INVENTORY VISIBILITY WILL HELP DISTRIBUTORS BETTER SERVE CUSTOMERS AND COMPETE

Bachir Kassir, president, WebJaguar

Inventory visibility is critical for any ecommerce company—particularly distributors. When the pandemic hit, distributors had to quickly adjust their operations to meet the demands of their customers—and integrating their systems with supplier data to access to accurate, up-to-date inventory information was essential to achieving that goal. To discuss how real-time inventory visibility will help distributors better serve customers and compete, Digital Commerce 360 B2B spoke with Bachir Kassir, president of WebJaguar.

DC360: What important trends around inventory visibility should distributors be aware of?

Kassir: Some distributors have hundreds or even thousands of dealers. And many of these dealers are demanding access to real-time and accurate product data and inventory. So there's a trend now where many of these master distributors need to create individual dealer stores for their dealers. The master distributor can then send master data feeds to these dealer stores—giving them immediate access to accurate inventory information.

There's another trend around self-service capabilities for the B2B buyer. The site itself serves as a sales rep. For industries that require complex selling that requires product configuration to complete orders, distributors need to enable CPQ (configure, price, quote) capabilities, which can be challenging.

DC360: What typical inventory challenges are distributors currently facing?

Kassir: Distributors need to be able to source the right products from the right supplier and have access to accurate and up-to-date supplier or master distributor data. A common challenge here is properly integrating supplier data with your internal systems to eliminate

duplicate data entries. The last thing distributors want is to tell a customer that a product they ordered—one that the system showed was available—is actually out of stock. That can cause irreparable damage to that customer relationship.

DC360: What technologies are now available to help distributors with inventory visibility?

Kassir: A master site/dealer store solution, ERP integration solution and using API for real-time inventory access. This applies to master distributors when selling to their dealers and when dealers and distributors are selling to their end customers—supporting both B2B and B2B2C.

Automation technology helps distributors better connect to their supplier data—ensuring all the data they receive is accurate and up to date. CPQ and quoting solutions essentially turn your ecommerce site into a virtual sales rep by letting buyers self-serve to configure products to their specifications, see prices and get quotes and even share configured products with their peers. And being able to integrate all of this technology seamlessly is key.

To do that, distributors should partner with a platform provider that not only specializes in B2B ecommerce and all the complexities that come with it, but one that also has experience in your specific industry. WebJaguar, for example, has spent more than 15 years working with distributors—getting their ecommerce sites up and running and solving their unique challenges. Most likely, there isn't a complex B2B ecommerce challenge—around inventory visibility or other—that we haven't already solved.

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