

7 REASONS YOUR BUYERS AREN'T USING YOUR B2B PORTAL

Manufacturers and distributors are rolling out online ordering portals to their customers in record numbers. While many businesses are excited for the business impacts of online ordering, some, especially initially, find customer adoption to be a challenge. Fortunately, this can be overcome. **Here are seven reasons that your buyers might be slow to adopt your B2B eCommerce portal, and what you can do to help.**

1 THEY DON'T KNOW ABOUT IT.

It may sound surprising that suppliers could forget to notify their buyers about their new online ordering portal. However, many manufacturers and distributors -- particularly those that do not do retail -- lack basic digital marketing tools like email marketing software that allow them to easily communicate with their customers. Make sure your buyers know your portal exists and provide them with the direct link to get there. This can be achieved via email, phone, or in-person through your sales reps -- whatever gets the job done.

2 THEY ARE APATHETIC OR RESISTANT TO CHANGE.

The apathetic buyer is comfortable with your previous ordering processes and might not care enough to try your online ordering portal. In order to get the apathetic customer to place online orders, it is critical to provide a standout user experience (see #4) that makes them want to abandon their previous methods. Other customers will actively resist using your B2B eCommerce portal because they don't like change. This will require you to educate them on (and convince them of) the value of online ordering. Resistant buyers are also more likely to adopt your portal if you train them to use it in person.

3 PRODUCT AND PRICING INFO IN YOUR PORTAL IS NOT ACCURATE.

Your B2B eCommerce portal should be the source of truth for your customers. Your buyers may browse the catalog in your portal but don't see the customer-specific pricing they expect. They might be led to believe a product is in stock only to find out later it was on backorder. A portal with inaccurate information will not be adopted. It's like the old adage says: you never get a second chance to make a first impression, and it's important that you set up and maintain your portal with this in mind.

4 YOU ARE NOT PROVIDING A GOOD ENOUGH BUYER EXPERIENCE.

Online ordering is meant to be convenient and seamless, especially compared to manual submission methods like fax, email, and phone. Buyers using your B2B portal should be able to easily find answers to product questions and seamlessly create and submit orders on the web or a mobile device. If your buyer experience is not intuitive or familiar, they will either revert back to their previous submission methods or order from a competitor with a more compelling user experience (see #5). Audit your current buyer experience to determine some quick wins: make sure your data is accurate, your product and marketing collateral is comprehensive, and that your buyers know where to go when they have questions or feedback. If you can't achieve these basics with your current provider, it's probably time to look elsewhere.

5 YOUR COMPETITORS ARE OFFERING A BETTER BUYER EXPERIENCE.

If your competitors have made it very easy for your customers to order from them, your B2B eCommerce portal will feel like a ghost town. This phenomenon is especially rampant in distribution, where competitors are often selling the exact same products and customer experience is one of the best ways to differentiate. Do a critical review of your buying experience. Determine what your competitors are offering. If you are lagging behind, improve your process (see #4 & 7) to win your customers back.

6 YOUR SALES REPS ARE SABOTAGING YOUR PORTAL.

Your sales reps have the strongest relationships with your customers, and therefore, you need them to actively promote your portal. The best B2B eCommerce deployments are rolled out in a way that feels like a partnership, rather than a threat to your reps. You must commission your reps on the online orders placed by their respective customers. Otherwise, they will attempt to force all orders to go through them, preventing your customers from using your portal. This adoption barrier is particularly dangerous, as it's difficult to gauge whether your portal (or your reps) are the problem.

7 YOUR B2B ECOMMERCE PLATFORM DOES NOT SUPPORT MOBILE ORDERING.

Your B2B buyers are also consumers, and they are becoming increasingly reliant on their mobile devices. In order to respond to the rapidly changing expectations of the on-demand economy, it is critical that your customers are able to place orders on mobile. It is particularly important for your eCommerce platform to include a native mobile application if your buyers have an ordering workflow that involves barcode scanning or ordering shelf-side while taking inventory. Native mobile applications are installed via an app store and function offline, optimal for B2B buyers that don't always have reliable internet access when they want to place orders in their store.

ABOUT HANDSHAKE

Handshake provides the B2B Commerce platform for manufacturers and distributors that powers standout ordering experiences both in-person and online. Companies using Handshake transform their sales effectiveness and drive operational efficiency, delighting customers and growing lasting relationships.

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