



**HANDSHAKE**



**FITSOK™**

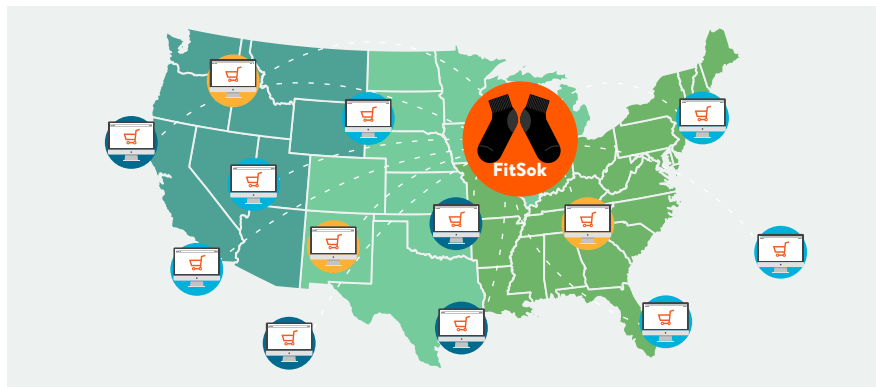
CASE STUDY

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# Fitsok Promotes Rapid Customer Adoption of B2B eCommerce

See how one brand's investment in B2B eCommerce technology resulted in 54% of their retailers placing online orders in just three months.

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# Overcoming the geographical limitations of field sales and increasing brand exposure.

For over eight years, Fitsok has been designing and manufacturing technical running socks sold at specialty footwear and running stores across the United States. Based in Minnesota, the company prides itself on offering their high-end products at a price point accessible for all.

Selling a niche product across a sparsely distributed customer base has proven to be no easy task, however. To overcome the geographical limitations of field sales and increase their exposure among independent retailers, Fitsok decided to use Handshake Direct, a B2B eCommerce platform that allows retail buyers to place orders 24/7.

Since then, Fitsok has been able to promote a remarkably rapid adoption of the platform by their retailers using a combination of three simple strategies, resulting in faster order processing and more frequent reorders.

## Why Fitsok Needed Handshake Direct

According to Fitsok Brand Director Jeff Bull, the company is laser-focused on building and maintaining relationships with independent retailers. “There’s so much potential to grow in specialty retail. That’s why we’re not really focused on big box. We want to build relationships with smaller chains and running stores,” he says.

To reach these stores, Fitsok originally turned to independent reps, but experienced several challenges. As one of many brands that their independent salespeople were representing, Fitsok was not always satisfied with the amount of air time their brand received during sales appointments. Additionally, because their products are sold to main street retailers across the United States, they had difficulty reaching customers in locations farther from major cities.

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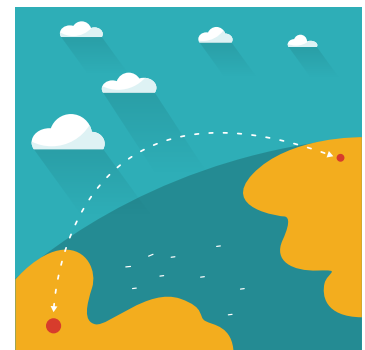


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**Jeff Bull**  
Brand Director, Fitsok



# Getting to 54% retailer adoption in three simple steps.

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In addition to these challenges in the front-end sales process, Fitsok was also facing order processing challenges in the back office. According to Bull, many of Fitsok's orders were placed via Excel spreadsheets, faxes, or phone calls. With orders coming through these varied channels, processing orders was a cumbersome, disorganized process. "We wanted a uniform way to get orders in, so that we could focus more on customers and less on operations," says Bull.

## Successfully Encouraging Retailer Adoption

After being referred by another footwear brand in his network who had seen great results with Handshake's online ordering platform, Fitsok turned to Handshake Direct to combat these sales and operational challenges. As a B2B eCommerce platform, Handshake Direct would give their customers the ability to place orders online at their own convenience, and the company could expand their reach while also receiving orders to the back office in one uniform format.

When it comes to the B2B eCommerce implementation process, many wholesale distributors have concerns about their ability to coax retailers into changing the status quo and adopting this new way of placing orders. For Fitsok, however, they understood that a few simple steps to actively encourage retailers to engage with their new online portal would yield rewards.

When the company began rolling out the portal to their retailers in July 2015, they had three main strategies to encourage adoption:

1. The use of Handshake's customer invitation functionality to automatically send emails inviting customers to sign up, log in, and place orders.

## Fitsok's 3 Adoption Strategies



1. Handshake's customer invitation functionality



2. Email marketing



3. A mailer included in all product shipments

# The importance of a simple, intuitive user experience.

2. Email marketing using their own list to reach out to retailers with targeted messaging, explaining that the new system would allow buyers to see new products, easily pick out sizes and styles, and immediately place orders any time of day.
3. A mailer included in all product shipments with a screenshot of the new B2B site to onboard those who hadn't already signed up via email.

These straightforward methods were highly effective. While only 22% of wholesale distributors with a B2B eCommerce platform have 40% or more of their B2B customer base placing orders online, 54% of Fitsok's retailers were placing orders on their B2B site within just three months.<sup>1</sup> Bull attributes this success in part to their outreach strategies, but also to the clarity and accessibility of Handshake Direct's intuitive interface. "I think the most important thing has been that the user experience is simple. We don't have to do much handholding, and we've gotten a lot of really positive feedback," says Bull.

Since then, Fitsok has been able to process orders fast enough to ship within 24 hours, and they've seen a higher reorder frequency from their retailers. Of course, the company still prides itself on service. Now that they no longer have to field as many incoming calls or faxes, the customer service team is taking a more proactive approach, and every order is sent out with a handwritten note and a cheerful gift—a lottery ticket. "We always make sure to say thank you, which is the most important thing you can do," says Bull.

Interested in how Handshake can help you get retailers to order online? Contact us today.

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<sup>1</sup>2015 Wholesale Technology & Sales Survey Report, <http://hnds.hk/1Gi7oPR>



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