, and in doing so helping retailers to reach new levels.

We're proud to have been recognised for this, not only by this award but by the 100s of retailers who trust Huboo with their fulfilment. It's a great achievement for our fantastic team who have pulled together to make Huboo the thriving business it is today. Thank you to everyone at Huboo for your hard work, and for DCA for their recognition.



Huboo-co-founders



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Entry deadline 1st October  
Shortlist revealed 11th October  
Presentations & Celebrations 14th October

# WINNER

## Taking Care

Best Exploitation of Technology

Businesses with sales  
up to £25 million  
Business to Consumer

By 2020, Taking Care (TC) was behind its competitors in the technology enabled care sector. It offered a single monitored personal alarm for older adults whilst competitors offered the same product at a lower price along with a choice of more modern alarms to support independent living from much better websites, designed for an older audience. TC set about developing a new site targeting both users and those buying for them. The site was live within 4 months, delivering an 83.6 per cent rise in conversion.

We were delighted to have received this award as recognition for the success of Taking.Care.

The pandemic has been particularly difficult for older people with isolation and loneliness affecting many of our loved ones. We know from talking to our customers that family members found it hard when they were not able to visit elderly relatives as frequently as they would normally. Covid has put extra pressures on family carers and customer feedback has shown that having a personal alarm has benefited older loved ones and their families, providing them with peace of mind that help is available in an emergency. Relaunching our website was the enabler for reaching more people and providing them with the services and support they need to remain independent. To work for a company that does good and works alongside charities such as Age UK is very rewarding and we'd like to thank our AXA Health colleagues for supporting the project.



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# WINNER

## Aspace

Best Business to Consumer

Children's/Family Brand

Aspace is a specialist D2C retailer of children's furniture. It achieved a great deal in 2020, undertaking its first TV advertising campaign on Sky Adsmart, launching new products especially desks and seating, as well as re-platforming its website. With all of its staff working from home, some also home-schooling their children, the business was able to approach its customers with empathy and understanding, leveraging its social channels to deliver live yoga and storytelling for children. And it grew sales by 11 per cent.

As Chairman of the Aspace Children's Furniture Brand I am proud and delighted to accept the Best Children's Retailer Award 2021 on behalf of the whole Aspace family. We could not have done this without the full commitment and support of our dedicated team who demonstrated their ability to flex and adapt during these unprecedented times; enabling us to continue delivering our great, quality products throughout the lockdown periods.

The award is also a testament to our customers who continue to support the Aspace Children's Brand by investing in a great quality product. As we look forward to the challenges of the next twelve months we remain excited and buoyant about continuing to build the business. Our sincerest thanks to Direct Commerce and the judges for awarding us such a prestigious and much coveted award - Thank you.

Caspar Williams



Aspace Team: L-R – Severine Thirion, Abigail Rawlings, Caspar Williams, Lewis Brownlow, Imogen Bovey

# WINNER

## Ellis Brigham

Best Business to Consumer

Active Lifestyle/Young Brand

Founded back in 1933 and with the ethos LIVE.BREATHE.OUTDOORS, Ellis Brigham was perfectly placed to support the pandemic driven surge of consumers wanting to get out into the countryside. With its stores closed, the business grew its online sales by 72 per cent with a greatly improved website & print magazines to drive customer recruitment. With content focused on being helpful, it was lauded for its great range and rapid delivery.

I'm delighted that Ellis Brigham has won this award. Every person in Ellis Brigham has gone above and beyond in the last 12 months. This award is a fantastic recognition of the constant drive that our teams have shown in making our service and range the very best for all our customers to enjoy.

Mark Brigham, Director



ellisbrigham  
**MOUNTAIN SPORTS**

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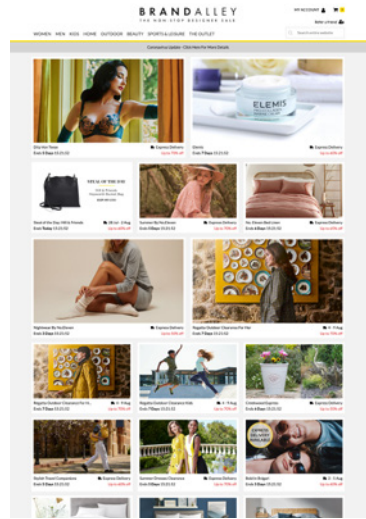
**BrandAlley**  
in partnership with  
**Whistl Fulfilment**

**Best Business to Consumer**

**Home & Interiors Brand**

BrandAlley, pioneer in flash sales, has a total membership of 7 million consumers with 1.6 million acquired in 2020. The home & interiors category is the largest in the business, driving 35 per cent of total revenue which grew to £45m in 2020. The business sends out over 120 million emails a month, generating a 14 per cent open rate with a 20 per cent click-through rate and 4 per cent conversion. Its average order value stands at £90 with an average of 2.8 items per basket across 2020.

The BrandAlley team are delighted to win Direct Commerce's Best Home & Interiors Brand in 2021. 2020 was an exceptional year that reshaped the future of e-commerce forever. BrandAlley were in a very fortunate position during 2020 in which we could continue bringing our customers the very best in home and interior products. In addition, demand for garden and outdoor products was notably high during lockdown with consumers spending more time at home during the hottest Spring on UK record. Items such as barbecues and garden furniture were particularly popular online purchases. 2020 also saw the BrandAlley consumer AOV at an all time high, as customers trust the BrandAlley product offering across higher ticket items. We are so grateful for our loyal customers and the hard work of our team, without either we would not be in this position-celebrating our success in the ecommerce home and interior space. BrandAlley are continuously expanding our onsite offering and as a team we are incredibly excited to bring new categories and new products to our ever growing customer base.



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# WINNER

**Silver Cross**  
in partnership with PushON

**Best Business to Consumer**

**Luxury/Prestigious Brand**

Silver Cross entered the pandemic with a strong DTC presence, robust eCommerce platform and well managed digital marketing & CRM. It took the bull by the horns and, working with PushON nearly trebled its annual website revenue from £3.4m to £9.5m. A premium brand, Silver Cross extended its ranges which now include stylish nursery products made of materials with anti-bacterial qualities. This together with solid data driven marketing and performance measurement has seen this iconic brand go from strength to strength online.

Silver Cross and PushON are thrilled to have won the award for the Best Luxury Brand 2021 for our work delivering a true digital experience during lockdown. This is an iconic British brand that is world-renowned for its pioneering baby products. 2020 was an undeniably tough year for everyone, but thanks to the strong relationship between Silver Cross and PushON that we've built over the past few years, we were confident it was something that we could handle.

Using a multi-channel strategy, we made sure that we were targeting the right customers, at the right time, with the right messaging – and as a result, online revenue trebled. The teams on both sides worked incredibly hard throughout, and the results are a true testament to that. Silver Cross have a great brand vision and we understand how working with an agency like PushON brings true expertise where we need it. We're confident the coming years will see even more profitable growth.

*Silver Cross*



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Entry deadline 1st October  
Shortlist revealed 11th October  
Presentations & Celebrations 14th October



# WINNER

**hotter<sup>®</sup>**

**Best Business to Consumer**

**Fashion/Accessories Brand**

Founded in 1959 and producing 1.3 million pairs of shoes a year, Hotter Shoes is the UK's largest footwear manufacturer and employs over 500 people. As the COVID pandemic hit in Spring 2020 forcing lockdowns, Hotter set about adapting and did so by quickly repositioning as a predominantly online retailer. Sales had previously been driven by its 82 stores but its new strategy saw it post a 27 per cent rise in online sales and a turnover of £45m. This set the business in a close to unique position targeting ongoing growth, against a backdrop peppered with less agile, faltering footwear retailers.

We are thrilled to have won the award for Best Fashion Brand at the Direct Commerce Awards last night. The win is a real testament to the hard work of our team in transforming the business from a predominantly bricks and mortar retailer to an online ecommerce brand over the past 16 months. Thank you to everyone who has supported us on this journey.



Ian Watson, CEO

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**JOINT WINNER**

**Home Leisure Direct & Wentworth Wooden Puzzles**

**Best Business to Consumer**

**Gifts, Hobbies & In-home Brand**

**Home Leisure Direct:** With commercial venues closed during lockdowns, HLD's B2B sales dried up causing the business to furlough all but 5 staff and then completely close for two months. When it restarted in June, consumer demand skyrocketed and the business improved its website to capitalise on key markets, and bought all the stock it could get. A TV campaign with Sky drove further demand and the business turned the corner ending the year with £9.9m sales, up from £8.1m despite being virtually closed for 2 months.

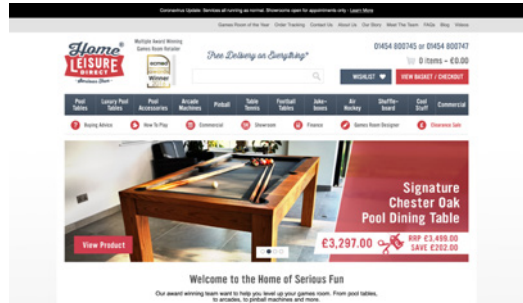
**Wentworth Wooden Puzzles:** This specialist in traditional wooden jigsaw puzzles achieved creditable growth despite reducing its range due to production restrictions. With a move to 24 hour production, it grew its online sales from 12 per cent to 86 per cent, re-shored its packaging, and flourished during lockdown as demand grew for its puzzles in the UK and USA.

We are so thankful to all of our staff, agencies and suppliers for being so committed to playing their respective parts and working incredibly hard to achieve all we have. What was already an amazing business has shown what makes it so special by reacting to all opportunities during the pandemic.

At the same time we are honoured to have brought fun and games to so many people stuck at home looking for something extraordinary to entertain themselves with during such testing times.

Thank you so much for this award, it'll be taking pride of place in our display cabinet!

Andy Beresford, Managing Director,  
Home Leisure Direct



Thank you for this amazing award. It recognises the achievements of our fantastic team here at Wentworth Wooden Puzzles, who worked relentlessly hard last year and often in difficult circumstances, to ensure our lovely customers could keep on puzzling!

We ended 2020 three years ahead of expectations having managed to condense those years of growing pains into one year, all whilst dealing with the professional and personal challenges of a pandemic. Hence, I am immensely proud of the way my colleagues, some of many years and some of only a few months, adapted to new ways of working and moved from mostly planned to mostly reactive with relative ease.



# WINNER

## Leprosy Mission Trading

Best Business to Consumer

Charity Trading Brand

2020 was a banner year for TLM Trading during which it increased the net profit from its activity by 202 per cent to £219,840. Income raised for The Leprosy Mission through Gifts for Life and donations rose by 19 per cent reaching £528k. It had bought artisan products from disadvantaged groups for £116k, often making prepayments to help them through the Covid crisis. Online became the most significant ordering channel for the charity whose average customer is 65+ and it acquired 14.37k new customers during the year. The charity exists to fund work to defeat leprosy and transform lives in 35 countries with a target of stopping leprosy transmission by 2035.

Leprosy is an ancient disease that, with modern antibiotics, is curable. It should no longer exist or cause the immense suffering and stigmatisation that still characterise leprosy in many countries. We are grateful for this award, that recognises the dedication of our small team, as we raise awareness and funds for the Leprosy Mission through our trading business [www.tlmtrading.com](http://www.tlmtrading.com). The publicity associated with this award brings us one step closer to ending the transmission of leprosy by 2035. A special thank to our artisan suppliers including MESH, Pachamama, Blue Mango and The Nepal Leprosy Trust. Thanks are also due to Mosaic Fulfilment Solutions who did a fantastic job of handling a huge increase in sales during Covid lockdown and to Ali Lewis our wonderful designer at Collektif.



The Leprosy Mission  
Home shopping

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# WINNER

## Office Power

Best Business to Business

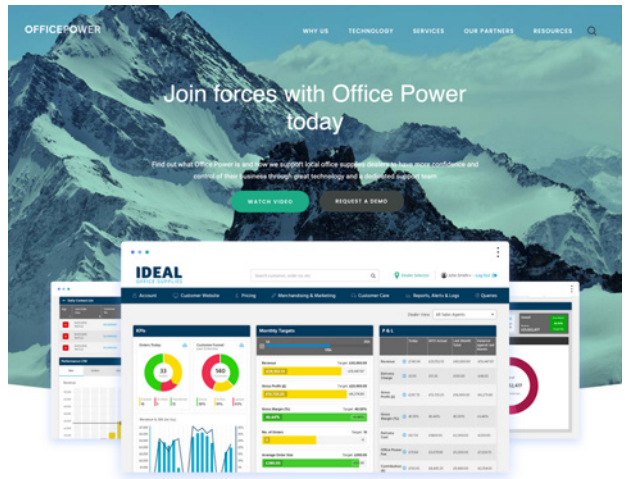
Office & General Business  
Supplies Brand

COVID brought major challenges to office supplies businesses including the dealer clients of OfficePower (OP). This was tackled via a wholesaler switch, launching an online dealer community, adapting its stockless model, adding 22500 additional SKUs, many targeted at the growing WFH market, and by developing new eCommerce technology to enable dealers to maximise new opportunities. Across the year OP had 60 live dealers on its platform and achieved some of its best ever dealer satisfaction scores.



Innovation and efficiency in this environment has been incredible and within such a tough industry that will continue to see flux, a business like this will thrive and help others to thrive

Andy Wood, 2021 Awards judge



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# WINNER

## Watco

Best Business to Business

Industrial, Technology & Warehouse Supplies Brand

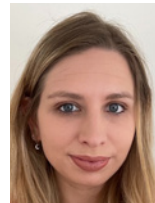
In 2020 Watco significantly invested to strengthen its online trading capabilities and CX with the support of 9xb eCommerce. This has driven up traffic, conversions and revenue for its offering. Specialising in industrial strength paint, repair and maintenance materials which are often sourced with complex technical requirements, Watco has a raft of further eCommerce refinements in the pipeline to make the selection and buying process easier for its customers. It also launched an online only brand for DIY consumers to meet demand for lower cost products.

It was an honour to be shortlisted at the Direct Commerce Awards and I'm absolutely thrilled that Watco won the Best Industrial, Technology & Warehouse Brand category, alongside our eCommerce partner, 9xb.

Like a lot of other organisations, it's been a somewhat rocky road over the last 12 months, but we've stayed focused on the end game, delivering growth and transformation through digital.

We've proactively strengthened our online trading capabilities to provide a frictionless, omnichannel experience and aligned our products to meet the needs of today's consumers. This has resulted in acquiring a completely new segment of customers, and has been the pinnacle driving force behind the exponential growth of our online business.

Winning this award recognises everyone's hard work and continued efforts to deliver a complex roadmap of innovative features and functions for the success of our business.



Hannah Cooper, Marketing Manager



Harley Saunders, Marketing Manager



Lisa O'Neill, Marketing Director



Richard Cross, Web Development Manager

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JOINT **WINNER**

## Jaques of London & TOTM

Best Business to Consumer

Best Overall Niche Brand

It's the people that make a business and we are fortunate to have a team that went above and beyond over the last year – thank you to them for making this win possible!

**Jaques of London:** Jaques is the world's oldest games maker and with a refocus on brand ethos, customer values, and eCommerce optimisation the 225 year old company was able to achieve a 170 per cent increase in its previous year's turnover. Its educational and chess sets drove strong growth as did strong sales via Amazon. A new website launched in October 2020 saw sales surge during the peak season.

**TOTM:** TOTM launched as a first-to-market brand in 2016 offering organic cotton period care on subscription, aiming to reduce period plastic in oceans and landfill. It has grown its subscriber base year on year, whilst also launching with Ocado, Tesco, Superdrug and M&S. It has also launched a workplace period care delivery service and currently ships 6000 online orders a month.



We are so pleased to have won Best Overall Niche Brand at the Direct Commerce Awards 2021. At TOTM, we're shaking up the period care industry for good with our sustainable and ethical range of organic cotton & reusable menstrual products. We exist to drive positive change by championing menstrual wellbeing and dignity for all. Receiving positive recognition for the work we do helps to power our mission as the bold and bright future of period care.

Huge thank you to Direct Commerce Awards for choosing us as one of their winners and to the TOTM team for their hard work getting us to where we are today.

St. John Pearce-Burke, MD & Founder, TOTM





# WINNER

## VitrA Bathrooms in partnership with mark-making\*

Campaigns & Partnership  
Business to Consumer

Best Catalogue Creative &  
Print Production Partnership

VitrA is a Turkish bathroom products business with substantial demand in the UK. It called in mark-making\* to review and improve upon its multiple brochures which were trying to cater to consumers, architects, designers, builders, retail stockists and its own sales team. The primary goal was to improve the effectiveness and this achieved by introducing a lifestyle focused design with better use of imagery, editorial as well as product related copy. A second optional technical publication was produced for commercial audiences.

Thank you for this award. Working from home, this project wasn't without it's challenges, but from our spare rooms, our dining room tables and sometimes even our gardens we managed to achieve something special. This award is for all the mark-making\* and VitrA team past and present who worked their socks off to make these brochures what they are.

Thank you! And thanks to the DCA!



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# WINNER

## Fairfax & Favor

**Campaigns & Partnership  
Business to Consumer**

**Best Social Campaign**

Fairfax & Favor was founded in 2013. Now with annual sales over £15m, the pandemic saw it focus wholly on online sales channels and this increased sales by 118 per cent. It also took the opportunity to raise six figure sums for the charity Breast Cancer Now via a limited edition line, and became the ninth largest fundraiser for NHS Charities Together. With an engaged social media following on Instagram and the rolling out all of its campaigns across social media, it has successfully repositioned itself gently away from its equestrian roots to appeal to a wider market.

Jenny Edwards, Marketing Manager at Fairfax & Favor said on behalf of the brand; We're so honoured to accept this award - I know I can speak for the full team in saying how thrilled we are to win. We've all worked so hard over a tricky year so this really is the icing on the cake! We can't thank you and all of our loyal customers enough for supporting us throughout our journey! With social media being a key method of communication for our brand, we've been able to utilise campaign imagery, influencers and user generated content to create a full circle approach to digital messaging in 2020/21.

Our highlights for 2020 and something we're incredibly proud of has been our recent charitable projects. Most notably and in the midst of the pandemic, we joined the country in extending a thank you to the frontline workers who risked their health and were isolated from their loved ones in order to save lives. We were so thrilled to become the ninth highest fundraiser for NHS Charities Together by donating £138,919.18 to the charity. We were also thrilled to support Breast Cancer Now for Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October and were able to raise £125,175 for the charity throughout 2020, which took the total sum raised over 6 years to £224,655.

As one of our key methods of communication with our customers, particularly within the last year, we take our social media strategy and campaigns extremely seriously. With countless initiatives to engage our following, from the Fairfax & Favor Facebook Club and Customer of the Month competitions to our gifting of VIP and influencers designed to inspire our target audience, our strategy is tailored to be as effective as possible and is something we will continue to build upon over the coming years.





# WINNER

## IRP Commerce in partnership with Intersoft Systems

Campaigns & Partnership  
Business to Business

Best Technology Partnership

IRP Commerce provides global eCommerce platforms to retailers and in 2019 identified the need to extend its carrier selection and delivery processing offering for existing and prospective clients. IRP Commerce selected Intersoft to meet its challenge and, as a direct result of the Intersoft solution, which supports speedy carrier integrations and swift production of documentation, has increased its client roster by 33 per cent. It increased its shipping volumes by 222 per cent from 2019 to 2020, and has been able to dedicate its developer time to delivering other timely integrations in areas including BNPL with Klarna to benefit its eCommerce clients.

Winning this award is just testament to the hard work of our talented teams and their commitment to exceeding expectations through our Partnership Programme. IRP Commerce, a growing eCommerce provider, joined Intersoft's delivery management solution in 2019 to expand their carrier offering and have since grown 222% in shipping volumes which is an incredible milestone in our partnership journey and we look forward to what the future holds.

Steve Sneath, Sales Director, Intersoft



Steve Sneath, Sales Director, Intersoft

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**IRP** COMMERCE CLOUD

# WINNER

## Wentworth Wooden Puzzles

in partnership with UniFida

Campaigns & Partnership  
Business to Consumer

**Best Technology Partnership**

Wentworth Wooden Puzzle Company (WWPC) enjoyed a sales lift of 107 per cent during 2020 with new customers up by 93 per cent as people turned to jigsaw puzzles during periods of lockdown. Credit is also due to improved marketing driven by WWPC's technology and data science partnership with UniFida. It is a relationship that began in 2017 with focus on building a single customer record combining online browsing and offline transactional data to form a base for delivering targeted customer communications, particularly catalogues. Campaign analysis informs how sales are driven in all countries, including the USA.

I would like first to thank Wentworth Wooden Puzzles, and in particular Sarah Watson their CEO and Helena Svozilova Catalogue and Product Manager, for the way they have directed and challenged us; and for their clarity over explaining their marketing objectives, which together we have to some extent helped them achieve. Within UniFida, I am more than grateful to Adham Shamkh, our Head of Technology, and Anthony Antoniou, our Head of Data Science, who have played a key role in supporting Wentworth". Sarah Watson, CEO Wentworth Wooden Puzzles " It was a pleasure to work with Julian and his team, as we continued to further develop UniFida in 2020, so that it now provides a powerful platform to help us achieve our goals and lay the foundations for future growth.

Julian Berry, Director UniFida



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# WINNER

## Happy Puzzle Co

### Outstanding Philanthropy

By the end of March 2020, the UK was in lockdown and as a family run business, The Happy Puzzle Company sought to do what it could to help. It donated 1000 puzzles to the NHS Trust in its area for recovering Covid-19 patients having been made aware of the huge numbers of patients who were unable to receive visitors and had little with which to pass the time. It donated a further 500 puzzles to care homes which were also closed to visitors. Then having been contacted by two primary schools it helped to set up toy libraries for them for underprivileged pupils who had no activities, toys or games at home. In addition it supported a local charity blind and disabled people to help them to take up new hobbies and interests.

At the start of the pandemic, we wanted to push ourselves to the frontline. However, we are just a little family-run puzzle company. What could we do to help? Well, we donated 1000 puzzles to the NHS for COVID-19 hospital patients to use during their recovery, whilst still isolating...

We provided nearly 500 puzzles to a network of care homes across the UK, to help bring a smile to residents unable to receive visitors...

We set up TWO toy libraries for underprivileged children, to help them stay entertained and positive during the lockdown...

We worked with a blind and disabled charity to help provide activities for their members...

We found a way to help... and we're really proud of what we achieved! This award is for the whole Happy Puzzle team! Thank you!

Gavin Ucko, Managing Director



Gavin Ucko, Managing Director

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# WINNER

## Cartridge People

Best Business to Business

Outstanding Customer  
Experience

Cartridge People specialises in print consumables and related products. In 2020 it grew its sales across own brand, printers, and stationery winning over customers with its free delivery and swift service. This saw it achieve 52.33 per cent year-on-year growth in orders and a 55.93 per cent rise in revenue. Its live customer file also grew, as did its level of returning customers. The business further developed its website, introducing a credit offering in order to extend its reach into B2B markets.

I just want to say thank you on behalf of all the team at Cartridge People. This award means a lot to us and is a reflection of all our hard work over the last 12 months and also our growth as a business as well, so we're very proud of the whole team so thank you very much.

Louise Laurie,  
Marketing Manager



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# WINNER

## Scotts & Co

Best Business to Consumer

Outstanding Customer Experience

2020 was a transformational year for customer service at Scotts and Co.. A few years earlier it had outsourced customer service but with the direct link with customers broken, it came to regret not having a contact centre onsite. Midway through 2019 a core team had been recruited and by Q1 2020, advisors were upskilled, its induction programme redeveloped, and the team focused on providing outstanding customer service. The pandemic brought new challenges as remote working began and order volumes skyrocketed. Online chat, additional staff and new technology saw service elevated to new levels.

"Scotts are very pleased to accept this award. The entire Customer Service team have worked incredibly hard to really enhance the experience customers receive and it's amazing to have this recognised".

Matt Hill, Head of Customer Operations



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# WINNER

## Christies Direct

Best Business to Business

Outstanding Agility in  
response to Covid-19

Christies Direct is Europe's largest pet grooming supplier with the second most visited eCommerce website for its sector in the world. Despite the various and ongoing challenges of the global pandemic, the company had sales of over £10m in 2020, growth of 11 per cent with an average of 125,890 orders despatched each month to over 90 countries. It also successfully pivoted to support pet owners as professional groomers were forced to close during lockdown and held its first virtual trade event. In 2020 the business responded to 93 per cent of all customer service requests within two hours, resolving them within 48 hours, leading to a Trustpilot score of 4.8.

“Christies Direct are delighted win the award for Outstanding Agility in Response to Covid-19. 2020 was not our average year, but one where the Christies Direct Team successfully navigated a global pandemic, furlough, working from home, and the closure of groomers.” Said Colin Christie, CEO. “The creativity, agility and dedication of staff across all departments allowed us to quickly and successfully pivot and maximise on the pet owner market when professional groomers were closed and ensured that orders were dispatched to customers in over 90 countries, even when we had 58% of staff on furlough. This award is a fantastic recognition of all this hard work. Our customer-centric approach to business ensured our customers new and old felt fully supported during challenging times, and has resulted in the company not only surviving the pandemic but also experiencing significant growth in all areas.”





# WINNER

## Hippychick

Best Business to Consumer

Outstanding Agility in response to Covid-19

Hippychick is a nursery equipment and infant gift/toy supplier and has traded for 21 years. It distributes through various channels including its own website, via marketplaces, Facebook as well as through retail partners. The pandemic presented one of the most difficult challenges it has had to face with it having had a difficult 2018-1019 due to Brexit uncertainty as well as adverse trading conditions. At the end of 2019 with profit margins at their lowest levels, the business had to make 5 redundancies and reduce some working hours and when COVID struck the owners were braced for the worst. However 2020 evolved into the best year ever for its website with a 39 per cent YOY uplift in sales and increased profit across the business.

"Though we always knew we had a great team, you never really know how far they are prepared to go until something like this happens. And did they step up to the plate, every single one of them. This award is a tribute to each and every one of them."

Julia Minchin, Managing Director, Hippychick



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Scotts & Co.  
DIRECT RETAILERS

As we pull together to work our way out of one of the most challenging trading periods our generation will likely ever experience, it is time to shine the spotlight on all of the collaborations and working partnerships which helped to underpin sector businesses and keep them trading. Never have these relationships been so key or so deeply appreciated.

Let's use the Direct Commerce Innovator Awards to celebrate the crucial partnerships and relationships between accomplished supplier organisations and their clients. Time too to get the spotlight shining on innovative solutions which are delivering a compelling raft of benefits to clients companies – saving time, reducing costs, adding agility and speed, improving decision making and delivering all round better results. Take this opportunity to reflect on how amazingly well your team adapted to cope with all the demands thrown at you. All the stunning ways you kept everything going. We'd love to hear about your philanthropy too as so much has gone unlauded.

Time to choose your category (ies), polish up the case studies, and prepare your entry to show the sector just how brilliantly your team has responded to your clients' swiftly changing challenges – and to give your entire team a much needed thank you!

-  **Creative, Content & Print Production**
-  **CRM, Data Targeting & Personalisation**
-  **Customer Service, Fulfilment & Delivery**
-  **Digital Performance**
-  **Direct Marketing Performance**
-  **Multichannel Commerce**
-  **Technology Tools**
-  **Outstanding Agility in Response to Covid-19**

## IMPORTANT DATES

Entry deadline:  
**5pm Friday 1st October 2021**

Shortlist release:  
**Monday 11th October 2021**

Awards presentation:  
**1pm 14th October 2021 at the virtual DCA Autumn Conference**

### Benefits of entering:

Each entry will be scrutinised by members of our panel of client side thought leaders plus selected expert independent consultants – this means that, simply by entering, you will be building awareness of your solution/service amongst an elite group who could become clients or advocates for your business.

Each winning entry will be profiled in detail within Direct Commerce Magazine's New Year issue as well as on <https://homeofdirectcommerce.com>

All entrants will receive 1 complimentary place at the DCA Autumn conference, with additional places available at a special rate.

### Producing an entry

Each entry should comprise an Executive Summary produced specifically for these Awards, comprising up to 350 words. Think of this as an elevator pitch – a succinct statement which provides sufficient information to pique interest. It should include the benefits being derived by clients and/or the USP from a client benefit perspective. Do include the projected or actual ROI or other meaningful benchmarks as experienced by clients. A brief testimonial from a client will also help. You may include links to specific information on your website but please do not rely purely on this.

To this you may append:

- a current/past 12 month case study of up to 1000 words. This may include diagrams, graphs, infographics or charts to illustrate the solution/service in effective use – the more detail on benefits being achieved by the client the better.
- a brief backgrounder, 600 words max, with details of when the solution/service was developed/launched; what inspired it; the primary target market it was developed for; and the names of client companies who are using/trialling it.

**Entries can be made digitally or by post. For postal entries, 8 copies of all information being submitted as part of each entry MUST be provided by the entrant: submit on USB memory sticks with the Executive Summary provided in print form to accompany each memory stick. Each category entered requires 8 separate copies of all information for the Judges. Please DON'T post your entry until you have received an official address label.**

# entry form

Please choose your category (ies)	Tick below
 Creative, Content & Print Production	
 CRM, Data Targeting & Personalisation	
 Customer Service, Fulfilment & Delivery	
 Digital Performance	
 Direct Marketing Performance	
 Multichannel Commerce	
 Technology Tools	
 Outstanding Agility in Response to Covid-19	

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**Entering Company:** .....

**Entering Brand(s) if different:** .....

My Name: ..... Position: .....

Company: ..... Web: .....

Address: .....

.....

..... Postcode: .....

Email address: .....

Landline: ..... Mobile: .....

PO Number (if applicable): .....

Entry Type (Digital/Postal): .....

**Fees & terms:**

The cost per single category entered: **£95 (+VAT)** - any additional categories: **£45 (+VAT)**

**You must return this form to [info@directcommerce.biz](mailto:info@directcommerce.biz) before sending your entry.** All entries will be confirmed via a VAT invoice, issued on net terms with the facility to securely pay using a credit or debit card. All completed entry forms received and processed are considered final. Please **don't post** your entry until you have received an official address label. Entries can be submitted anytime between now and the deadline of **Friday 1st October**.

# 8 in 10 marketers say the festive season is make or break for their brand

Following a fallow year, Christmas 2021 is make or break according to 83 per cent of UK marketers, warns a new study from Sitecore, the global leader in digital experience management software. Despite this, shocking results reveal only a quarter of marketers are prepared for the Golden Quarter - even though shoppers (20 per cent) are already browsing for gifts.

The study of 400 UK marketers highlights that almost half of those with stores (45 per cent) believe this holiday season will be the last chance to prove the value of their physical presence - signalling increased concerns about the future of the high street.

As brands hope for a “mega Christmas” to see them through to 2022, Sitecore is advising marketers to capitalise on earlybird shoppers - and fast. Over a quarter (28 per cent) of consumers are planning to holiday-shop before the end of summer. The most common reasons are: to take advantage of sale prices (46 per cent), spread the costs (44 per cent) and avoid the crowds (42 per cent).

In Black Friday's home territory - the USA - 17 per cent fewer marketers are offering promotions compared to last year. On this side of the pond, many UK marketers are planning promotions this Black Friday (68 per cent), but its popularity may wane as a third (33 per cent) believe that Black Friday is synonymous with mass consumerism and is becoming outdated. The risks of large crowds was a further red flag for 36 per cent of marketers.

In addition to this, half (49 per cent) of marketers admit online discounting has become more competitive than ever in the

last 12 months - showing the clear need to create seamless and personalised customer experiences, rather than slashing prices, to stand out from the crowd. Given the majority (74 per cent) of marketers admit digital marketing has taken a back seat in favour of investment in other areas this year, swift action is required, with 93 per cent of marketers believing digital marketing is now business-critical for surviving the holiday season.

Paige O'Neill, CMO, Sitecore, comments, “These findings point to a dramatic shake-up on the horizon for both the UK's highstreet and ecommerce landscape. It's now or never for those brands looking to thrive, or even just survive, this festive season, with the onus on them to deliver the most compelling and engaging digital experiences possible. The next few weeks will be critical for realising these plans and taking advantage of technology in the critical run-up to the holidays.”

With shoppers having already started their Christmas shopping, marketers are now left playing catch-up, rolling out plans to revolutionise the Christmas shopping experience, boost sales and ultimately keep the business moving forward. These plans include:

- **Trialling subscription-based engagement** (71 per cent) - to connect with customers in a hyper-personalised way
- **Optimising the supply chain through AI** (62 per cent) - making sure we don't see another year of late deliveries
- **Introducing new virtual services for trying on clothes and visiting stores** (61 per cent) - providing excellent experiences for those shopping from home

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- **Improving customer service through AI services like chatbots** (57 per cent) – to further engage with customers at home
- **Selling directly to consumers via their websites for the first time** (29 per cent) – helping engage customers directly and build brand loyalty

Sitecore commissioned this research to help marketers who are fighting to survive and thrive post-pandemic. Sitecore technology accelerates the path to purchase and improves overall experience, while enabling marketers to truly understand their customers and build strong relationships through personalised digital experiences.

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# How new technologies are transforming the face of retail

By James Barlow, country manager, Akeneo

Since the Covid-19 pandemic, we have seen a fundamental shift in the way consumers shop.

Digital trends that weren't expected for at least another few years have been accelerated by a rise in customer demand. In response to the forced closure of brick-and-mortar stores to prevent the spread of infection, many retailers have had to adapt to survive. Throughout the pandemic, the UK has adopted online shopping more readily than any of its Western peers, as research shows that 20 per cent of UK consumers shop entirely or mostly online. This increase has placed further pressure on retailers to evolve their online and offline strategies to survive.

Technology is transforming customer touchpoints, from point of sale, customer service, inventory management, and more. By 2030, it is anticipated that technology will displace a third of tasks in UK retail due to automation and channel shifts. Retailers must command a diverse omnichannel strategy to engage and retain their increasingly tech-savvy consumers. In doing so, businesses both big and small

need to take the approach to digitally transform and evolve their offering to meet the growing demand.

## Three tips for a successful digital strategy

### 1. Embrace social commerce.

The digital space is continuing to grow, with more opportunities emerging across social platforms such as TikTok, Facebook, Instagram and more. This market has seen exponential growth over the last few years, with social commerce reported to be worth \$600bn by 2027. The proliferation of these platforms supporting online shopping has made it imperative for businesses to adapt. These platforms are offering more routes for retailers to get their products in front of customers. For example, Facebook enables small businesses to create their own website within the Facebook domain. Pages are completely customisable, and retailers can even import their existing product catalogue for ease. With social commerce,

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brands can shape their own story and identity by sharing visual content and communicating with their audience. The dialogue formed on social channels is integral to a brand's reputation, and therefore delivering unrivalled customer service on these channels is of the utmost importance. Investing in a PIM solution will also aid the growth of these channels, enabling retailers to generate product catalogues that are tailored to the different requirements of each platform. This will help retailers maintain their brand reputation across different sites and allow them to stand out from a highly competitive marketplace.

**2. Connect the online and offline experience.**

Now the high-street has opened up again, instead of pivoting back to the traditional retail model, many retailers need to explore new ways to get their customers back in store. A connected online and offline experience can create a valuable layer of customer service to the

customer journey. For example, innovations such as QR codes that provide shoppers with additional information on a product or personalised offers dependent on their interests will motivate shoppers to make a purchase. Offering a free click-and-collect option will also increase footfall so that customers can collect an item during a time that's convenient to them. Driving customers in-store will motivate them to browse products and encourage further purchases.

**3. Onboard new technologies.**

To stay on top of the digital incline, retailers should integrate new technologies into their business model that can streamline internal processes and better satisfy customers by focusing on their needs. A study found that almost four out of five shoppers are interested in using new technologies when shopping. Technologies such as chat bots, virtual reality, augmented reality and voice assistants have already taken the market by storm. Other innovations are also starting to make their mark on retail such as

autonomous delivery robots, cashierless stores like the Amazon Fresh store recently opened in London and AI-powered advancements. Technology continues to push the boundaries of shoppers' expectations. The retailers that implement these solutions will be able to serve their customers with ease and ultimately future-proof their business.

As lockdown lifts and our lives return to normality, retailers need to capitalise the spending increase that's to come, by ensuring they can deliver a seamless online and offline experience. A customer journey that combines physical activations with digital technology is one that is more personalised, engaging and will drive customers to return again. Furthermore, technology and social commerce will be crucial for UK retailers to stay relevant and profitable in the current retail climate.

The future of the industry will depend on technology to reach customers where they are, whilst providing a compelling digital experience that competitors can't match.

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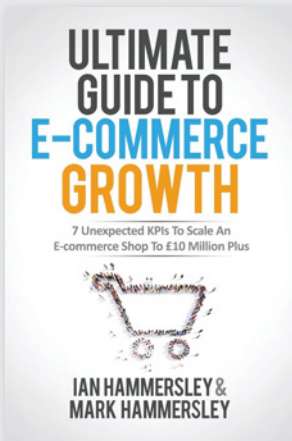
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# Ultimate Guide to Scalable eCommerce

## PART 6

By Ian & Mark Hammersley



### WEBSITE SPEED AND CAPACITY

The website speed and capacity KPI looks at the current speed of your website. As you are aware, page speed is vital for a couple of reasons. First is user experience. Each quarter of a second it takes for your page to load begins to paint a negative picture in the mind of your site visitor. Slow page load can mark your business as unreliable or behind the times in the mind of your potential customer. Each small negative thought can add up to your visitor looking elsewhere to fill their order.

The second reason, of course, is page ranking. Google and other search engines use page load speed as a determining factor and will penalise sites that don't make speed a priority, especially for mobile.

There are a couple of ways you can benchmark your site's current performance. A handy website, [www.webpagetest.org](http://www.webpagetest.org), is an excellent online tool to measure website speed.

You can also use Google Analytics:

- Sign in to Google Analytics.

- Navigate to your view.
- Open reports.
- Select behaviour and then site speed.

Here, you want your site to register under four seconds. Between four and five is okay, but any higher and your website is getting slow. You especially want your landing pages to load quickly as this is a tangible factor in the first impression that is registered unconsciously by the visitor.

One of the most important considerations with this KPI is how fast your website is when under peak loads. It may be blazing fast on a normal day, but on holidays where it sees more traffic, and more potential revenue, you don't want it to come to a screeching halt. This KPI helps protect all of the other work you're doing, such as marketing and AdWords, and to make sure the website works when you need it to.

### SLOW WEBSITES AND MENTAL FRICTION

Like we said above, the speed of your website plays an important role in the add-to-basket, basket-to-order, and proceed-to-checkout process.



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In a customer's subconscious, they have a specific length of time they allow themselves to spend on a website. If you have a slow website, and the customer cannot check out within that specific length of time they have allotted in their mind, that is where you'll see a lot of unexplained abandonment. If the website is slow, it is more likely to be a frustrating experience for the user.

For example, when we worked on GSF car parts, customers were originally on the site for six minutes. After making the website twice as fast, customers still spent six minutes on the site, but they purchased much more during that time because they could get more done in that amount of time. The average order value and conversion both went up.

### **WHEN TO TEST WEBSITE SPEED AND CAPACITY**

Some websites do 80% of their sales during two months of the year. If that describes your business, then testing your website speed in August will likely produce brilliant numbers, but if it's not a peak moment, this test won't tell you how your site will do in the run-up to Christmas or on Black Friday/Cyber Monday.

The secret is to measure the load from the previous year, if available, and estimate what you think you'll need this year. Then always have a margin of safety. If you think you're going to have X number of visitors per minute, then you want to have 50% or more capacity available

for them. When calculating what you'll need, also consider your marketing campaigns. Maybe your email campaign is going out with on-sale items at an already peak time. This additional traffic could bring the site to a halt. You need to be sure you have ample resources so your users can get more done in the amount of time they allow themselves to spend on the site.

Website speed and capacity is one of the most important KPIs. It affects every other part of your website, as well as the conversion rate. At smartebusiness, we've found many ways to increase the speed and capacity of a site, from varnish caching, optimising the server and using clean code.

### **RECAP: WEBSITE SPEED AND CAPACITY**

Customers spend an average of six minutes on your website. If your site is running slow, they'll achieve a lot less in that amount of time than if it is running at a high speed. The faster your website speed, the higher your average order value and conversion rate will be.

### **KPI: WEBSITE SPEED AND CAPACITY**

Put it to use:

- Slow page load can cause Google penalties that affect your page ranking.
- Measure your web speed often. This will help increase conversion rates.
- Google Analytics can help you measure your website speed, as well as other sites like [www.webpagetest.org](http://www.webpagetest.org).

- Your site should measure under four seconds.
- Increasing speed and capacity involves using clean code, varnish caching and optimising the server.

Answer the following questions:

- Have you experienced slow page load recently or seen a lot of browser abandonment from visitors?
- What is your current website speed? Use the information in this chapter to check the speed via [webpagetest.org](http://webpagetest.org) and Google Analytics.
- What are three things that could be causing the reduction in website speed? How can you fix them?
- Are there certain times of the year when you need more website capacity (e.g. Black Friday, Christmas)?
- How do you plan on making sure your website is ready for visitors during this peak time?

### **HOW TO RAISE THIS KPI— WEBSITE SPEED AND CAPACITY**

But what can you do about your site's capabilities?

### **MOBILE SPEED**

- Do the mobile speed test here <https://search.google.com/test/mobile-friendly>. Check for images that don't load quickly; how does Google rate you?
- Loading testing—ask your host to do some load testing on mobile above what you think you will need for your busiest period. When does the site [Continues overleaf >](#)



load go below five seconds? This will be the point where conversion rate will start to be negatively affected.

- Implement a AMP mobile site: <https://www.ampproject.org>.

#### **DESKTOP SPEED**

- Load test the desktop site. When does the page load reduce below five seconds?
- Reduce image size and make sure that the admin team understand how to optimise images. Often we optimise a site and then two weeks later the client's team have unknowingly replaced home page images that slow the whole site down.
- Create page load speed alerts in Google Analytics, so that if page load increases over

a certain threshold you get sent an email.

- Do page load speed tests on the top four websites listed on Google's natural search results for your biggest search keyword. Find out how quick they are and make sure you site is faster and as fast under load. Google will not send you more traffic if it knows your site is slow.

#### **TABLET SPEED**

- Look at the main tablets being used and their screen resolutions. Check the responsive site 'break points' to make sure each size is optimised for page load.
- Load test on tablets to highlight issues.

#### **SPEED IN GENERAL**

It's all about speed. Don't just think about speed in terms of page load, but think about how quickly your business reacts to a customer as it has a key impact on the conversion rate.

We humans think we are level-headed, consistent beings that don't change our minds from one minute to the next. It's an illusion. We are all over the place. We think that we are rational, that our decisions make sense.

Alas, experiments have shown that we make some decisions subconsciously and then come up with a conscious reason for that choice afterwards. Crazy! Our subconscious decides and then we pretend it was our idea. So, when you

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have an interested prospect on your store you need to act with speed before the 'monkey mind' gets fixated on the next thing.

We have done a lot of AdWords for promotional product stores and they tend to do lead generation on product pages. It turns out that unless you respond within 10 minutes of that lead then the chances of closing that business reduce by 90%. This is because people are only in the receptive zone for buying in that instant. In that instant they are convinced they cannot live without the product or service you sell. Ten minutes later and they don't even remember visiting your site.

So how does this help us with e-commerce and selling physical products online? Well, response rate to live chat, support emails and every interaction must be swift.

We need instant gratification. We need to:

- Help people on the checkout page within five seconds otherwise they will walk.
- Respond to contact enquiries within 10 minutes, otherwise doubts creep in.
- Have a fast website (under four seconds load time in Google Analytics).
- Deliver products faster than we promise.
- Upsell quickly whilst they are still in the 'buying zone.'
- Do not make people wait on phone lines.

Every interaction you have with the customer, whether

it's digital or personal, needs to be fast and super attentive. Time is king—we are all only in the buying zone for a small window.

### **LET'S LOOK AT LIFETIME CUSTOMER VALUE**

Lifetime customer value (LTCV) is the total revenue divided by the total number of customers. This will give you the average spend per customer. Many e-commerce businesses don't track this because it's not a metric you can pull from Google Analytics. However, focusing on this number is important.

LTCV allows you to track things like:

- Which products purchased by first-time customers lead to the highest lifetime value?
- How do discount coupons affect lifetime value?
- Which marketing channels generate the highest lifetime value?

We want to be recruiting customers that make growth downstream easier. Too many businesses focus on getting the first sale, totally ignoring the potential future sales that a customer can generate. If you sell furniture, for example, a good salesman knows that selling a customer a chair that is part of a set almost always guarantees the customer will come back and purchase the rest of the set. If you sell a chair by itself, however, you'll only get that one sale.

A big part of the LTCV KPI is the repeat customer rate.

This is the average number of times a customer buys from your store. Some stores differ largely on this metric. A clothing website will see higher numbers here, but a lawnmower dealer would traditionally see a much lower number. It doesn't matter what this metric is when you start. What matters is seeing this KPI move up. If it moves down while all other metrics rise, the long-term growth of your business will eventually derail. In fact, all these seven KPIs work like this. For true business growth, you must see all rise together, or at least remain the same while the others rise. Raising one KPI at the expense of another might lead to a great month but build an unhealthy future. Consider Black Friday, for example. If it isn't approached the right way, it can kill your Christmas sales. These KPIs will show you why.

Some of the best ways to increase lifetime customer value are:

### **LOOK AT THE TYPE OF CUSTOMERS YOU'RE RECRUITING**

Many businesses have products that naturally lead to a repeat purchase rate, and some customers are drawn to these items. For example, if you're selling supplements or contact lenses, these products lend themselves to repeat purchases. If you begin looking at the products you're selling, you'll begin to see which of your products have higher lifetime customer value. Armed with this information, you can feed it back into [Continues overleaf >](#)

your recruitment activity, such as Google AdWords and Google Shopping. You might then start bidding slightly higher on the products that provide a higher LTCV.

Our product, ScentTrail, helps you obtain and track this information, getting it out of your e-commerce backend and into AdWords. As a result, you are able to recruit customers who are most likely to become repeat customers.

### **START LOOKING AT DELIVERY CHOICES**

When your customers are ordering, what shipping rates are they choosing? Do most want their product immediately? Or do they choose to wait three to four days? Measure this against your LTCV. Are people who ship your products to their home quickly much more likely to come back and purchase again? If this is the case, you can take steps towards getting the products to them even sooner and increasing your lifetime customer value even more.

At smartebusiness, we tend to find that the 30 days directly following a purchase is a critical window to develop repeat customers. This, of course, doesn't apply to every website. Those that sell clothes, for instance, will cater to a certain percentage of impulse buyers and as-needed shoppers. LTCV can increase with these sites as well. You just have to create a positive experience that leaves the customer feeling satisfied. Remember, the purchase has a large emotional component.

### **CONSIDER THE COUPONS THEY USE**

For this comparison, consider customers who make a purchase with a coupon and those who make a purchase without one. How does that affect how quickly they come back to make another purchase? This information can be a gold mine, helping you understand which factors actually increase the lifetime customer value. Once you know, you can use those factors to recruit more customers who have a high potential for repeat purchases.

### **CUSTOMER SATISFACTION**

One of the most obvious, but necessary, ways to increase your lifetime customer value is to make sure that every customer is happy with their purchase. Read your reviews, benchmark them against your past reviews and against competitors. As you grow, make sure you are still maintaining this level of happiness. If you have a 4-1/2 star average when you're selling 10 items a day, you should still have that average when you're selling 1,000 items a day. If your average star rating drops, this means customers are no longer happy, and your lifetime customer value will drop. If it does, you will have a much harder time growing your business and increasing revenue.

If you're not sure how to cultivate overall customer satisfaction, consider offering a free gift to first-time buyers. Give them something they didn't expect. If they're buying a jacket, for instance, give them

a pair of sunglasses as well. It's something inexpensive that has perceived value. You can even split test this by giving 50% of customers the free gift and the other 50% nothing to determine how it affects your LTCV.

### **USE REMARKETING TO MAKE YOUR SHOP FAMOUS**

Why do brands like Mars spend millions of dollars making sure that we see their products all over the place? Why does Coca Cola make sure that we see their brand at events where we feel good?

It's obvious. What we are familiar with we trust. But why is this? When the brain was developing the environment was a lot more dangerous. There were a lot more predators and people died a lot more frequently from normal day-to-day activities. We had to survive in this environment, hence everything that was new was categorised as 'bad until proven otherwise.' Let's say we were walking to the watering hole in the morning and saw a new type of bird. It's a large bird and we are not sure whether it's safe, so we proceed with caution. Nothing happens that day and the bird just watches us. The next day the same thing happens. After a week of seeing the bird every day, we relax and understand the bird means no harm.

This is how we are wired. We treat new items with caution and only relax once we have seen the item many times and nothing has happened. Repetition plus nothing happening equals trust.

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Thus, when presented with a buying opportunity, we tend to reach for the brand that we trust and are familiar with. This is not rocket science.

However, how can we afford to become familiar to our customers before they buy? We cannot sponsor the super bowl (not yet!).

But what we can do now with Facebook, Google, Twitter, etc., is carefully target people and become the 'repeat, repeat, repeat = safe' famous in that small niche. We don't have to be famous for everyone, only a very small, select group of people.

Google Analytics recently launched a native predictor of buying intent right inside everyone's account. With this information we can remarket to the very small subset of people that we want to be famous for. For these people we can be everywhere.

Forget the people that found the store by accident, forget the people who were checking out the competition. Focus on the people that show buying intent and Kardashian the crap out of them. It doesn't even cost that much.

Inside every rock is a sculpture and inside every account's traffic are the potential buyers. You just need to chisel them out and get famous. But how do you actually get remarketing to work, i.e. how do we make online visitors actually buy?

When we first started marketing we realised we

needed to get in front of prospective customers. That's obvious. Clearly you need to be selling something that people need or want.

The next step is realising that you need to be much more persistent with your marketing, i.e. resend emails that have not been opened. Follow up with people that visited that didn't buy. Remarket on Facebook and Google to people that abandoned the site.

Be like a terrier that won't let go. But if we miss one element in the above sequence we lose.

Many of the websites we get asked to look at are stuck in the above loop. They find people that are likely to buy, then they remarket and follow up. However, nothing really happens. Remarketing does not work. Return on ad spend is low. They can't scale because they are missing the secret sauce. So, what is this secret ingredient? 'Believable Proof.'

You must be able to demonstrate believable proof that your product takes the purchaser to where the buyer wants to be. This cannot be done in your own voice. You cannot say to the prospect 'we are amazing' unless you yourself are a trusted celebrity or an accredited authority.

But you can create believable proof in the following ways.

- If you sell beauty products, remarketing to prospects with a Facebook post that has a ton of shares, likes, comments, and social proof

from women just like them. But good social proof like this works with a lot of products.

- If you sell a medical ebook getting an endorsement from a doctor from a well-known university.
- If you sell car parts getting an endorsement from a Formula One mechanic.
- If you sell blinds getting an endorsement from a TV DIY personality.

If you don't have the budget for celebrity endorsement, then you need to use social media 'social proof' to create believable proof. To do this, create Facebook Posts that tell the story of your product or show recent customers using the product. Then make these posts evergreen and buy a ton of social proof on these posts. This way when your prospects see them they will think 'wow this product is the real deal, look at all these people who love this product.'

Don't forget the secret ingredient; without it is like trying to play tennis with no strings in your racquet. But before you can create proof, you need to make sure that you are creating proof about something your customers actually care about.

When you start out, you will have some idea of what you need to prove with your product. You could be thinking:

- Can you prove you can get this delivered on time and in one piece?

[Continues overleaf >](#)

- Does this product work?
- I need to prove my product is better than the competition.

We must start with something; however, to really hit the jackpot we need to listen. Who to?

You know those annoying loud, shouty people that comment on your Facebook ads that this product is a scam, or not as good as x, y, z. Or perhaps they buy your product and then moan about it on Feefo or Trustpilot. These people are inconveniently essential to your marketing efforts. Inconvenient because they are annoying.

However, for every loud person there will be 80 people who think something similar but are too British to say anything. These loud people are telling you the main objections that people have to your product. Every time someone complains or trolls you, make a note of it in a little spreadsheet, categorise them and put a count against each one. When you have your main objections, you can get to work.

For example, perhaps you are selling baby sleeping bags and the main troll comment you get is about how these bags are not better than a cot duvet for helping a baby sleep. Next you would need to answer the following question: How can

I, without a shadow of a doubt in the prospect's mind, prove to them that our baby sleeping bags are the best sleeping solution and a clear choice over the competition?

Here's how you might answer that question:

- Ask recent customers for testimonials on how improved their child's sleep is with your product.
- Employ a doctor and scientist to take some measurements of a sleeping child in your sleeping bag compared to a normal duvet. Show the difference in restlessness over a night's sleep. Ask the scientist and doctor to endorse the study and the product.
- Ask recent customers to specifically talk about their worries about the objection before purchase and how they are now free of the objection.
- Use an evergreen Facebook post that you get a ton of social proof on and has a lot of people commenting that 'this is the most amazing sleep product ever' and then use this as a remarketing post to traffic that comes to the site.
- Use video testimonials on the product page, with mums talking about before and after experiences.

Okay, so now we are starting to see what real marketing is. It's not some quick trick but a carefully planned

out sequence of believable proof that overcomes the prospects' main objection in a predictable and automated way.

### **USE CUSTOMER LISTS IN GOOGLE ADWORDS**

Uploading your customer email list to Google AdWords is an excellent way to increase LTCV. Once you upload the list, you can choose to have Google show your ad or website to anyone on your list who searches for a product related to your business. Uploading your list also lets you bid on much more generic terms that you wouldn't bid on for regular Google traffic. For instance, if you're selling casters for chairs, you wouldn't normally bid on casters. It's too broad. In this instance, however, if you have a past customer that purchased casters from you, you'd want to bid on that keyword.

Using RLSA (remarketing lists for search ads) helps cultivate repeat customers, reminding them of the good experience they had with you. Remarketing can be looked at as a type of marketing training for your clients. It's easy to forget about a place you've shopped at once, maybe on a whim or during a busy holiday season. When combined with promos or discount coupons, remarketing can expose those first-time buyers to the benefits of being brand loyal.

**don't miss the next issue...  
DIG INTO YOUR STATISTICS**

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# Customer data intelligence

## A special offer for DCA member companies



**UniFida is offering all DCA member companies special terms for implementing its award-winning<sup>1</sup> cloud-based customer data platform. The proven platform has been developed specifically for mid-size D-to-C retailers and is already licensed by several members of the DCA.**

**U**niFida solves data challenges and unifies customer data enabling users to deliver consistent and highly personalised omnichannel campaigns and experiences. This fosters customer loyalty, increases ROI and enables a reduction in media spend.

Users of the Unifida platform can normally expect to see a return on this technology investment of greater than five times once operational.

Specific features of the UniFida platform include:

- A single customer view including all online and offline sources of customer data
- AI driven multichannel performance attribution
- A full suite of customer performance metrics and campaign results reporting
- Customer journey mapping
- Multichannel capabilities for batch and automated trigger campaigns
- Support for all GDPR requirements

### **The offer:**

- Complimentary support to map out your use cases so you can see the opportunities and estimate the incremental ROI prior to any commitment

- 20% off list price for the first year's license when signing by 31 December 2021
- 5 days additional free support for marketing advice after the system is live

DCA members and customers say:

“Cloud based UniFida is the best value intuitive data marketing tool I can find to drive continued high levels of growth”. Martin Harvey, founder, Muck Munchers

“It's been great to finally be able to understand what's influencing our new and repeat purchases (including both on and offline marketing activity) which means we've been able to bring the insight UniFida gives us into far more projects that I would have ever thought possible”. Chloe Thomas, author and consultant

“It's a brilliant platform for marketing teams, giving you access to all the rich data and insights you need very easily”. Lilly Bisset, marketing director, Johnstons of Elgin

Contact UniFida – Simply book in a 20 minute Zoom via [Calendly](#) or email Julian Berry our founder directly [julian@unifida.co.uk](mailto:julian@unifida.co.uk)

<sup>1</sup> 2021 winners of the Best Technology Partnership jointly with Wentworth Wooden Puzzles



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# The technology B2B businesses need to survive



By James Brooke,  
CEO, Ampliance

The operating models of B2B businesses are quite different to those in the B2C world, primarily because they have been slower to adopt new technology throughout the sales process. Field sales representatives drum up new business and drive repeat custom while tradeshow, showrooms and catalogues do the job of displaying products to prospective accounts.

If they are to progress, B2B businesses must look to new technology to enhance their sales pipeline, nurture loyalty amongst customers, and market both products and the brand.

Change is already afoot. The B2B buyer of old is now being replaced with a new generation of digitally savvy buyers, living in a connected, social world where they expect engaging, real time experiences online when they buy. They are B2C buyers inherently and when they go online to make B2B purchases they want to be met with the same seamless customer experience. But because of the ingrained and traditional sales methods and funnels of the B2B world, they are often disappointed.

Fortunately, the global pandemic has shaken things up. Shoppers were given no other choice but to head online when stores closed. Retailers and brands pivoted their efforts towards eCommerce and the B2B world also had to shift. No more in-person sales. Field representatives were grounded indefinitely, and any large expos were postponed or cancelled. Now more than ever the difference in buying behaviours between B2C and B2B buyers has blurred and all businesses must adapt.

## Enter a wealth of competition

Like the explosion of competition in the B2C eCommerce world, B2B businesses are feeling the heat.

Today's connected customer can buy from anywhere and leverage exchange rates that benefit them when purchasing from overseas. They can access more suppliers and get stock when they need it.

With this, burgeoning B2B marketplaces and Amazon being thrown into the mix, B2B businesses have a lot more to contend with.

The answer to competing is technology, specifically modern day, MACH-based (microservices, API first, cloud native, headless) technology that gives businesses the agility, scale and flexibility they need to keep up, adapt quickly and grow.

A MACH approach allows the frontend and backend of a company's architecture to be separated, so businesses can stitch together a stack comprising best-of-breed vendors with solutions the company needs and that align with its

[Continues overleaf >](#)



roadmap. This compares with tightly coupled platforms that restrict integration with other vendors and the customisation of digital experiences.

### Digital merchandising and personalisation

Here's to the rise of digital merchandising. B2B businesses need multichannel shoppable content, the ability to show products across the site or within different pieces of content so it can be accessed and ordered easily.

All merchandising and content should incorporate personalisation, not just on an account level but to every user who logs in or views products. A MACH-based approach leverages AI technology to make content and products hyper-personalised, inform and predict content offering recommendations for specific buyers based on previous buying habits and drive repeat custom.

### Flexibility

As B2B business look to adapt and grow, they will need technology that scales with them, allows them to spin up multiple sites and experiences based on new brands or product lines, and enter new regions or markets with different currencies and languages.

Utilising a headless content management system (CMS) within a MACH approach will let B2B businesses do this. It enables the creation and reuse of content types across different channels and digital experiences so content workflows are streamlined and duplication of work is minimised. They can manage and apply new branding and styling, regardless of components or complexities.

### DAM Capabilities

B2B businesses utilise different content and media types to showcase products and highlight product details. To help with this, a powerful digital asset manager (DAM) is paramount, and using MACH allows for easy integration with the existing CMS and the rest of the technology stack. The DAM needs to be highly performant to deliver to any channel at speed, export at speed and distribute to third parties and offer proper search functionality.

B2B businesses are on the cusp of realising all the benefits of modern technology. With the right approach and a CMS working with MACH technology their content, digital channels and the workload will be fully streamlined, leaving them free to reap the rewards of a bigger and more satisfied customer base.

# Masterful performances

Music experts agree that it takes 10,000 hours of hard practice, coupled with natural aptitude, to make a world-class violinist. And if you were paying for tickets to a Beethoven concerto, that's who you'd want to hear.

Perceptive marketers take a similar attitude to their catalogue designers. They prefer the agency whose Creative Director has over 70,000 hours of specialist experience, has a multi-award-winning team, and an unrivalled portfolio of performance.

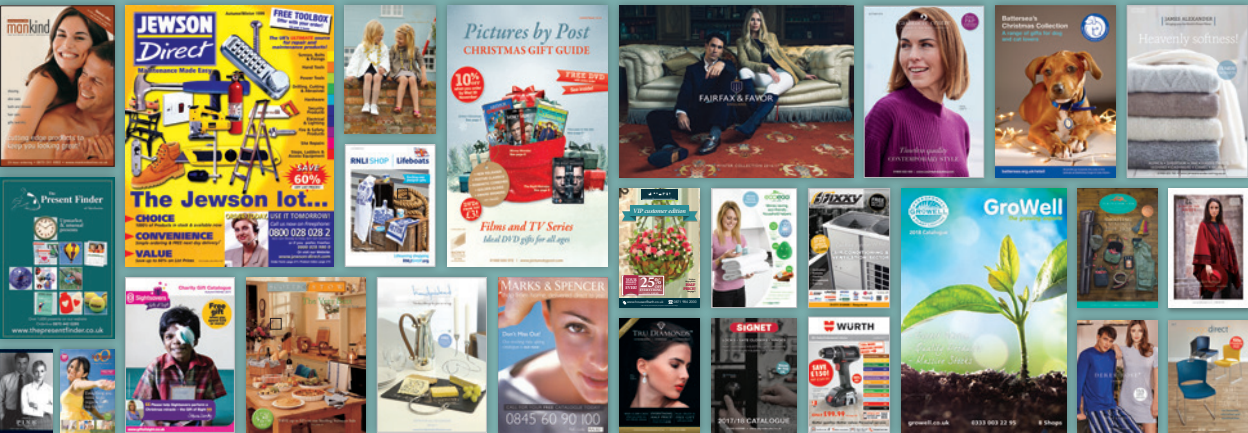
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