INVENTORY DATA:
THE TOP 5 QUESTIONS

The art of managing inventory and shelf space has long been a challenge for B2B buyers.

Fortunately, with the movement of B2B transactions online, buyers and sellers are getting greater visibility into the inventory data they need. This has allowed the B2B seller to drastically improve order fulfillment and accuracy, while enabling B2B buyers to better manage inventory.

1 WHAT IS INVENTORY DATA?

Inventory data refers to product availability information, and can include:

- Whether a product is in or out-of-stock
- The exact quantity of the products that are available
- The date that the product will be available to ship

2 WHERE IS INVENTORY DATA DISPLAYED?

Inventory data is often displayed alongside their corresponding images in a digital catalog, and it is most useful in two scenarios:

1. **For the sales rep at an in-person appointment, in a mobile order writing application.**
   When your sales rep knows how much of each item is available to sell, they are able to prevent backorders, proactively suggest alternative products, and better manage customer relationships.

2. **For the buyer, in an online ordering portal - on both web and mobile.**
   The buyer that has access to inventory data knows whether items are on backorder and can choose other products based on availability—all without having to contact your customer service team. According to a report by Forrester, 70% of B2B buyers feel that transparency when it comes to product availability is an important factor in the buyer experience.

3 WHY SHOULD I PROVIDE INVENTORY DATA TO MY SALES REPS AND BUYERS?

There are three main reasons to provide inventory data to your sales reps and buyers.

1. **To increase order accuracy, reduce backorders, and improve fulfilment.**
   When orders are submitted with full knowledge of product availability, they are more likely to be processed quickly and seamlessly.

2. **To increase efficiency in your back office.**
   If your buyers and reps are able to access inventory information in a self-service portal, they do not need to email your customer service team with inventory-related questions. Many companies choose to redirect their back office staff to more strategic tasks once this burden has been lifted.

3. **To provide a better buyer experience that matches consumer expectations.**
   Your B2B buyers are also shopping online in their consumer lives, and are accustomed to knowing whether products are in- or out-of-stock. They are also used to error-free orders and fast shipping, and providing inventory data is necessary to meeting these demands.

4 WHERE IS THE INVENTORY DATA SOURCED FROM?

Inventory data is typically brought into your mobile order writing and eCommerce software from your ERP, warehousing software, or inventory management system.

Inventory data can be integrated manually, with the import and export of a spreadsheet, or automatically, with an API integration.

5 HOW CAN I ENSURE MY INVENTORY DATA IS ACCURATE?

The accuracy of inventory data is dependent on how regularly it is updated. Some manufacturers and distributors find it sufficient to manually update their inventory levels on a daily (or even weekly) basis.

However, **the only true way to achieve a real-time display of product inventory is with an API integration** that connects the source of your inventory data with your commerce software, ensuring these two systems are always in sync.

To learn more about providing your sales reps and buyers with better access to inventory data, contact us at **info@handshake.com** or 855-532- 9044 (+1-646-434-2553 intl.).

ABOUT HANDSHAKE

Handshake provides the B2B Commerce platform for manufacturers and distributors that powers standout ordering experiences both in-person and online.