

B2BECNEWS

strategic intelligence for business-to-business professionals

SPRING 2015

Portals to Business

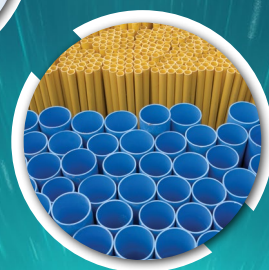
Amazon and the rapidly evolving world of B2B web marketplaces

+ **Spotlight:** How Groupon built a marketplace

+ **Marketplace profiles**

- Apparel/Consumer products
- Business & Industrial

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InternetRetailer.com/B2B

B2B E-Marketplaces Get Down to Business

Behind much of the surge in B2B e-commerce sales are e-marketplaces—which can be both friend and foe to manufacturers and distributors. From the massive Amazon Business and eBay.com to newcomers like general products portal Kinnek.com and auction site AutoWorld.com, they are popping up and buzzing with activity.



IN THE WORLD OF BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS E-MARKETPLACES, EVERYONE'S A PLAYER. OR AT LEAST THEY COULD BE.

Take N2 Surplus Inc., a 9-year-old distributor of products ranging from office supplies and eyeglass frames to industrial valves and materials for scientific laboratories. Though tiny compared with many of its competitors in these product categories—names like W.W. Grainger Inc., Staples Inc. and MSC Industrial Supply Co.—N2 Surplus goes up against the giants with its own formidable presence on the major online marketplaces of Amazon.com, eBay.com, Rakuten.com and NeweggBusiness.com.

It's also expecting to start selling soon as a third-party seller on Sears.com. The exposure on marketplaces in recent years, meanwhile, has helped it establish its N2 Surplus brand, leading the company to launch its own e-commerce site at N2Surplus.com.

"WE'RE GROWING," N2 Surplus founder and president Neal Brenner says confidently. Having started as a small seller on eBay.com not quite

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3

A Guide to B2B e-Marketplaces

APPAREL AND TEXTILES

BambooRose.com
Fibre2Fashion.com
JoorAccess.com
NuOrder.com
Ordre.com
RetailUniverse.com
Tradegood.com

BUSINESS SOFTWARE AND SERVICES

99Designs.com
Appexchange.salesforce.com
BlurGroup.com
DiscoverCloud.com

CRAFTS AND PRODUCTS FROM INDEPENDENT ARTISANS

AmericanMadeShow.com
GoCoop.com
wholesale.TheGrommet.com

CONSUMER PRODUCTS, INCLUDING EXCESS MERCHANDISE

DHgate.com
GencoMarketplace.com
Groupon Goods Liquidation
Auctions (GrouponGoods.
bstocksolutions.com)
ViaTrading.com

GENERAL BUSINESS, INDUSTRIAL, SCIENTIFIC PRODUCTS

Amazon Business
(Amazon.com/business)
Alibaba.com
AllActionTrade.com
B2Buy.com
BizBilla.com
Cogobuy.com
eBay.com
EC21.com
FedBid.com
(government and commercial)
GSAAdvantage.com
(government and commercial)

IndiaMart.com
Indiabizsource.com
Kinnek
MarketplaceB2B.com
Mercatrade.com (Latin America)
Miriads.info
MyTradeZone.com
NeweggBusiness.com
SurplusRecord.com
ThomasNet.com
Toboc.com
TradeBoss.com
Tradebanq.com
Tradeindia.com
Tradekey.com
Tradescraper.com
TradeZone.com
UpStored.com

AUTOMOTIVE

AutoWurld.com
MotorTrade.arval.com
RevolutionParts.com

a decade ago, N2 Surplus now lists more than 12,000 products across several online marketplaces, plus its own site. Those sites target buyers in the United States and N2 is looking to begin selling internationally.

Brenner and other B2B sellers complain about the confusing rules on Amazon and other major sites, and they worry that Amazon watches their sales and purchases the best-selling products to sell itself. But for many sellers those concerns are outweighed by the exposure and sales they gain on these marketplaces, along with the intelligence they pick up on what their customers want.

TO BE SURE, B2B E-COMMERCE IS THUNDERING

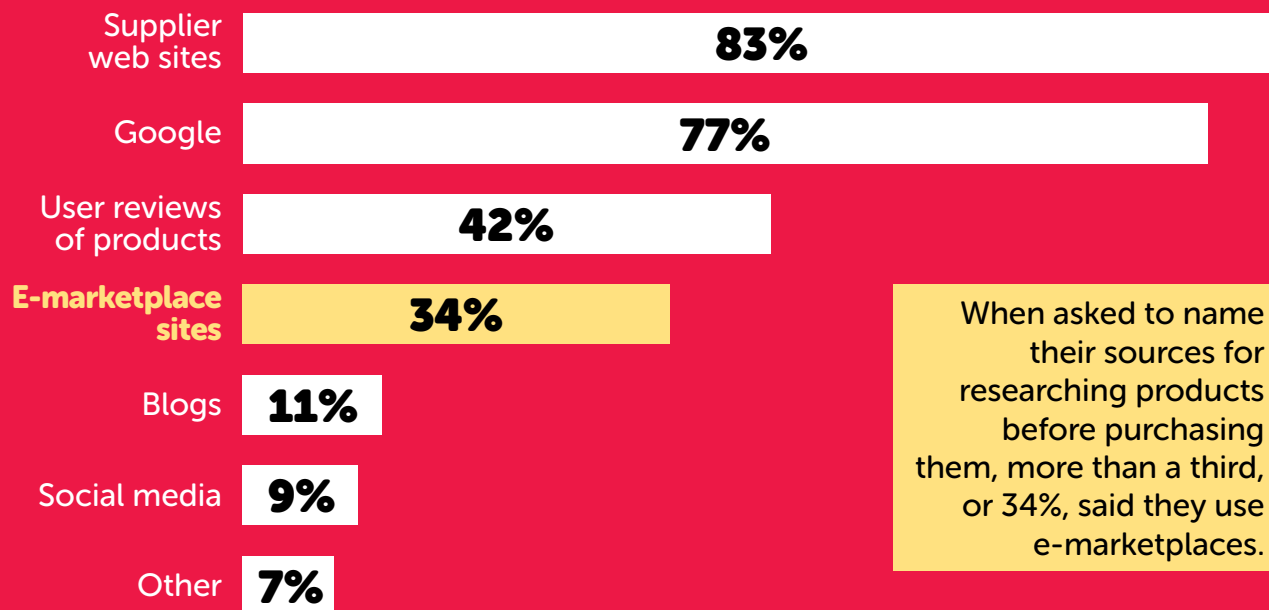
full-steam ahead. B2B e-commerce sales in the United States are projected to steadily increase to more than \$1 trillion by 2020, according to recent studies by research and

advisory firms Forrester Research Inc. and Frost & Sullivan. Forrester projects that B2B e-commerce sales in the United States will reach \$780 billion in 2015—more than twice the level of the \$305 billion in 2014 U.S. retail e-commerce sales as figured by the U.S. Department of Commerce, then increase to \$1.132 trillion by 2020. Frost & Sullivan projects even higher U.S. B2B e-commerce sales by 2020: \$1.9 trillion.

Globally, Frost & Sullivan projects B2B online sales will hit nearly \$7 trillion by 2020. Archana Vidyasekar, senior research analyst in Frost & Sullivan's Visionary Research Group, says much of that growth will come from "many-to-many" e-marketplaces, with large numbers of both buyers

Where B2B Marketplaces Fit into Product Research

Percentage of B2B buyers using online venues to research products



Source: Acquity Group, a unit of Accenture Interactive

and sellers, such as the Amazon Business section of Amazon.com and China-based Alibaba.com.

Frost & Sullivan defines B2B e-commerce as all sales transactions between businesses—including manufacturers and wholesalers, and wholesalers and retailers—conducted primarily through the Internet, including via mobile commerce. It figures its estimate of \$6.7 trillion in global online B2B sales will account for 27% of total B2B sales of \$25 trillion in 2020.

Forrester Research, which released its projections in an April 2015 report authored by e-business analyst Andy Hoar, says the growth will be driven largely by “channel-shifting” B2B buyers purchasing more online and less through phone and other offline channels, and the opportunity for manufacturers,

wholesalers and distributors to cut operating costs by processing more sales to customers through self-service e-commerce sites and electronic processing of orders.

Forrester points to “key categories” that are driving the most growth. It says petroleum and petroleum products, and drugs and pharmacy sundries account for the largest share of U.S. B2B e-commerce sales today and will remain the leading categories in 2020. But it says the fastest-growing categories over the next five years will be such durable goods as motor vehicles, and motor vehicle parts and supplies; electrical

and electronics products; and industrial machinery, equipment and supplies.

Most if not all of these types of products can be purchased through B2B e-marketplaces as well as directly from the e-commerce sites of manufacturers, wholesalers and distributors. Market research indicates that e-marketplaces have established themselves as an important part of the mix.

MORE THAN A THIRD, OR 34%, OF B2B COMPANIES

search for products on e-marketplaces before making purchases, according to a December 2014 study by Acquity Group, an e-commerce and digital marketing services firm that is part of Accenture Interactive. And while a far higher percentage of buyers, 83%, research products on suppliers' own web sites, only 37% of these buyers say suppliers' web sites provide enough product information to make a purchase, Acquity says. The study was based on a survey of 500 B2B buyers with annual procurement budgets of \$100,000 or more.

The Acquity study adds that only 48% of buyers say they purchase products from their suppliers' web sites, with many of them purchasing instead through web marketplaces or e-procurement software programs that provide ample product information and an easy-to-use online ordering process. Among e-marketplaces, Acquity found that the most popular was AmazonSupply.com, the B2B site Amazon recently replaced with Amazon Business, which is located at Amazon.com/business;



'If you don't know exactly what you need on Amazon, you can come to us to find it.'

—JEFF McRITCHIE,
VICE PRESIDENT
OF MARKETING,
MYBINDING.COM

17% of respondents said they bought on AmazonSupply "regularly," and 38% said at least once per quarter. "The No. 1 reason cited by buyers for purchasing from a third-party site like AmazonSupply was an easier ordering process," Acquity says. "The reality is procurement officers at major corporations expect the same level of convenience that they received from popular B2C websites, which many B2B websites are not currently delivering." The study did not provide figures on other e-marketplaces.

The e-marketplaces operated by Amazon and eBay Inc. account for billions of annual B2B sales among them, according to Scot Wingo, executive chairman and founder of ChannelAdvisor Corp., a company that helps businesses sell products through e-marketplaces. He

estimates that business and industrial sales amount to about \$2 billion to \$3 billion a year on eBay.com and about the same amount for the B2B sales on Amazon. EBay and Amazon do not break out those numbers in their financial reports.

Moreover, Wingo estimates that B2B sales on marketplaces are growing at a faster annual clip, at about 20%, than retail sales, at about 15%.

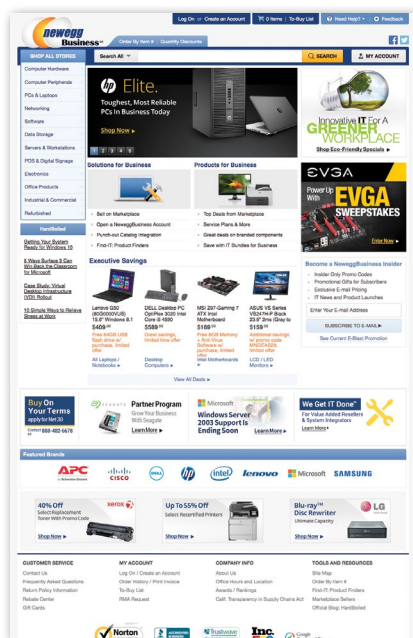
NEW B2B E-MARKETPLACES, meanwhile, have been cropping up in recent years like fields of spring wildflowers. Since January 2014, the weekly

B2BecNews newsletter has run more than 20 stories about B2B e-marketplaces either launching or expanding, including in the United States, Brazil, Europe, India and China.

They include New York-based Kinnek, which has received \$10 million in venture capital to fund its online service connecting millions of small-business buyers with sellers of equipment and supplies for restaurants and other operations; AutoWurld, which is seeking to upend the world of automobile auctions by charging the selling dealers a set subscription fee regardless of their number of online transactions; and London-based Tradegood.com, which reports having more than 5,000 corporate buyers on its portal, where they buy products ranging from apparel and consumer electronics to home furnishings and health care supplies from more than 100,000 suppliers.

The growth of B2B e-marketplaces is helping more companies—sellers as well as buyers—get on board with e-commerce.

Frost & Sullivan cites the combined industries of B2B and retail e-commerce as the most significant of several emerging industries judged by their market attractiveness, ability to disrupt their industry, level of certainty of future business, and degree of innovation. Disrupting established ways of doing business, of course, can be easier said than done, and many companies are just dipping their toes in the waters of B2B e-commerce, experts say.



Specializing in computers and electronics products, NeweggBusiness.com provides a niche marketplace for suppliers like N2 Surplus that have electronics to sell.

Most B2B companies still are in their infancy in terms of “effectively targeting B2B buyers online, developing an industrial-strength B2B e-commerce infrastructure and achieving an acceptable business-to-consumer-like customer experience standard,” Hoar of Forrester Research says.

Building out from scratch a customer-friendly and useful B2B e-commerce site, as Hoar and other experts recommend, can take months or even years. But one way many sellers start out—and continue to hone their online selling skills, while learning how online buyers respond to their product offerings—is through e-marketplaces.

N2 Surplus kicked off its online strategy in 2003 on eBay.com, and eventually learned how to sell through multiple marketplaces—taking advantage of each one’s selling features and customer base—and on its own e-commerce site as well, Brenner says.

N2 SURPLUS BEGAN SELLING ON AMAZON.COM a year and a half after it launched on eBay.com. It started selling through Rakuten.com last fall, and then NeweggBusiness in January 2015. It also launched its own e-commerce site on the Bigcommerce e-commerce technology platform last September, choosing Bigcommerce for its ability to integrate product and order

data well with e-marketplaces, Brenner says. The result, he adds, is a coordinated strategy of selling a varied mixture of new, remanufactured and used products across several e-commerce sites.

On eBay, where it all started for N2 Surplus and where buyers are accustomed to seeing used merchandise, the distributor still sells many of its used as well as new and remanufactured products across multiple categories. It sells a higher concentration of new products on Amazon.com and Rakuten.com as well as on its own site, N2Surplus.com. On NeweggBusiness.com, however, it will focus on selling electronic components that complement the automotive and other electronic products Newegg offers.

Selling through e-marketplaces is not without its problems, and many companies say they're still trying to figure out how to best promote their brand and serve customers on those sites. Some marketplaces cover a general range of industrial and commercial products; others focus on niches like motor vehicles and electronic cigarettes.

AMAZON, WITH MORE THAN 2.25 MILLION PRODUCTS ranging from industrial metal-cutting tools to janitorial products and office supplies, is often mentioned as potentially a major new competitor to manufacturers and distributors. Amazon, meanwhile, shows no signs of slowing down its development of its B2B e-marketplaces. A recent search on Amazon for available jobs



'On any marketplace, you need to stay on top of their policies. These are large entities with a lot of complexity.'

—NEAL BRENNER,
FOUNDER AND
PRESIDENT,
N2 SURPLUS

included more than 50 listed by the “Amazon Supply and Business-to-Business (B2B) team,” featuring positions for software developers, inventory experts and vendor and product managers across locations including the company's headquarters city of Seattle, Wash.; Austin, Texas; and Madrid, Spain.

Another major manufacturer, of cleansing products used in businesses and homes, says privately that his company is still weighing whether it's more advantageous to sell through big marketplaces like Amazon.com that offer huge market exposure, or through smaller e-marketplaces or distributor web sites that offer relatively scant traffic but higher levels of service and specialized information about products. “We're always debating the role of Amazon and other e-marketplaces,” he says.

He adds that while Amazon has massive web traffic—a monthly average of more than 95 million unique monthly visitors, including Amazon's consumer customers on its retail sites, according to comScore Inc.—it “doesn't have a lot of services” for the B2B buyer, such as assistance in configuring and installing sets of industrial products. In contrast, he notes that such services are available through some online distributors with far less traffic—W.W. Grainger and MSC Industrial Supply, for example, which have total

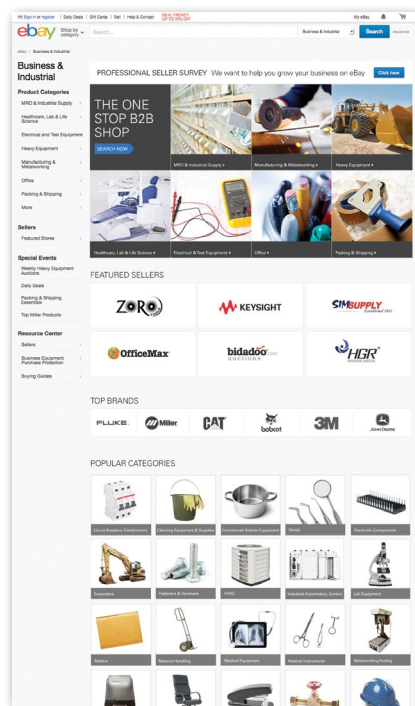
average monthly traffic figures of 2.6 million and 2 million, respectively, according to figures published in the Internet Retailer Top 500 Guide, which ranks companies on their annual web sales and includes other performance data.

The desire to differentiate from Amazon and other large marketplaces has also driven smaller, specialty online distributors to offer specialized services. For example: OnHandSupply.com, which sells pumps, pump seals and related supplies, ships them from five outsourced warehouses and promises delivery within one or two business days to most of its U.S. customers.

The distributor also offers services that Amazon doesn't, says OnHandSupply co-founder Jeff Winkel. For instance, to customize products for customers, it trims and balances impellers—which are pump rotors that can increase or decrease fluid pressure—and other parts used for pumping chemicals and water. OnHandSupply also offers such services as pump testing, maintenance and repair. "Our products and services cannot be picked by a robot and delivered by a drone," Winkel quips, referring to Amazon's automated warehouses and drone-delivery experiments.

SOME B2B COMPANIES FIND THAT E-MARKETPLACES can play an important, if relatively small, part of their overall e-commerce strategy.

MyBinding.com, for example, expects to do about \$22 million in sales this year—90% online, the rest



Sellers offer a wide range of products on eBay.com, including used as well as new merchandise.

through field sales reps—and processes most of its online orders through its own web site. Yet the 10% of its online sales that come from Amazon.com and eBay.com not only add to its revenue, Jeff McRitchie, vice president of marketing, says. Those marketplaces also provide exposure to a broader range of customers that otherwise might not have found MyBinding's products, while also providing opportunities to sell used products on eBay and offer popular services like Amazon's Prime free-shipping program, he says.

Still, he views Amazon as a tough competitor as well as a source of business. "The management of marketplaces is really challenging," McRitchie says. "It's almost like sleeping with the enemy. And the biggest and scariest is Amazon."

As a B2B company sells products through Amazon, Amazon learns about the seller's products and how to win an edge in selling the same products itself, McRitchie and others marketplace experts say. When they offer similar products, Amazon routinely places higher than MyBinding in Google search results for the same keywords and Amazon also often wins the Buy box on Amazon.com. The Buy box displays the seller Amazon deems the best option, based on price, reliability and other measures, and the company that wins the Buy box usually wins

the sale. Amazon wins the Buy box on Amazon.com about 90% of the time, according to industry experts; Amazon.com also lists underneath the Buy box listings of “Other sellers on Amazon” with their own Add to Cart buttons.

McRitchie says he deals with those challenges in multiple ways, learning how to maximize his sales on Amazon as well as through his own e-commerce site.

For one thing, he researches the competition on Amazon for particular products and, while also figuring his profit margins, tries to list on Amazon only those products that have the best chance of winning the Buy box with an attractive price. Winning the Buy box often means offering the Fulfillment By Amazon service, or FBA, as a delivery option. Amazon holds the inventory for FBA clients and handles fulfillment, and their products become eligible for the Amazon Prime free-shipping program. In order to get that edge, McRitchie focuses on selling through Amazon products with a large enough profit margin to absorb the cost of using Fulfillment by Amazon.

MyBinding.com works with Mercent Price Optimizer software from CommerceHub, a provider of fulfillment and shipping services. The Mercent software monitors prices on Amazon for products sold by MyBinding and its competitors, helping MyBinding to adjust its prices to stay competitive and win the Buy box.

It's also important to use FBA only for products that can be expected to quickly sell, so as to avoid extra fees Amazon charges for storage for six

“The management of marketplaces is almost like sleeping with the enemy. And the biggest and scariest is Amazon.”

—JEFF MCRITCHIE,
VICE PRESIDENT
OF MARKETING,
MYBINDING.COM

months or more, McRitchie says. Basic FBA fees vary based on product size. Not counting media products like books and CDs, for cases weighing more than two pounds, for example, Amazon charges FBA fees of \$1.59 per package, plus 39 cents per each pound over two pounds. It also charges warehouse storage fees of between 40 cents and 68 cents per cubic foot depending on package size and time of year. And for any packages left in

an FBA warehouse for more than 12 months, it increases the storage fee to a long-term rate of \$11.25 per cubic foot. Starting in August 2015, the long-term rate will kick in after the first six months of storage.

THE EXPERIENCE OF DEALING WITH AMAZON as both a selling partner and competitor has also helped to sharpen his own site's offerings, McRitchie adds. Amazon “forces us to be better,” he says.

If a buyer searches for a particular binding or laminating product and finds it at Amazon at a good price, she'll probably buy it, he says.

But printing companies and other businesses that order MyBinding's products often need to choose from a variety of equipment and materials—such as multiple versions of binding coils, and manual or electric hole-punching machines. In addition to showing how multiple parts of binding and laminating products work together, MyBinding,

unlike Amazon, also provides industry expertise from sales reps, whom B2B customers can reach via a toll-free telephone number or live chat window available on every product page. “If you don’t know exactly what you need on Amazon, you can come to us to find it,” McRitchie says.

Going forward, McRitchie says Oregon-based MyBinding will consider using outsourced warehouse and fulfillment centers in a central U.S. location like Kansas to provide more, and less costly, shipping options to reach customers in the eastern half the country. To support that option, however, he may also investigate new order management software to better enable MyBinding to route orders, received online through marketplaces or its own e-commerce site, to the most appropriate fulfillment center capable of expediting shipment to the customer.

DEALING WITH MARKETPLACE RED TAPE,

meanwhile, is another challenge, sellers say. While manufacturers and distributors sell endless numbers of industrial and consumer products through e-marketplaces, the rewards to sellers more often than not come after working through reams of red tape and rules set by the marketplace hosts.

N2 Surplus works with Internet-hosted software from ChannelAdvisor to load its product data and images onto several e-marketplaces, but it also needs to constantly monitor how N2’s product listings are abiding by the rules of each marketplace. “On any marketplace, you need to stay on top of their policies,” Brenner says. “These are large entities with a lot of complexity.”

Amazon in particular can be complex, he adds. For example, he says, Amazon.com once inadvertently moved the listing of one of N2’s rubber caps for covering a hydraulic hose into Amazon’s Beauty & Health category instead of the Business/

Industrial/Scientific category as N2 had intended. “They somehow put it in Beauty & Health, apparently figuring it was some sort of bowl for makeup,” Brenner says.

That led to other unexpected problems, including one case where a customer who received the industrial hose cap filed a complaint on Amazon.com, demanding a refund from N2 Surplus without returning the item. Further complicating the matter, Brenner says, was that Amazon’s rules did not make clear whether a customer must return an item in order to get a refund. The customer received a refund but refused to return the item, even though N2 sent the customer a prepaid return shipping label, Brenner says.

Although Amazon didn’t comment specifically on that incident, it recognizes that listing products can be complicated, and is also working to provide better service through account managers, says Petra Schindler-Carter, general manager and director of Amazon Business Marketplace.

Despite the difficulties, Brenner says his strategy of selling through multiple marketplaces in addition to N2Surplus.com is proving to be a good driver of sales. One of his next moves will be to explore international sales through e-marketplaces, possibly including ones N2 Surplus hasn’t connected with yet for such markets as India and Brazil.

They can be competitors and they can be complex, but e-marketplaces can also provide B2B sellers that learn how to play the game a steady stream of sales. ♦

Say hello to Amazon Business, good-bye to AmazonSupply

By Paul Demery and Nona Tepper

THERE'S A NEW BIG KID ON THE BLOCK IN B2B E-COMMERCE—NEW IN NAME AT LEAST.

Amazon.com Inc. in April launched Amazon Business, its new business-to-business e-commerce marketplace, matching millions of buyers and sellers with millions of products, says Prentis Wilson, vice president of Amazon Business.

Amazon Business replaces AmazonSupply.com, which the company launched in 2012 and that grew to more than 2.25 million products ranging from janitorial suppliers to metal-cutting tools and industrial equipment. Amazon Business also supplants the Business, Industrial & Scientific section of Amazon.com.

“With the launch of Amazon Business, Amazon is clarifying its positioning in the B2B space,” says Andy Hoar, an e-business analyst at Forrester Research Inc. “The realignment enables them to consolidate their B2B assets and simplify their value proposition to B2B buyers.”

Amazon is taking what it has learned from its online B2B operations to offer a broader range of products, more useful site search and navigation, personalized content based on a buyer's transaction history and business category, and more services for both buyers and sellers, Wilson says.

“We're looking to reach a more diverse set of customers,” he tells B2BecNews. “We're looking to bring on new sellers, both large and small, who didn't think of Amazon as the right marketplace for them.”

Amazon Business, at Amazon.com/business, will offer products directly from Amazon itself as the seller of record, in addition to products from third-party marketplace sellers that will have to compete with Amazon for the primary selling position in the Buy box on product pages. Amazon charges third-party sellers a commission on sales ranging from 6% to 15%, depending on the product category and the size of an order, for business sellers selling to business customers, the company says.

For example:

- ▶ For consumer electronics, the fee is equal to 8% of total transaction value of up to \$1,000, and 6% of value for transactions greater than \$1,000.
- ▶ For office products, the fee is 15% of value up to \$1,000, 10% of value from \$1,000.01 to \$3,000, and 6% of transaction value of more than \$3,000.
- ▶ For tools and home improvement products, the fee is 15% of value up to \$1,000, 10% from \$1,000.01 to \$3,000, and 6% above \$3,000; for the subcategory of base equipment power tools, the fee is 12% up to \$1,000, 8% from \$1,000.01 to \$3,000, and 6% over \$3,000.
- ▶ For industrial and scientific products, the fee is 12% of value up to \$1,000, 8% of value from \$1,000.01 to \$3,000, and 6% of transaction value of more than \$3,000.

For each product category, Amazon charges a minimum fee of \$1.00. When business sellers sell products to buyers who are not registered as business buyers, Amazon charges its separate Selling on Amazon fees for retail transactions.

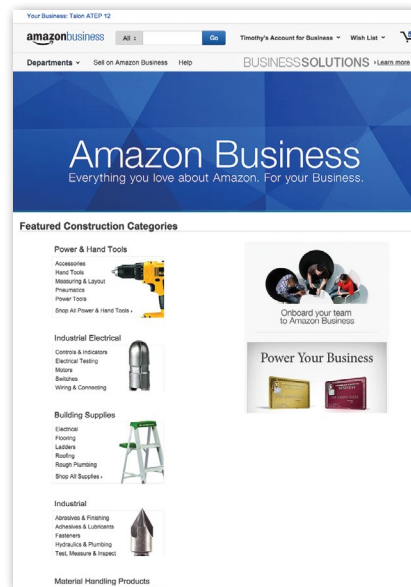
All buyers who purchase \$49 or more in goods from Amazon Business will be eligible for free 2-day shipping.

Scot Wingo, executive chairman of ChannelAdvisor Corp., an e-commerce services provider that helps merchants sell through such web marketplaces as Amazon.com and eBay.com, says he thinks at least 10% of ChannelAdvisor's 3,000 customers will want to sell there. Among the attractive features for buyers, Wingo says, are workflow options that will offer control over what each employee can purchase.

"Let's say ChannelAdvisor buys all their office supplies off Amazon," Wingo says. "Different users can spend different amounts. An employee can spend \$50,000, whereas a CEO could spend \$200,000. Companies can create an account at Amazon Business and offer different purchase levels."

The AmazonSupply.com web address will soon begin to automatically direct visitors to Amazon Business, Wilson says. B2B customers can also use existing features Amazon Prime and Fulfillment by Amazon, a service that lets merchants store inventory at Amazon warehouses with Amazon handling delivery, through Amazon Business.

Among the new features for sellers include the ability to:



Amazon Business, at Amazon.com/business, offers more than 2 million products and, among other things, lets sellers set exclusive pricing for business customers.

► Display with product listings such credentials as ISO 9000 certifications, which state that a company meets quality standards as set by the International Organization for Standardization;

► Set exclusive pricing and product offers for business customers, as opposed to what's available to consumers who also shop on Amazon.com for retail products. This feature is designed to help companies manage their sales of high-tech products in health care and other fields where sales to consumers are not allowed;

► List products by manufacturer or distributor part numbers, offering their customers another way to search for products.

Features designed for buyers include:

► Creation of business accounts for single or multiple buyers, with designated groups of buyers able to share payment methods and shipping addresses;

► Viewing multiple offers from sellers on a single product page, to compare pricing and the seller ratings that Amazon issues sellers for service and quality;

► Integration between Amazon Business and a buyer's procurement software, enabling buying companies to include Amazon among their list of authorized sellers within their procurement system. ◆

Executive profile: Howard Rosenberg, CEO, B-Stock Solutions

Helping Groupon Goods launch a European B2B auction site

By Nona Tepper Associate Editor, B2B E-Commerce

HOWARD ROSENBERG, CEO OF B-STOCK SOLUTIONS, A DEVELOPER OF BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS E-MARKETPLACES, HAS HAD HIS EYES ON EUROPE FOR GROWING E-MARKETPLACES, AND WITH GROUPON GOODS HE FOUND AN OPENING.

“We’ve always been really interested in the European market, and we view this as a really great opportunity for us to start investing,” Rosenberg says.

Groupon Goods, the online retail site of online coupon marketing company Groupon Inc., is reaching into new territory with a liquidation auction site for Europe developed by B-Stock. Groupon Goods Global GmbH, the retailer’s Switzerland-based unit that retails and ships general merchandise from Europe, has launched a business-to-business e-marketplace—Groupon Goods Liquidation Auctions—where merchants and other businesses can buy excess merchandise.

Rosenberg says his company also builds liquidation marketplaces for hundreds of other retailers, including Wal-Mart Stores Inc., The Home Depot, Wayfair Inc., and Gregg Appliances Inc., which operates online and in stores under the brand hhgregg.

B-Stock Solutions also helps its client retailers to build bases of buyers from its own network of companies. “We’ve got a very significant database

of buyers located in 173 countries globally, and this is really important because demand is what creates higher prices,” he says. “If you don’t have bidders in an auction then it doesn’t work very well. Our job is to create demand for our clients’ inventory.”

For Groupon Goods Global, “We expect to build a base of many thousands of buyers,” Rosenberg says. “I don’t know how to predict how quickly the buyers will ramp up because it’s sort of a new territory for us, given that the inventory is in Europe. But, when we launch a site we typically get thousands of buyers in a matter of days.”

The B2B auction site, located on the web at GrouponGoods.bstockolutions.com, is Groupon’s first European marketplace where retailers and other business buyers can bid on excess merchandise initially allocated to the Groupon Goods European e-commerce site at Groupon.co.uk/goods, including products that were returned by customers or that Groupon was unable to deliver to customers. Businesses can buy anything on the B2B auction site from furniture to flip-flop shoes, and all items are sold for a fraction of their retail price.

The retailer’s European inventory is located in facilities in the United Kingdom, Belgium and

Sponsored by: GoEcart, IBM, Snap36 and WebJaguar

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Switzerland, and inventory lots range in size from single pallets to full truckloads. There is no fee to buyers for creating an account on the B2B auction site, and buyers from around the world can bid on goods on the site—not just those located in Europe.

“All buyers just need to have a resale certificate. It’s a document that says, ‘I’m buying this stuff to resell it, not to consume it,’” Rosenberg says. “You have to provide that to whomever you buy from so they don’t charge you sales tax.” Once a buyer is approved for the site, he can go to any auction page and start bidding on Groupon Goods products.

Rosenberg says the auction site is a good example of how his company builds an e-commerce site to suit a client’s needs. Buyers type in the highest amount they are willing to pay for an item, and the system automatically manages the bidding for them. The current bid displayed on each item is equivalent to the second highest amount offered, plus one bid increment of 25 euros (US\$27.37).

If a buyer is interested in buying a TV priced at 1,000 euros without any bids on it, for example, and chooses to bid 5,000 euros, the individual will then be winning the auction at 1,000 euros. If another bidder places a bid for 1,100 euros on the same item, the previous buyer will win the auction at 1,125 euros. The system automatically continues to outbid other customers, but will never exceed



‘We definitely see a need in Europe, the retailers there are just like they are in the United States’

—HOWARD ROSENBERG,
CEO,
B-STOCK
SOLUTIONS

the maximum proxy bid of 5,000 euros.

When the site launched, B-Stock Solutions sent an email notifying its own network of buyers that the Groupon Goods B2B auction site was open for business.

Rosenberg says the experience of Groupon Goods Global is indicative of the potential for growth in Europe of B2B e-marketplaces focused on excess merchandise. “We definitely see a need in Europe, the retailers there are just like they are in the United States,” he says.

The company charges a monthly percentage fee based on what is sold on the e-marketplace, and the percentage charged varies by volume. If a seller ends up selling more than the set amount indicated by B-Stock Solutions, then the monthly percentage B-Stock Solutions charged decreases. “The percentage charged goes down the more volume you do,” Rosenberg says.

B-Stock Solutions’ gross transaction volume runs between \$100 million and \$900 million per year for merchandise across the network, Rosenberg says. He declines to report the company’s revenue, but says it has been growing in recent years at an annual clip of 100%. ♦

Giving B2B buyers what they want

While business-to-business buyers expect features found on consumer-facing websites, such as real-time product inventory and online support forums, on supplier's websites, they still expect suppliers to provide the additional features that purchasing agents require.

A B2B buyer's unique needs include being shown only products she buys and needs, as opposed to the entire catalog, product pricing specific to her company's contract, one click re-ordering and available payment and shipping options.

As a condition of doing business with the supplier, some B2B buyers require the ability to initiate a purchase order using a Punchout catalog, which links a buyer's ERP and procurement software to a supplier's catalog and integrate it with the buyer's internal workflow and approval processes. In addition, Punchout catalogs include current product information and configurations and real-time pricing and availability.

When purchasing products not covered under an existing contract or in a quantity that exceeds the previously negotiated bulk pricing agreement, or when selling complex products that require customization, B2B buyers expect to be able to quickly negotiate a price with the supplier online and convert the quote into a sales order with one click. This capability eliminates the paper work involved with negotiating a purchase price and submitting a sales order, which speeds both processes.

Private e-commerce portals are another way B2B suppliers can serve their customers. Private portals show products and pricing specific to the buyer. For example, a distributor of teacher, classroom and school office supplies can create a private portal that lets school districts set up preapproved product lists for purchase by teachers, department and administrative staff. Suppliers can also display ads specifically on the portal targeted at the buyer and offer other perks through it, such as a loyalty program.

"The challenge of B2B e-commerce is that every B2B buyer has different needs, which is why suppliers need an e-commerce platform that is flexible enough to meet whatever a buyer's needs may be" says Bachir Kassir, founder and president of the WebJaguar Commerce, Mobile, Search and Marketing Platform.

On the supplier side, e-commerce platforms that equip sales representatives with the tools to place an order on a buyer's behalf, provide notification when a buyer initiates an order or requests a price quote, and to show



Bachir Kassir,
founder and president of
WebJaguar Commerce

buyers real-time inventory information, can strengthen the relationship between the sales representative and the buyer. A buyer can also be a company that has sub-accounts with different stores or departments, and might require a manager's approval.

With the emergence of B2B marketplaces, many suppliers are enabling third-

party sellers on their sites. "Marketplaces are uncharted territory for B2B companies," says Kassir. "At WebJaguar, we took the leadership position in B2B marketplaces when we launched myTradeZone.com, a B2B trade, search and networking portal. This technology enabled our client ViaTrading.com to launch their liquidatenow.com portal."

WebJaguar's Variable Print technology allows buyers to order business cards or forms. For example, quick-service restaurant franchisees can launch a template to design coupons featuring offers specific to their location, then submit the order to the supplier for printing. Buyers can also collaborate to make purchases together to receive bulk pricing.

"At WebJaguar we saw a need from our customers and addressed it," says Kassir. "The features within our platform can help B2B vendors grow their business and automate their processes."

As the needs of online B2B buyers grow, so too will their expectations that suppliers can meet their needs. "B2B buyers expect suppliers to provide the tools they need to conduct business online in the manner they want," says Kassir. "WebJaguar gives manufacturers, distributors and wholesalers the tools and flexibility they need to meet their customers' needs."

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DHgate.com

DHgate opens the gate to China's suppliers

DHGATE.COM'S E-COMMERCE HOME PAGE SHOUTS A CLEAR MESSAGE to the retailers who are its targeted buyers: "Relax ... You're Not Paying Retail!" it says in bold letters at the top center of the page.

That greeting sums up DHgate's pitch as it seeks to build its brand across North America, Europe and other markets. The company wants its web portal to be seen as a place where small as well as large retailers can find and purchase a broad range of consumer products at wholesale prices directly from some 1.2 million suppliers across China.

It's not that DHgate is just getting started in business-to-business e-commerce: The company says it already has more than 5.5 million buyers across 227 countries, with about 50% of its online transactions generated by buyers in North America. But the company, which is headquartered in Beijing, wants to keep building its customer base in markets where it is already established—including the United States, Canada and Europe—while also preparing to expand into markets like Brazil and Russia.

"We do well in developed countries, where buyers are smarter than ever before," says chief operating officer Noah Herschman, who has spent some 30 years in the retail industry at companies including Amazon.com Inc., eBay Inc. and Hong Kong-based Groupon Goods Asia. "But we're also looking to expand in emerging markets."

The image shows a screenshot of the DHgate.com website. The homepage features a navigation bar with categories like Electronics, Health & Beauty, and more. A central banner promotes 'EXCLUSIVE HOT WHOLESALES FROM TOP-RATED SELLERS' with a 'Buy Direct & Save Big' message. Below this, there are sections for 'Best Selling Items' and 'New Arrivals'. To the right of the website screenshot is a portrait of Noah Herschman, chief operating officer for DHgate, wearing glasses and a suit.

Noah Herschman,
chief operating officer
for DHgate

DHgate.com, a web site that the company built in-house, carries between 25 million and 30 million items, including consumer electronics, apparel, jewelry, car and motorcycle parts, sports equipment, and home and garden supplies. The site may also expand into some industrial supplies, Herschman says.

It provides assistance to suppliers, many of whom don't have their own Internet access, to load

images and descriptions of the products onto DHgate.com.

DHgate was founded in 2004 by its CEO, Diane Wang, who had previously co-founded and served as CEO of Joyo.com, an online retailer primarily of books, music and videos that was acquired in 2004 by Amazon.com and relaunched as Amazon China.

In June 2014, DHgate appointed Herschman as chief operating officer to oversee a new executive team and business strategy to provide upgraded customer services, including more assistance in sourcing and shipping products from China, managing online payment transactions and handling product returns and warranties.

“Our main goal is to relentlessly improve buyer satisfaction,” Herschman says. Among its biggest efforts to serve customers, he adds, is using its online and field staff to check on the product quality and service reputation of suppliers, allowing customers to purchase directly from suppliers and cut out what can otherwise be four or five middlemen, including wholesalers and distributors, Herschman says.

DHgate.com offers its web content in 10 languages—Russian, Portuguese, Arabic, Italian, Spanish, French, German, Japanese, Korean and English—and accepts more than 30 forms of online payments, including several credit card brands, online bank transfer services and “e-wallets” such as Skrill and WebMoney.

Merchandise on DHgate is available for purchase by consumers as well as retailers. When looking for, say, a Brazil World Cup soccer team jersey, a consumer from the United States could purchase a single item today for \$23.40. A retailer looking to buy at wholesale would click on the same product page and product image, but choose among several

options for bulk orders with prices as low as \$14.40 per item for an order of 50 or more.

DHgate earns its revenue in commissions charged to sellers. Commissions can vary by product category, but generally sellers pay a commission of 4.5% on sales of \$300 or more and 8% to 12% on sales of under \$300, Herschman says. DHgate collects the payment from buyers, then forwards the proceeds minus its commission to sellers.

Shipping to the United States typically takes from three to 15 working days, depending on product category and availability, and is often free, even for single items. DHgate and its suppliers work with several shipping carriers, including ChinaPost, Hongkong Post, the U.S. Postal Service and DHL. Through an ePacket service available through China Post and the USPS, the USPS handles the local delivery to U.S. addresses.

DHgate sees about 90% of transactions processed via credit cards—a rate that has been fairly constant in recent years, the company says. But now it’s offering a new service to make credit card payments more attractive to the other 10%.

DHgate.com also lets buyers pay through MasterCard International’s MasterPass digital wallet service, MasterCard says. DHgate says it expects the digital wallet service will make more small and midsize companies comfortable with online purchasing.

“As an e-wallet of for customer credit cards, it attracts customers who in general don’t like to type their credit card numbers into computers for security reasons, or who leverage mobile platforms more frequently and prefer the convenience of a digital wallet,” Herschman says. ♦

Ordre.com

Ordre.com launches as a B2B marketplace for designer apparel

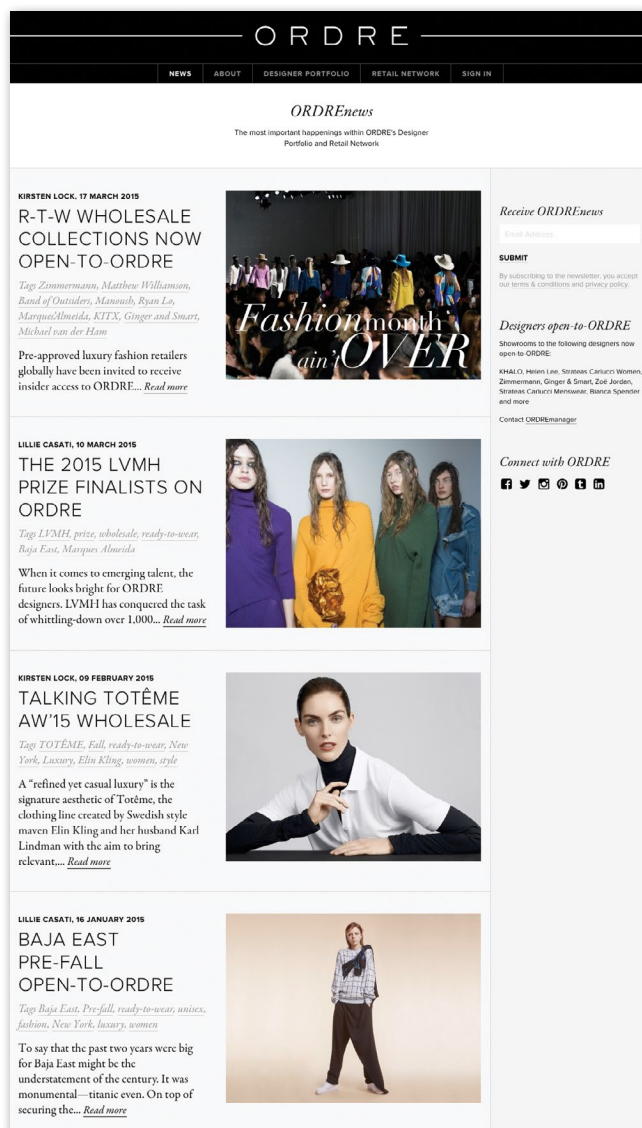
NEARLY 3,000 RETAILERS ACROSS 93 COUNTRIES have a new source of apparel fashions in Ordre.com, a new business-to-business marketplace featuring ready-to-wear designer apparel.

Ordre.com, which launched in October 2014, is based in Hong Kong and founded by The Lock Group, the organizer of annual apparel industry events in Australia and Asia-Pacific. The buying portal opened with apparel from more than 20 designers, including Chalayan, Emilia Wickstead, House and Holland and Jason Wu, and it expects to have apparel from as many as 60 designers loaded on the site in the first half of 2015, Lock says.

Ordre.com is backed financially by a team of early-stage investors led by Michael Alexander, CEO of investment firm Jefferies Hong Kong Ltd. Alexander is also advising Ordre.com on its Series A funding round, which Lock reportedly expects to bring total funding to \$10 million within several weeks.

Participation in the Ordre.com retail network of buyers is by invitation. Ordre.com doesn't list the retailers in its network, and the company did not immediately reply to a request for more information about the retailers that make up the network.

Other B2B apparel e-marketplaces include Joor.com and NuOrder.com. ♦



Tradegood.com

Marketplace expands to over 100,000 suppliers and 5,000 buyers

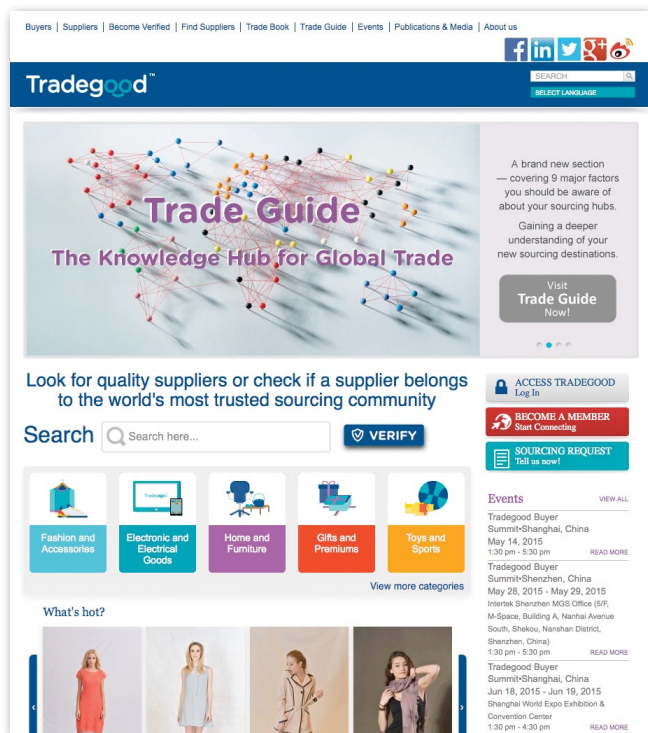
MORE THAN 5,000 CORPORATE BUYERS are using Tradegood.com as a portal for buying products ranging from apparel and consumer electronics to home furnishings and health care supplies from more than 100,000 suppliers, Tradegood says.

Tradegood is a unit of London-based Intertek Group plc, whose services include supplier-verification programs. Intertek employs more than 36,000 people in 1,000 locations across more than 100 countries that check suppliers' products for compliance with national and international standards and regulations in such areas as product quality, environmental impact of production and employee working conditions.

Buyers, who pay no fees to Tradegood, include New York-based Vanilla Star Jeans, which uses Tradegood to find suppliers of apparel and accessories, and the iGo division of United Surgical, which buys orthopedic health care items from Tradegood suppliers.

Tradegood earns revenue from sellers. A "Basic" membership is free for three months and allows suppliers to list up to 20 products. An "Elite" membership costs \$999 per year for an unlimited number of products and a dedicated section of Tradegood.com. Other plans for suppliers range as high as \$45,000 per year based on the services and features provided, a spokeswoman says.

In Intertek's most recent certification effort, in the fall of 2014, it was approved by the EDGE



Certified Foundation to audit and certify companies for compliance with the EDGE Certified Standard, which ensures female employees earn equal pay and have the same opportunities for advancement as male employees. EDGE stands for Economic Dividend for Gender Equality; the EDGE Certified Standard was launched at the World Economic Forum in 2011 and is associated with organizations including the World Bank and the Clinton Global Initiative. ♦

99Designs.com

E-marketplace for designers and clients eyes big growth

99DESIGNS, A 5-YEAR-OLD ONLINE

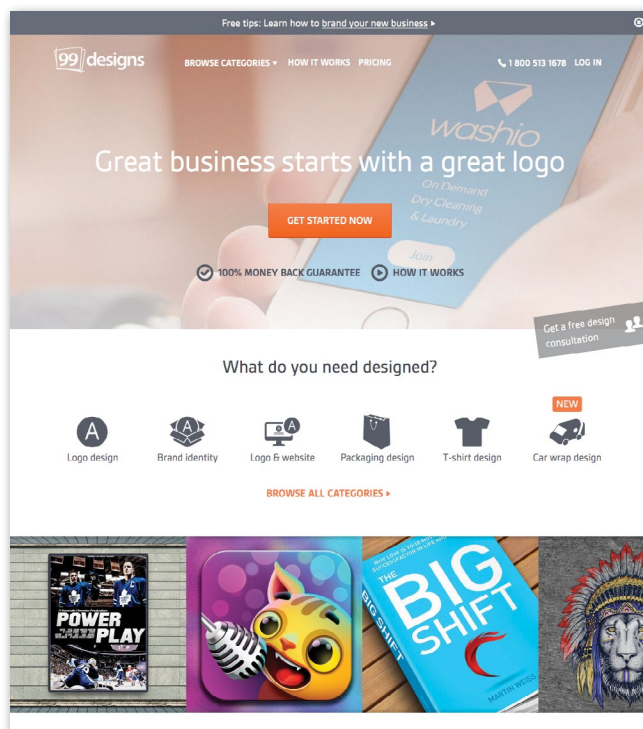
MARKETPLACE where designers compete for projects, expects to hit \$160 million in payments to those designers by the end of 2015, up from nearly \$84.4 million in September 2014.

99Designs.com is a global e-marketplace where a business can find various types of designers, including those who specialize in web sites, mobile apps, business logos, brochures and T-shirts, arrange and collaborate online on projects, and pay fees online for the completed project. Businesses seeking design work set up a “contest” on the site that lets designers submit their proposals. The winner gets compensated.

Another option enables a client to select a particular designer and arrange for a one-on-one project, with the client working out the fee with the designer. Clients can also choose and download ready-made logos and other designs, paying a fixed price on 99designs.com.

99Designs’ pricing starts at \$299 for proposals from about 30 designers and goes to \$499 for 60 designers and \$799 for 90 designers and a dedicated account manager. For \$1,199, the client gets 60 designers handpicked by 99Designs and an account manager.

The online marketplace has offices in the United States, Australia, Brazil and Germany, and offers design services in nine languages. Its clients and designers come from 196 countries. As of last fall, more than 2,100 contests were running



on the marketplace, with more than 336,000 completed in total.

“During the last two years we’ve been thrilled to see our investment in international markets pay off with some terrific growth,” says Patrick Llewellyn, CEO of 99designs. “These numbers strengthen our desire to continue delivering the best solutions for businesses of all sizes and unmatched opportunities for designers.” ♦

Appexchange.Salesforce.com

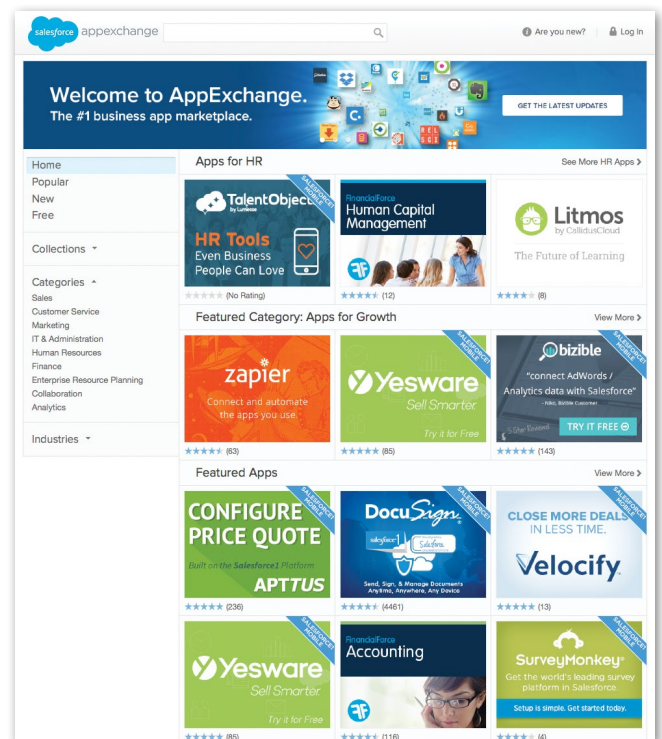
Salesforce.com rolls out a portal for selling B2B mobile apps

SALESFORCE.COM INC. HAS ADDED TO ITS SOFTWARE PLATFORM for connecting with business customers online. Clients that deploy its customer relationship management software can now also host their own e-marketplace for apps designed to help companies run their business operations.

Salesforce says its new AppExchange provides businesses with a tool for managing the distribution of business apps—whether they're designed for use via mobile devices or computers—in a single marketplace that they can brand and manage with a built-in dashboard that shows figures on app downloads and other information.

“Every company is becoming an app company, but until now they haven’t had the option to centralize app management and distribution,” says Jim Sinai, Salesforce’s senior director, AppExchange and platform. “With AppExchange Store Builder, companies can now create a fully customizable app marketplace for customers, partners and employees.”

Salesforce says the AppExchange is designed so that Salesforce clients can deploy an app e-marketplace “with a few clicks” and make apps immediately available for download. Companies can offer their own in-house-developed apps as well as apps from other sources. Apps that have already been offered through AppExchange marketplaces include Chagent, for managing online payment processing; Linvio, for deploying and managing e-stores connected to a salesforce.com



CRM application; and Zuora, for managing online subscriptions.

Salesforce charges no extra fees for deploying the AppExchange, which is available to users of Salesforce.com software. Salesforce makes its CRM and other business software available at prices ranging from \$25 to \$300 per user per month, depending on the number of features a Salesforce client uses to interact online with customers. ◆

DiscoverCloud.com

A new B2B marketplace arrives for cloud-based software

AS THE BENEFITS OF BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS E-COMMERCE become more evident, more B2B e-marketplaces are emerging. One of the newest is Chekkt, an Israel-based company that features a portal, DiscoverCloud.com, with 85 customer relationship management applications among some 2,500 cloud or Internet-based software applications from about 2,000 suppliers available to buyers.

Chekkt set up its portal in May 2014 to appeal to small and mid-sized businesses of up to about 500 employees looking for cloud-based software to run their operations, CEO Ori Manor says. It caters to businesses that want to choose from a broad number of software applications likely to suit their particular needs, he adds.

“Everyone knows about Salesforce.com and SugarCRM for customer relationship management software, but for other CRM vendors they have to ask a friend and search in a forum,” Manor says. Chekkt features some 85 CRM vendors on DiscoverCloud, including names like Soffront CRM, WalkMe, Crocagile, Olark and Myco Suite. Chekkt lists each of these CRM vendors, and scores of others are listed within other industry categories, with customer ratings and background information about each vendor and its products.

Other vendor categories on DiscoverCloud include inventory management, digital asset management, web and mobile tools, accounting and finance, and human resources.

Chekkt says DiscoverCloud has grown in recent months from about 30,000 unique monthly registered users, or companies looking for products to purchase, last summer to about 50,000 this month, Manor says. There is no charge to register as a buyer.

Suppliers can also register for free for basic listings, but pay between \$100 and \$200 per month for “premium” listings that include displays of customer ratings and analytics on customer activity on web pages.

Chekkt primarily deals with buyers and sellers in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom, though it also gets traffic from companies in Spain, France, India and Mexico, Manor says.

For now, buyers on DiscoverCloud can click a vendor’s listings for a free trial of its software. If a buyer wants to buy software it makes arrangements offline with the seller. “Eventually we will also offer the Buy button,” Manor says.

Manor says Chekkt, which is backed financially by Tel Aviv, Israel-based investment firm Valueshine Ventures, is considering a possible expansion of its marketplace to include suppliers of downloaded software applications and business services. ♦

Tradescraper.com

Tradescraper launches as a new global B2B e-marketplace

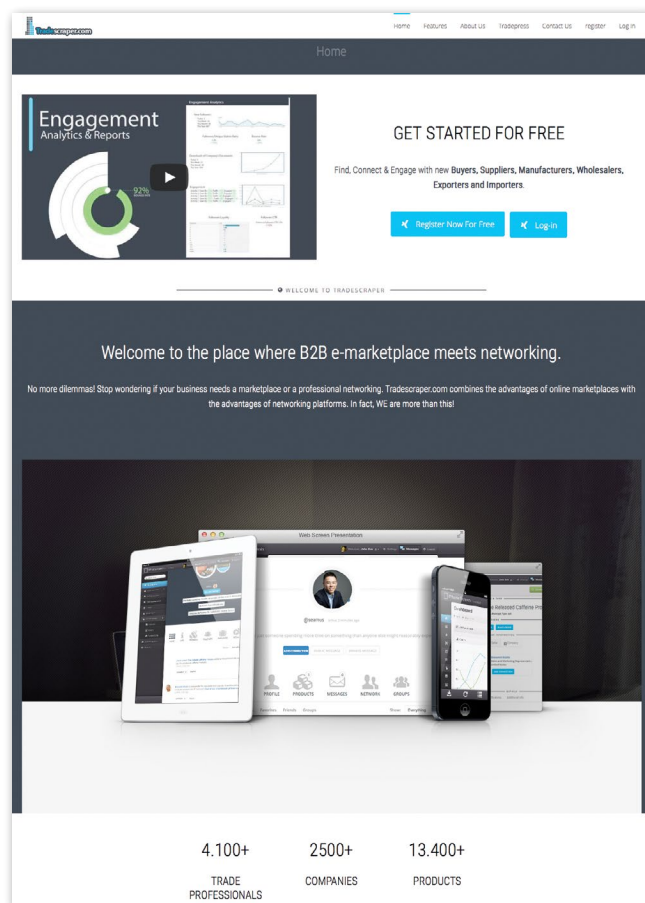
THE WORLD OF BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS E-COMMERCE has another global trading portal, one that aims to set itself apart with social networking features designed to better help buyers and suppliers find the best trading partners.

Tradescraper.com, based in Athens, Greece, lets buyers search its network for suppliers by product lines, while also letting suppliers search for buyers with a stated interest in particular products. In each case, companies can check profiles, ratings, reviews and references for possible trading partners.

Tradescraper also lets participating companies join online communities of “like-minded” professionals and participate in industry-related forums. Participants can send messages and chat online in real time.

Kevin Che, CEO of Gardeners Co., a Shanghai, China-based supplier of garden tools, says he has “closed many deals on Tradescraper. The platform has every tool an exporter should use in order to expand, and the social functionality really helps companies engage with new buyers for communicating and trading.”

The portal also provides users with analytics reports related to how often their product listings and company profiles are viewed online, and by whom. Tradescraper is supported by the business incubator services, including access to marketing and financial assistance, provided by the National Technical University of Athens, the Business



Innovation Center of Attica and the Enterprise Europe Network.

Tradescraper provides basic listings in the network for free, but charges fees for “premium” services that help companies share information. In addition to a free basic networking service, buyers and suppliers can subscribe to premium services for \$19.99 to \$79.99 per month based on the level of site search and messaging features. ♦

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AND IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS.**



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