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How to sell highly custom industrial products online

Nothing is impossible!

"Complex and configurable products cannot be sold online!" This paradigm is still prevalent in the minds of many marketing, sales and procurement departments of manufacturing companies and end customers. Indeed, these products often require guidance from a sales representative, are rich in variations, and usually involve complex internal procurement processes. But market leaders such as Trumpf, Würth, Atlas Copco and KION North America demonstrate: machines and industrial goods can successfully be marketed and sold online. Manufacturing leaders are rethinking their sales strategies to take advantage of rapidly evolving digital technologies. This is being driven by two things: the evolving purchasing behavior of B2B buyers and the swift innovation in digital commerce.

Our checklist tells you what is important when selling complex products online and which strategies lead to success. Ready for a digital revolution?

1

7 tips for selling complex products online

Provide detailed product information.

Providing coherent, reliable, and complete product information is critical to successfully selling complex and configurable products and services. B2B buyers need accurate descriptions, dimensions, images and videos across all touchpoints. With a comprehensive Product Information Management (PIM) system you can achieve all of this and more. You'll ensure a consistent database, a better conversion rate, and a shorter time-to-market. You'll also save time by reducing data maintenance efforts and answering your customers' most important questions up front.

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2

Visualize your product portfolio.

Companies with endless lists of possible product variations and unclear drawings or dimensions won't be able to convince demanding customers to submit a binding order online. Customers want to be certain sure and see with their own eyes if the selected product "fits". That means that the future of industrial sales is highly visual! By offering visual product configurators, OEM's can present product features and options in real time and even make 3D-models available for download. Thanks to immersive technologies, you can make your entire product portfolio available online in a visually appealing way and save precious time for your sales team.

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3

Sell spare parts with augmented reality.

Finding the right spare parts for complex products can be tedious and time-consuming. Integrate augmented reality into your e-commerce strategy to make it easier for your customers to order spare parts and significantly minimize machine downtime. For example, using Microsoft's HoloLens, 3D models of the exact machine can be used to identify required components with the help of exploded views and voice assistants. Anyone can do this without having to ask an expert or go through technical drawings. Thanks to the seamless integration with your e-commerce solution, your customers can then buy the identified spare parts directly in your online shop.

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4

Help your customers complete their purchase.

As user-friendly and informative as your online shop may be your customers will still have questions. Given the specialties of B2B procurement processes, such as additional quotation steps and multidimensional approval processes, buyers often need more information to make a confident purchasing decision. Therefore, it's no surprise that 24% of all global B2B online transactions involve the help of sales representatives (source: Forrester, The B2B E-Commerce Playbook for 2021). Support your customers along their entire journey by offering co-browsing functionality, thereby answering their questions in real time and helping them complete an order.

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Turn individual transactions into lasting customer relationships.

5

Customer interaction doesn't end with a completed transaction. At least it shouldn't, because after-sales business offers great revenue potential. For example, through your online store offer new and bolt-on products or maintenance and repair services. That is how you drive cross and up-sell revenue. Think of improved response times or availability commitments, service support via virtual reality, tool monitoring, consumption optimization or prediction of material wear. These open up other, steady revenue streams after the product sale and therefore maximizing lifetime customer value.

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Increase buyer convenience through self-service.

6

Many manufacturers have realized that they gain a competitive advantage by making it easier for their customers to buy complex products and services. By implementing a digital customer portal, you offer your customers personalized experiences and maximum of convenience at every stage of their buying journey. Thanks to digital self-service, buyers have 24/7 access to their data, registered machines and service contracts, and can manage their own workflows and cost center budgets. This saves them time and strengthens customer loyalty.

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Leverage the potential of subscription models.

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A digital transformation is about changing the way industrial goods are sold and manufactured and it is about manufacturers exploring new business models. Think of flexible subscription models and pay-per-use scenarios! The prospect of recurring sales is particularly helpful to your bottom line. And a subscription model offers manufacturers to sell not just one product, but a complete bundle with additional services. Customers in turn benefit, because they avoid unnecessary spend and unpredictable operating or maintenance costs. They only pay for what they use all at a low monthly fee.

Are you **ready** for a **boost**?

More information:

- Intershop Commerce Talks

- Webinar: How to sell highly customizable products online

- Benchmark report: The state of international e-commerce in manufacturing

Let's get in touch!

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