

# This is how wholesalers excel in digital commerce



There has been much speculation about the future of the wholesale trade in recent years. It was said that it was not sufficiently digitally mature, that it was threatened by new, non-market competitors and that it lacked disruptive innovations. Some market observers even prophesied the demise of the wholesale trade if it did not manage to reinvent itself.

But despite all the prophecies of doom, something is happening in the industry. Many wholesalers have taken the new market dynamics as an opportunity to optimize existing processes in order to secure margins and to take into account the changing information and purchasing behavior of buyers. More and more, they are offering digital customer portals with convenient self-service solutions that are tailored to the requirements of the respective buyer groups.

**THE EXPERT****Tobias Giese**

Executive VP Customer Lifecycle at Intershop



In this e-book, we have compiled the best practices of leading wholesalers and provide practical tips for your digitalization project. Get inspired and write your own e-commerce success story!

[Get in contact with us](#)

## DIGITAL WHOLESALER

# Strategies for a successful e-commerce business

**In times of digitalization, flexibility and creativity are key to stay ahead of the competition. Those who cling to old patterns of thought and action and reject the shift in traditional business models will find it difficult to retain customers in the long term. So: Have the courage to change and enter the digital future!**

**Here are a few tips and suggestions on how wholesalers can profit from digitalization in a systematic way:**



## 1 Develop new customer segments with digital sales channels.

Whereas in the past, wholesalers used to contact their customers primarily by telephone, fax or the field sales force, today it is an effective combination of online and offline sales channels that is essential for success. The big advantage: By adapting your business model to changing buying habits, you can address new buyer segments. For example, you can also reach B2C customers via an online shop. In terms of reach, it also makes sense to place selected product ranges on large marketplaces such as Amazon. It is important not to look at the sales channels individually, but to integrate them into an omnichannel concept.

Get valuable tips for your digitalization strategy in our [whitepaper "9 key drivers for success in B2B digital commerce"](#).

## 2 Increase customer satisfaction with convenient self-service tools.

Self-service portals today serve as the hub of digital customer service. Customers have 24/7 access to account information, order history and order status. They also benefit from the mapping and provisioning of:

- The complete transaction and payment history as well as digital customer services
- E-learning offerings, manuals and documentation
- Customer-specific processes, including purchasing processes, catalogs and replenishment rules
- Analytics and evaluations (e.g., how much expenditure was posted to which cost center?)
- Value-added services (e.g., configurators, planners, predictive maintenance, IoT services)

### 3 Put clearly defined target groups at the center of your activities.

Which customer group uses which sales channel in which purchasing situation (initial purchase, modified repurchase, identical repurchase)? You should develop a clear understanding of existing and new target groups and address them with the right strategies. If the groups are clearly defined, you can adjust assortments, prices and services accordingly and thereby create a perfect customer journey.

### 4 Turn buyers into loyal customers.

In times of digitalization your competition is only one click away. That's why regular customers are your most important capital. You need to invest in long-term business relationships with your customers through customer loyalty programs and individual, target-group-specific marketing campaigns for customized product offers and services. To achieve this, it is necessary to capture historical customer data and transactions holistically across the entire organization and analyze them adequately.

### 5 Stand out from the competition with consulting competence.

The digitalization of trading models is pushing new competitors into the market, putting pressure on wholesalers. It is also becoming increasingly easy for customers to obtain product information from manufacturers or other digital sources. Wholesalers must therefore develop strategies to place their specific knowledge online as well, in order to support their customers across all channels according to their needs. After all, your advisory competence is a real differentiating feature that marketplaces cannot provide to the same extent.

Are you looking for a successful strategy to stay ahead of competition? You will find what you are looking for in our whitepaper [“Wholesale and the benefits of digitalization”](#).

### 6 Extend the value chain with digital services.

Wholesalers traditionally offer a whole range of services, including supply chain management, warehousing, consulting and financing. In times of digitalization, however, the digital channel also plays an important role. Through digital services, you can expand your portfolio and position yourself as competent partner of industry and commerce. For example, you can act as full-service provider and provide online platforms for smaller (specialist) retailers and manufacturers. Another option is drop shipment: You can monetize your knowledge of products and assortment by making it available to third parties, expanding their assortment and taking over the logistical processing including all services.

### 7 Offer after-sales services via digital customer portals.

After-sales services are shifting more and more to the online channel. Bundled in a digital customer portal, customers can decide for themselves what they want to do and when, without having to consult a direct contact person during fixed business hours. Furthermore, recurring tasks and inquiries can be mapped more cost-efficiently which reduces the workload of sales and customer service. In addition to customer care, you will also benefit from up- and cross-selling potential as well as a sustainable increase in customer value.

For further information, tips and best practices on the subject of digital customer portals click [here](#).

# Close to the customer—online and offline

Whether it's intelligent dispensers filled with tools or shelves that replenish themselves thanks to automated reordering, or other state-of-the-art solutions, Würth welcomes digitalization like no other company. At the heart of this strategy is Intershop's e-commerce solution, which ensures flexibility and stability. However, despite all of its commitment, Würth's management does not lose sight of the most important thing in B2B: personal customer contact.



[Read the whole story.](#)

**33,000**  
sales representatives

Whether online or offline: Würth focuses on the needs of its customers.

**14.4 billion**  
euros revenue

Online and offline, a total revenue of 14.4 billion euros was generated worldwide in 2020.

**3.9 million**  
customers worldwide

Würth is a B2B market leader in the field of international trade of assembly and fixing materials.

## Challenge:

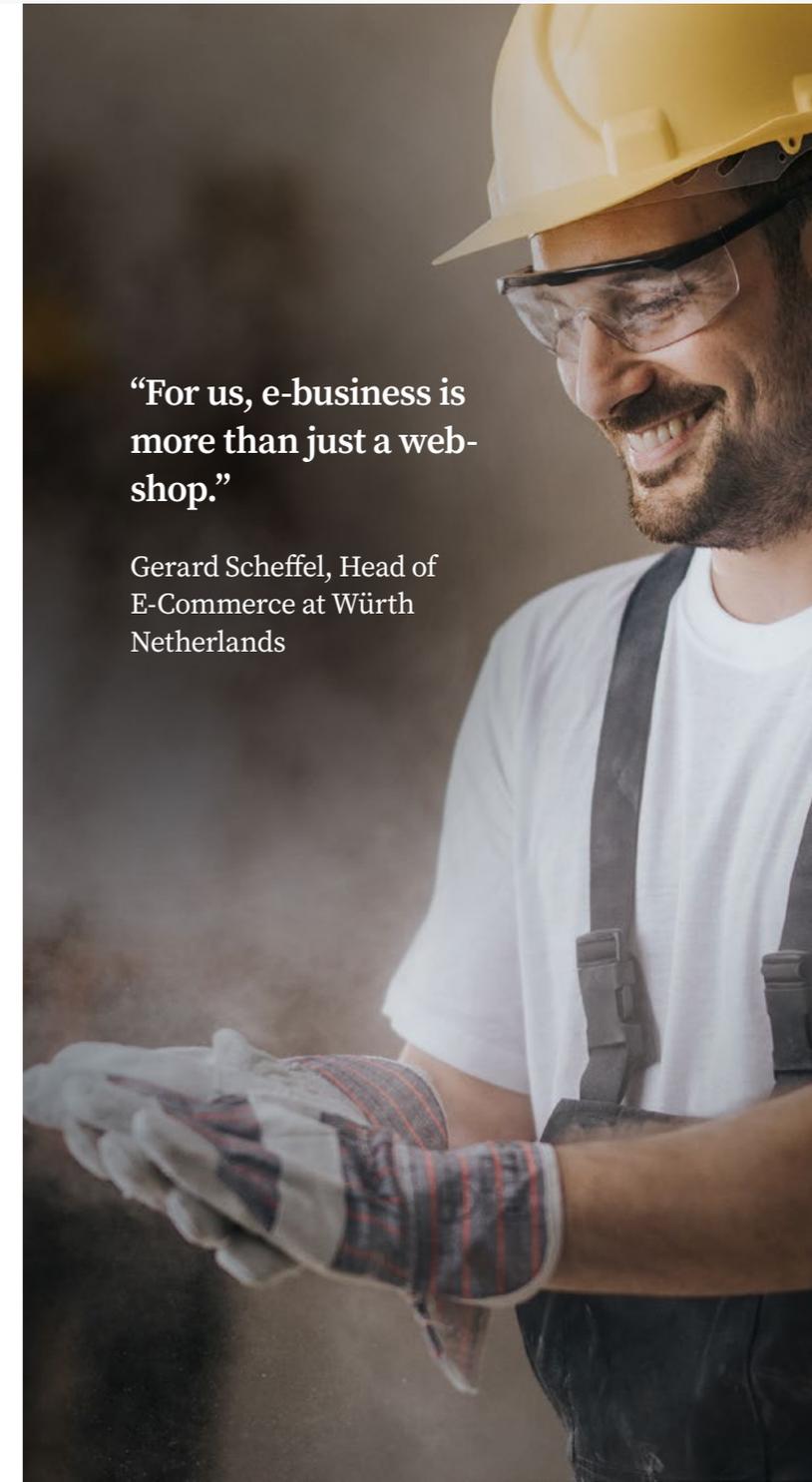
- Mapping of complex business processes (company structure, purchasing organization within Würth and on the customer side) via one central platform
- Creation of a network of fully integrated touchpoints for more service sales and more satisfied customers
- Individual pricing at every customer touchpoint at any time on any device

## Solution:

- 43 websites, 37 countries, 14 languages, 8 currencies—one single platform: Intershop!
- Seamless integration of the Intershop Commerce Platform into Würth's complex IT infrastructure
- Omnichannel concept with fully integrated customer touchpoints, such as online shop, hand scanner, app, smart shelves, vending machines or TwinBin
- Customer-centric approach: individually tailored online stores addressing the specific needs and preferences of each customer
- E-business sales experience above-average growth: omnichannel strategy shows its worth also in the Coronavirus crisis

**“For us, e-business is more than just a web-shop.”**

Gerard Scheffel, Head of E-Commerce at Würth Netherlands



# Successful digitalization of procurement processes

The Gustav Ehlert GmbH & Co. KG is a German wholesaler for food production supplies. With almost 100 years of industry experience, they sell natural and artificial casings, spices and additives as well as auxiliaries, cutting tools, protective and disposable clothing, packaging materials and cleaning agents for the entire food production sector. With its own warehouse, 40,000 listed articles, of which 18,000 are immediately available, and their own fleet of vehicles, the family-owned company sets standards in the industry.

1924

year founded

700

square meters: a brick and mortar shop in the company headquarters

18,000

products immediately available

**“The new generation is getting more and more impact. And the more it is them who take business decisions, the more we profit from having the best digital solution in our industry in place”.**

Philipp Ehlert, CEO, Gustav Ehlert GmbH & Co. KG

Business partner:



**Ehlert** MIT SYSTEM  
ZUM GENUSS

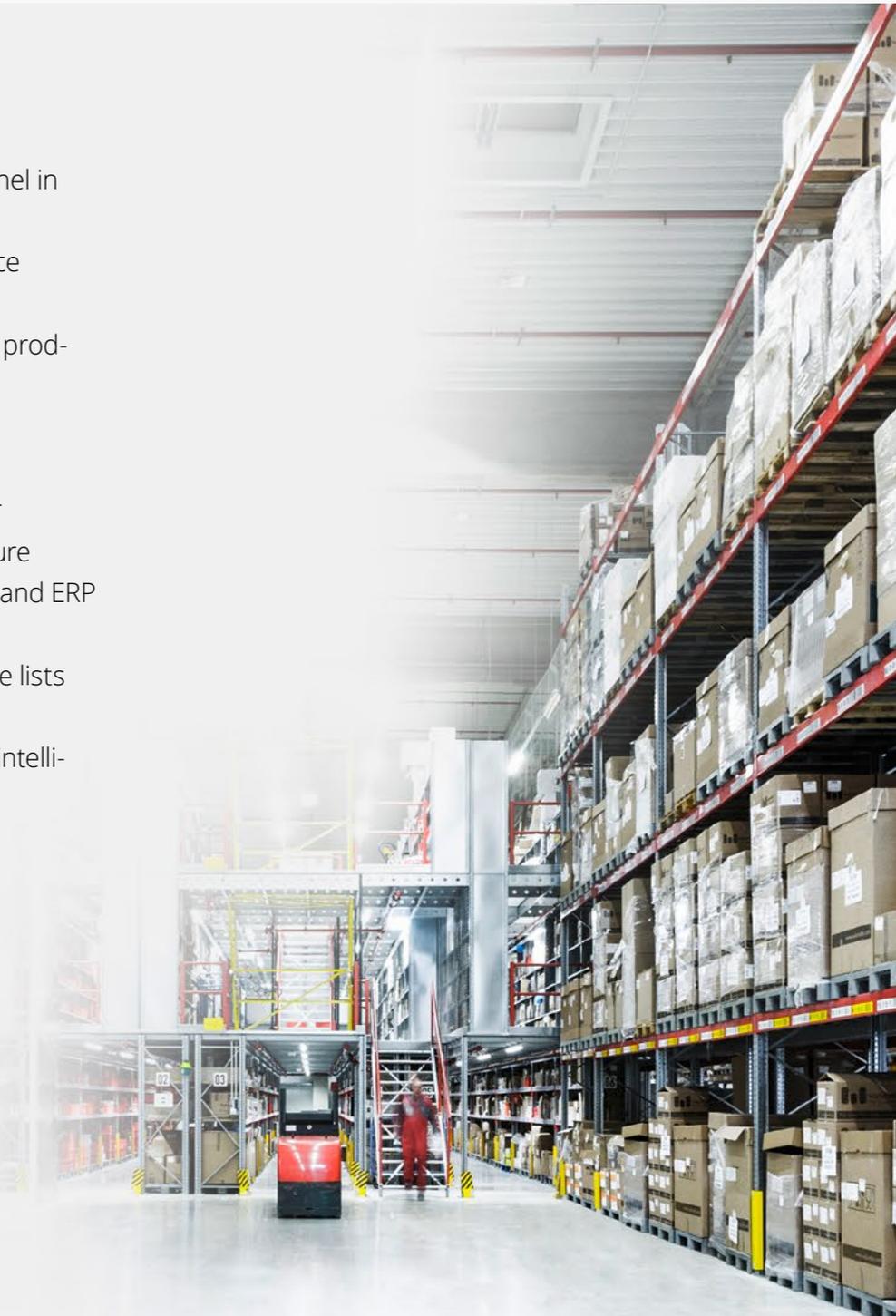
[Read the whole story.](#)

## Challenge

- Establishing the digital distribution channel in the procurement of consumables
- Realizing of a consistent brand experience across all channels
- Online price negotiation and ordering of products

## Solution

- Migration from Magento to Intershop for powerful out-of-the-box commerce feature
- Deep integration of commerce platform and ERP system via OCI punch-out
- Processing of over 85,000 individual price lists and 750 suppliers
- PIM solution from Perfion and business intelligence tool Qlik Sense connected



# Enhanced customer service across all channels



[Read the whole story.](#)

Isero is the most specialized hardware wholesaler and service provider for construction professionals in the Benelux region. Back in 1826, Isero arose from cooperation between various companies, including Gerritse Ijzerwaren, Breur Ceintuurbaan, Van der Winkel, Pijnenburg Building and Industry, Scholte & de Vries-Estoppey, Gunters and Meuser, and Freke Burglary Protection. In Isero the forces are literally bundled for customers to benefit from huge experience. The growth of recent years goes hand in hand with a solid digital strategy and an intelligent omnichannel concept.

**62**  
branches

Isero is a fast growing company with 62 branches in the Netherlands.

**65,000**  
products online

The company specializes in hinges and locks, tools, hardware and fasteners, work clothing and personal protection equipment.

**176 million**  
euros turnover

More than 800 service-oriented employees generate a turnover of around 176 million euros.

Business partner: WUNDERMAN  
COMMERCE

## Challenge

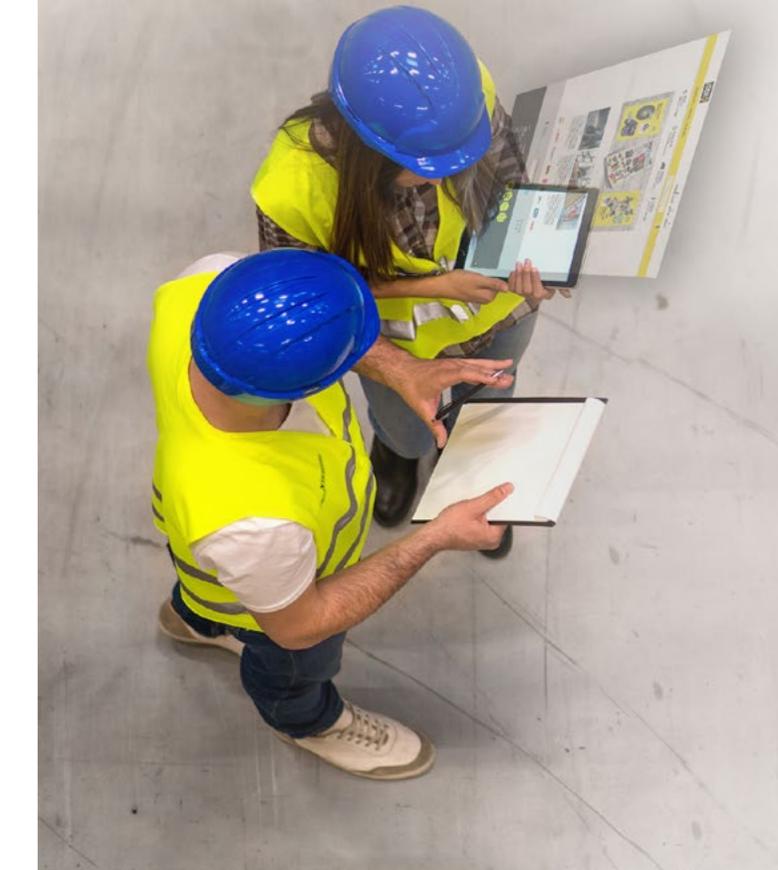
- Replacing the existing web shop by a fully-fledged e-commerce platform
- Mapping the entire customer journey
- Increasing customer satisfaction and customer loyalty

## Solution

- Intershop Commerce Platform on Azure – highly scalable and seamlessly integrated into Isero's IT structure
- Omnichannel approach: optimal customer journey and comfortable accessibility of the shop via fully integrated touchpoints
- Digital customer portal: improved customer service thanks to self-service options and extended services

**“In addition, we have the customer portal with which we offer all kinds of services to our customers. (...) The site, as well as the app that runs on the same platform, are increasingly becoming an extension of our services. In this way, we help the customer to order reliably and save time.”**

Suzanne Bussmann-Van Es, Marketing Manager at Isero



# Digitally available, quickly delivered, well protected



[Read the whole story.](#)

With almost 70 years of market experience, the RAJA Group supplies over one million customers throughout Europe and offers the largest selection of packaging materials with 200,000 products. The RAJA Group pursues a multi-channel distribution strategy through four complementary channels: catalog, Internet, telephone and field service – and this very successfully, as the turnover of 1.02 euros in 2020 proves.

**3,000**  
employees

The international company of French origin employs 3,000 people in 18 European countries.

**330,000**  
m<sup>2</sup> storage space

In order to offer the best possible service on site, 330,000 m<sup>2</sup> of storage space is available in 14 logistics centers throughout Europe.

**9**  
months

After a project duration of only nine months, the French website went live. All other countries followed after another nine months.

**“We want to make life as easy as possible for our customers. [...] Thanks to standardized interfaces to the e-commerce system, we no longer have to worry about large development projects.”**

Nathalie Chapusot, Director Marketing, Sales & E-Commerce at RAJA



Business partner: DATASOLUTION  
YOUR E-BUSINESS PARTNER

## Challenge

- Implementing a reliable and scalable commerce platform for selling means for professional packaging, shipping, cushioning, protecting, transporting, and storing goods
- Internationalization and localization: more efficiency when introducing new countries and languages by reducing manual development, testing and implementation processes
- Fast order processing despite the growing product range and the increasing number of consignments

## Solution

- Combination of powerful Intershop technology and implementation expertise of Intershop partner Datasolution
- Catalogs specially tailored to the needs of online sellers and the possibility of personalizing packaging material
- Optimal customer experience through seamless integration of all customer touchpoints
- Implementation of new payment options and a chat service in the portal thanks to standardized interfaces based on the REST framework

# Setting standards of innovation



[Read the whole story.](#)

Following a tradition of excellence, Limmert decided to relaunch its website and all associated touchpoints. After comparing several leading e-commerce providers, the long-established, family-owned company opted for the Intershop Commerce Platform. The key attractions were the exceptional adaptability of the Intershop solution and its omnichannel capability.

**>1.3 million**  
products

Limmert's online product range comprises more than 1.3 million products.

**1924**  
year founded

Since its foundation in 1924, Gebrüder Limmert AG has been known for its sustained growth and outstanding service.

**60 million**  
euros

The company has around 160 employees who generate an annual turnover of over 60 million euros.

Business partner:



## Challenge

- Implementing a powerful e-commerce platform for 1.3 million products
- Website relaunch: cleaner, faster, and more user-friendly
- Responsive design: making all shop features fully available and easy to use on smartphones and tablets
- Interface with the ERP system in order to show product availability in real time

## Solution

- Relaunch based on Intershop Commerce Platform with extended shop functionality, e.g., customer-specific pricing, calculation of various product-specific surcharges or discounts, and residual stock management
- Mapping of different roles, rights and hierarchies on customer side
- Seamless integration with the SHCware ERP system
- App for iOS and Android enables users to re-order items by simply scanning a barcode (EAN, Data Matrix)

**“We want to secure the company’s success over the long term. The goal of using a marketplace based on Intershop to expand the digital division is to meet the increasingly tough requirements in a multi-channel market and to give customers one of the world’s most cutting-edge e-commerce solutions. What’s more, it is important that we partner with a strong provider so we can set standards of innovation in the future, too.”**

Harald Ebner, Managing Director at Gebrüder Limmert AG

# À la carte— B2B commerce



**martin&servera**

[Read the whole story.](#)

Martin & Servera is a Swedish, family-owned group of companies. The companies in the Group deliver beverages, fresh produce, foodstuffs, equipment and services to restaurants, cafés, bars and canteens across Sweden every day. In order to boost their already substantial online business, Martin & Servera selected Intershop as basis of their new innovative B2B online shop. A clever move, as the restaurant and catering specialist was the only B2B player to make it onto the list of the ten best web shops in Sweden.

**“With our new B2B platform and the plans we have to improve our business, we are working on a strong, sustainable future model.”**

Kristina Ossmark, Marketing Director at Martin & Servera

**70%**

share of online revenues in total revenues

**2018**

Launch of the new e-commerce platform

**13**

sales offices

## Challenge

- Creating a comfortable and fast customer experience, which is offered by the simple order on an online platform
- New website offering an authentic B2C-like shopping experience and powerful functionalities for the specific requirements of B2B businesses
- Products specifically tailored to the customer through the personalization of product content

## Solution

- Intershop Commerce Platform with extensive personalization functionalities for delivering relevant content tailored to customer needs
- Easy integration into the existing IT landscape and powerful B2B functionalities out-of-the-box
- Realization of an innovative, B2C-like shopping experience
- Voice commerce: voice-controlled ordering of food and catering products via Google Assistant

Business partner:  **Accenture Interactive**  
Part of Accenture Digital

# Cost reduction: 98% of orders received online

Daily Fresh Food is the largest supplier of fresh products in the southern Netherlands. Through years of continuous growth, Daily Fresh Food has created a perfect fulfillment chain—from ordering to processing to on-time delivery. As many as 98% of orders are now received online, using the Intershop Commerce Platform.

**60 million**

euros sales in 2018

**6 million**

meals a year

**> 98%**

of orders received  
online

**“We’ve been using Intershop since 2016 and it’s been an important platform for our ongoing growth.”**

Roel van Alebeek, E-Commerce Architect at Daily Fresh Food



[Read the whole story.](#)

## Challenge:

- Receiving orders exclusively online
- Creating an attractive shop interface with excellent usability
- Providing customer account functionality with support for budgets, roles, and rights
- Providing consistent and up-to-date pricing at all times
- Enabling fast response even for large orders with more than 1,500 items

## Solution:

- Intershop Commerce Platform with state-of-the-art B2C usability and powerful out-of-the-box B2B features
- Future-proof, scalable e-commerce environment that supports Daily Fresh Food’s future growth ambitions
- Persona-oriented approach to ensure the best customer experience along the buyer journey
- Integration with the ERP system for real-time information on prices, conditions and product availability

Business partner:



# Dealer portal for multiple brands



[Read the whole story.](#)

Kruitbosch started out as a local wholesaler for bicycles and accessories before they evolved into an international chain with a partner network that consists of over 2,500 dealers. To get more out of the various sales channels and to enable further growth, Kruitbosch replaced its previous ordering system with an online customer portal. In early 2020, the family-owned company migrated to the latest version of the Intershop Commerce Platform and the Azure SQL Server.

## Challenge

- Replacing the previous ordering system by an online portal for better collaboration with the dealer network
- Implementing a scalable and manageable solution for Kruitbosch's various brands and portals
- Realizing an excellent user experience for more customer satisfaction as well as increasing sales and margins

## Solution

- Highly scalable Intershop Commerce Platform with extensive B2B and B2C functionalities
- Seamless integration with Kruitbosch's ERP system
- Mapping of the entire customer journey with individual product recommendations for each supplier

Business partner:



## 2,500

retailers

Kruitbosch has evolved over time into an international chain with a partner network of over 2,500 retailers.

## 95 million

euros turnover

Around half of the turnover of 95 million euros in 2018 was achieved through the sale of accessories and bicycle parts.

## 90%

of all orders placed via online portal

The new Kruitbosch portal was launched at the beginning of 2018 and by the end of the year almost 90% of all orders had been placed via this new portal.

**“With the new portal, we are absolutely future-proof and can concentrate again on increasing our market share.”**

Jolien Mars, Program Manager E-Commerce at Kruitbosch



# Customer care at its best



[Read the whole story.](#)

Online revenues in the automotive aftermarket are growing at an unprecedented rate. To meet the high demand for online ordering, Highline Warren needed to establish a scalable 24/7 online channel. The existing solution limited the growth of the business, lacked flexibility and didn't have the self-service shopping features their customers needed. Therefore, the focus of the new online store was on enhanced product visibility and extensive self-service capabilities to increase customer adoption and strengthen market share organically.

>35

years quick lube  
industry leader

209,000

total square foot distribution  
space in 4 distribution centers  
across the country

5 million

items shipped  
each month

**“Our initial growth goal for year one was to drive a 10% increase in new online customer registrations. After the first six months, we saw an increase of over 22%!”**

Mike Quinlan, Marketing Director at Highline Warren

Business partner:



## Challenge

- Replatforming: business grown out of old solution
- Realizing a powerful e-commerce website with extensive self-service options that meets the increasing expectations of B2B customers
- More flexibility and enhanced product visibility
- Strengthening market share organically

## Solution

- “Amazon-like” shopping experience and access to the industry’s broadest assortment of over 4,500 items
- Individually created parts finder to ensure that only the right products end up in the shopping cart
- Smooth project process with stakeholders from different departments to identify customer needs and business requirements right from the start
- Customer-centric and intuitive platform with low business risk to focus on scaling the business
- Tremendous increase of monthly online registrations
- More time for the sales team to help support customers in deeper ways

# Customer focus across all channels



[Read the whole story.](#)

**220 million**  
euros revenue per year

**1926**  
year founded

**16**  
subsidiaries

The Stiho Group has been a wholesale supplier to the construction industry for over 90 years. Now, it is entering a whole new world with a digital solution from Intershop. The Stiho Group was quicker than its competitors to grasp the enormous potential of the latest digital tools. With its new online agency, Sybrand's Place, the Stiho Group provides e-commerce support for the construction industry in the form of round-the-clock service, a rapid response to urgent requests, and dynamic, innovative ideas.

Business-Partner:



## Challenge

- Thriving digital transformation within the construction industry
- Launching a modern B2B sales channel for greater customer satisfaction and efficiency
- Flexibly mapping the complex business processes of construction companies
- Offering a seamless buying journey across all channels

## Solution

- Modern B2B online shop based on the powerful Intershop Commerce Platform with extensive B2B standard features
- Increased customer satisfaction thanks to omni-channel approach, personalized online environments and digital self-services
- Seamless integration into the existing IT landscape



# Highly distinctive with clicks and bricks

BookSpot is a Dutch online bookstore that has been part of the Audax Group since April 2020. The Dutch media group with around 1,300 employees supplies a total of 170 own branches, 880 franchise stores and 5,400 sales outlets in the Netherlands and Belgium. In terms of digitalization, BookSpot uses the Intershop Commerce Platform as the central platform for the online shops of all Audax brands due to the existing know-how and experience from previous projects.

## 211 million

euros turnover in 2019

## 30

employees in a powerful e-commerce team

## 100%

increase of conversion rate in mobile commerce

**“We chose the Intershop Commerce Platform because we had the expertise in-house and we knew that adding new sales channels was very easy. In addition, the solution’s high scalability is convincing.”**

Daniëlle Vromans, Head of Digital Business at Audax

Business partner:



[Read the whole story.](#)

## Challenge

- Strengthening and growing all digital sales channels
- Integrate the e-commerce strategy for multiple online shops and sales channels for consumers, own shops, franchise shops and distributors
- Offering customers a 360° experience, combining online and offline data
- Improving the mobile user experience and conversion

## Solution

- Migration to the latest version of the Intershop Commerce Platform
- High scalability and architecture enable easy addition and central management of additional sales channels for B2C (consumers) and B2B (shops and distributors)
- Improved personalization for a better customer experience and up- and cross-selling
- Integration with SAP ERP and the existing PIM, CRM and BI platform



## MORE

If you would like to read more about the subject of this whitepaper, we advise you to watch the webinars mentioned below and read the blogs and whitepapers that we refer to. Please click on the links and expand your knowledge!

**Whitepaper**

- [Wholesale and the benefits of digitalization](#)
- [Replatforming in B2B commerce: Success factors and best practices](#)
- [Boost your online sales by putting your B2B customers first](#)
- [The challenges and potentials of aftermarket e-commerce](#)
- [The value of a digital customer portal from a business perspective](#)
- [9 key drivers for success in B2B digital commerce](#)

**Webinars**

- [How to develop the right digital strategy for business growth?](#)
- [How to set up your digital B2B strategy for growth and customer loyalty](#)
- [Not just a sale: Keep your customers for life!](#)

**Blogs**

- [Digitalization in the wholesale industry: challenges – opportunities – strategies](#)
- [The seven rules of wholesale digitalization](#)
- [Connected digitalization: to dos for wholesalers](#)
- [How wholesalers can unlock the full potential of digitalization](#)
- [How to achieve quick and easy order processing in wholesale](#)
- [How does a cloud order management system benefit wholesalers?](#)

- [How COVID-19 changes the manufacturing and wholesale business](#)
- [OK Google, order tomatoes!](#)
- [A B2B customer portal for Isero: The efficient way to do e-commerce](#)
- [A future-proof online platform for bicycle vendors](#)
- [Würth: “We take the online shop out of anonymity”](#)

## ABOUT INTERSHOP

# Always nearby

Intershop enables the world's leading manufacturers and wholesalers to digitalize, transform, and boost their businesses. Our robust e-commerce platform gives companies the power to establish and expand their digital presence, improve customer experience, and increase online revenue.

With a dedicated focus on e-commerce, we're the digital craftsmen of choice for 300+ B2B customers worldwide. Our cloud-based technology provides a reliable, full-service foundation with the flexibility to adapt to unique requirements today and tomorrow. Together with our vast network of experts, we support the success of our clients every step of the way – creating opportunities to scale, innovate, and gain a competitive edge.

Founded in 1992, headquartered in Jena, Germany and with additional offices in Amsterdam, Stuttgart, Chicago, Frankfurt, Ilmenau, Melbourne, Paris, San Francisco, Sofia and Stockholm, Intershop combines global expertise with local insights. Supported by 340+ employees and high-quality German engineering, we help our clients turn products into profits, customers into business partners, and transactions into lasting relationships.

Intershop is built to boost your business. Learn more at [www.intershop.com](https://www.intershop.com).

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