

CASE STUDY

Projecting a Bigger Image: The Power of B2B eCommerce for Small Businesses

How outdoor products distributor Wild Game Australia transformed their operations to project a more professional image with Handshake.



For small companies selling B2B, projecting a professional image is critical to securing new customers.

For small manufacturers and distributors selling B2B, projecting a professional, modern image is critical to securing new customers. But for many small businesses without significant internal resources or IT teams to manage technology deployments, modernizing customer-facing ordering, sales, and operational processes can be both daunting and extremely costly.

With the advent of out-of-the-box B2B eCommerce software, it's becoming easier and more affordable to provide B2B customers with convenient online ordering on both web and mobile, allowing even the smallest mom-and-pop businesses to provide a sleek, modern ordering experience. Wild Game Australia, a small distributor of hunting, shooting, and archery products, found that they could use technology to transform both operations and the image they were projecting to customers and prospective buyers—simply by investing in Software-as-a-Service technology that is both powerful and easy-to-implement.

The First Step Towards Digital: An Ordering App for Sales Reps

Heatha Nicholas, owner and chief operator of Wild Game Australia, first came across Handshake in 2011 when she and her husband were running Red Roo Agencies, an independent rep company representing 7 outdoor brands. Her husband was doing the majority of the field selling while she focused on operations, and because each brand had a different method of accepting orders from the field, maintaining accuracy and efficiency in order submission and processing was becoming next-to-impossible.

Nicholas remembers thinking at the time that in this day and age, there had to be technology that could solve her operational headaches. “What I wanted,” she explains, “was something that would allow my husband to be in a store with a buyer and not have to remember every rule or every product code.”

Fortunately, a rep in her industry was using Handshake, and after seeing the mobile order writing application in action, she immediately knew it was exactly what she had been looking for.

With Handshake, distributors can **represent multiple brands** in one digital catalog.



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Heatha Nicholas
Owner, Wild Game Australia

Handshake was built to accommodate the multi-brand use case distributors need.

Nicholas had two main requirements for a B2B selling solution. First, it had to be able to represent multiple manufacturers. Frequently used by independent rep agencies and distribution companies, Handshake's technology was built to accommodate the multi-brand use case she required.

Second, because her husband was generally resistant to using technology, she knew he wouldn't embrace Handshake unless it was easy to use. Says Nicholas:

"It had to be something that I could show him and really easily convince him that it was worth his time to learn. I could see that it wouldn't take much time, that it was a really user-friendly interface, and that it was going to do exactly what we needed it to do."

The Handshake Set-Up & A Surprise Consulting Gig

After getting buy-in from her husband, Nicholas got to work with Handshake, setting up the mobile app with product catalogs and customer-specific pricing for the 7 brands they represented. The first manufacturer she put in place was so impressed by Handshake that they requested she set up the rest of their internal sales reps with their own accounts. Before she knew it, Nicholas was a consultant for several Australian outdoor brands who wanted their sales teams outfitted with Handshake.

Says Nicholas of her experience setting up multiple manufacturers with Handshake:

"I am no computer whiz. I am completely self-taught and by no means an expert, and that again is the beauty of Handshake—it really is so easy! I was always able to solve their problems."

After several years of business growth, Nicholas merged Red Rue Agency into a new company, Wild Game Australia, and now represents 9 outdoor brands across Australia.



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Wild Game Australia knew online ordering would help them stay relevant as customer expectations evolved.

The Decision to Implement Online Ordering

Excited to take her business to the next level, Nicholas realized that the B2B market was changing, and that more buyers were placing orders online. She knew that to stay relevant as her customers' expectations evolved, she needed to implement B2B eCommerce.

Not only did Nicholas see her competitors providing online ordering portals, her customers were actually requesting the option to place orders online. Online ordering would also help her meet the challenges of serving faraway customers with enough frequency.

She explains:

“Australia is a big country, and there are big distances between our stores. Our sales agents might have to drive 6 hours to get from one store to the next. Obviously they can't go there often--maybe twice a year. So to me, having an online ordering system was a much better option.”

Finally, Nicholas' biggest reason for implementing B2B eCommerce was the fact that a modern B2B eCommerce portal would up her professional image, making her business look larger than it is. She elaborates:

“I started this business from home with a bunch of shipping containers. It's growing nicely, but, you know, you don't start off at the top. It definitely elevates my status as a serious wholesaler.”

For her first attempt at rolling out online ordering, Nicholas tried working with the developer who initially built her website. She soon realized, however, that building a B2B eCommerce portal from scratch was a much more complex undertaking than she'd expected. The statement of work became increasingly more costly, and due to the complexities involved in building a B2B eCommerce portal, the completion date was being pushed farther into the future.

Wild Game Australia uses:



Handshake Rep:

A mobile app for B2B field reps/merchandisers



Handshake Direct Online:

A website for B2B customer ordering

Handshake's aggregated platform provides a cohesive customer experience across multiple channels.

Having already promoted her online ordering option to customers, Nicholas found herself in a bind. The B2B eCommerce portal project was so far behind that she needed to explore an alternative. Fortunately, she received an email from Handshake about Handshake Direct, their online ordering solution. Nicholas quickly realized that it was exactly what she was looking for. She could easily flip the solution on (both Handshake Rep and Handshake Direct share the same digital catalog and customer-specific information) and be up and running very quickly.

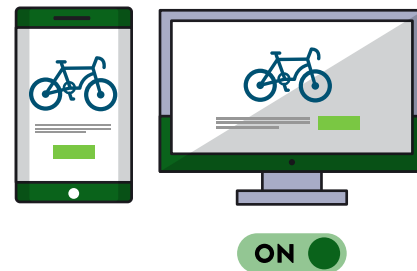
What's more, Nicholas understood the power of an aggregated solution--providing a cohesive customer experience across multiple selling channels. Because her reps were already using Handshake, her buyers were also familiar with the technology, making the adoption of Handshake's customer ordering solution that much easier. She explains:

"If I can offer something that my customers trust and are already familiar with because of what we've been doing in-store, then surely that helps me and builds on the relationships we've already established."

The Buyer Reaction

Nicholas has been thrilled with the results since rolling out Handshake Direct to her customers, often hearing that "her system is far superior to anything that anyone in the industry is running." She attributes this to Handshake's easy-to-use buyer interface.

Nicholas also utilizes Handshake's inventory display feature, allowing her to show real-time availability of items in the digital catalog as well as restock dates, to keep buyers informed as they place orders. "It's absolutely fantastic. If the customer knows an item is going to be in in a week, they are happy to order it. If it's not until 6 weeks, they would think about not ordering it."



Handshake Rep and Handshake Direct share the same digital catalog and customer-specific information, so it's easy to start with one and flip on the other.



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Owner, Wild Game Australia

With Handshake, Wild Game Australia can serve more customers and project a more professional image.

All in all, Handshake Direct has allowed Wild Game Australia to serve a greater portion of their customer base, keep up with buyer expectations, and project a more professional image. For more information on how Handshake can help you elevate the image of your small business with modern online ordering technologies, contact us today.

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