

A Look Ahead: IRCE's B2B Workshop

B2B E-Commerce: The Future Is Digital

The Internet is transforming B2B commerce, and manufacturers, distributors and wholesalers must compete in the new digital world. Inside are reviews of the 10 sessions featured in the IRCE B2B Workshop that cover what B2B companies need to know.

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strategic intelligence for business-to-business professionals

B2B WORKSHOP: IRCE 2016

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Workshop Introduction

B2B E-Commerce: The Future is Digital

Getting on board with the customer's journey

The customer journey—researching products and eventually making a decision on a planned purchase—is often illustrated with a common funnel. Start out with a wide scope, then filter down to a narrower and narrower one until ready to buy.

Nowadays the funnel is more like a tornado funnel cloud—with potentially limitless amounts of data twirling at breakneck speed around a buyer. Interruptions can be constant—from social media, text alerts, targeted email, search and display ads, among others—and a seller must know how to best engage its targeted customers with the right information, in the right format and channel, and when to have a sales rep jump in.

In the B2B Workshop at IRCE 2016 on June 7 in Chicago, one of the sessions features customer journey expert Adrienne Hartmann, director of e-commerce, government and customer insights at J.J. Keller & Associates, a supplier of online training courses and services that help companies deal with government regulations. She'll address how J.J. Keller engages customers with the right material and the right time to win their sales and loyalty.

Hartmann's will be one of 10 sessions that will take attendees on a journey that will cover multiple aspects of the surging and complicated B2B e-commerce market—with lots of examples of how companies have met the challenges of this huge market and grown with it.

The other session topics:

- Getting a company's management, employees and customers on board with e-commerce;

- Grasping the surging growth in B2B e-commerce sales—with a look inside Amazon Business;
- Designing a B2B site that's useful to customers;
- Accommodating the online purchasing needs of buyers of complex products;
- Product information management technology provides clear and accurate product information and images;
- Analyzing the sales performance of self-service e-commerce and sales reps;
- Empowering sales reps to take advantage of e-commerce and m-commerce;
- Letting customers buy from a job site via mobile devices;
- Making a retail e-commerce site work in the B2B world.

Workshop speakers come from a variety of companies, including family-owned distributors, large multinational corporations, and specialty suppliers involved in global as well as domestic commerce.

We're looking forward to the show, and we hope you'll come along for the ride. It'll be worth the trip.

Paul Demery, *Managing Editor*, B2B E-Commerce

Tuesday, June 7, 9:00-9:30 am

How a 100-Year-Old Electrical Supply Company Became an E-Commerce Powerhouse

Michael Mayer, Director of E-Business Strategy & Commerce,
Crescent Electric Supply Co.



Crescent Electric, a 100-year-old company with \$1.2 billion in sales, is going through a major shift in how it goes to market. From a traditional inside/outside sales staff model to a new 21st Century omnichannel presence, Crescent quickly built out the e-commerce channel to jump ahead of the competition.

Michael Mayer, director of e-business strategy and commerce, will discuss how the company built the e-commerce team, created content, and addressed pricing, functionality and e-marketing. He will explain how the company overcame both internal roadblocks, such as commissions, salespersons' resistance and field education, and external roadblocks, such as communication to customers and coordinating customer's existing processes with e-commerce.

'Getting employees on board with e-commerce was the best decision we could have made, and it has since contributed to a 60% growth rate.'

"After first rolling out e-commerce for our account customers, our adoption rate and growth of the channel eked along at a snail's pace," Mayer says. "Our first response to this issue was to amp up our marketing to our customer base. That helped slightly, but we were missing the bigger picture: Our employees were not on board. They didn't know what we rolled out, how it could help customers or how it impacted their lives. They didn't feel

any ownership and couldn't help customers with it. To them, the new e-commerce channel was a competitor."

After almost a year, Crescent pulled a 180-degree turn and redirected its focus to getting its employees on board. "This was the best decision we could have made, and it has since contributed to a 60% growth rate," Mayer says. "Additionally, our customers spend almost 10% more when they use the website as an additional way to do business with us compared to when they weren't using the site."

Through surveys and interviews, Crescent found out why its employees weren't supporting this initiative and attempted to right the ship. "Employees didn't have a good idea of what our e-commerce channel had to offer," Mayer says.

To fix things, Crescent employed a number of tactics to educate its staff. "We offered them training opportunities and sent them cheat sheets (FAQs) to hang on their cube walls," Mayer says. He also went on the road to train staff in person—t training about half of Crescent's 1500 employees face to face.

Crescent has also improved how it reaches new and existing customers through search and other forms of marketing, and improved how it engages its online customers.

Tuesday, June 7, 9:30-10:15 am

Full-Steam Ahead to \$1 Trillion+ Sales



Andy Hoar, Principal Analyst,
Forrester Research



Prentis Wilson, vice president,
Amazon Business

As the B2B world conducts more commerce on the web, companies of all sizes will reap more revenue; as a result, all will have to possess a deep understanding of how the transformation to B2B e-commerce happens.

Andy Hoar, principal analyst covering B2B e-commerce at Forrester Research Inc., will discuss key trends in B2B e-commerce from the of customers' demands and sellers' strategies. He'll address what's behind the project surge in U.S. B2B online sales to more than \$1 trillion over the next few years.

For an inside look at one of the biggest and fastest-growing players in B2B e-commerce, Hoar will engage in a dialogue on stage with Prentis Wilson, vice president of Amazon Business, the B2B operation within Amazon.com.

Even for e-commerce behemoth Amazon.com Inc., Amazon Business is producing blow-out growth rates. Launched in April 2015 to replace the former AmazonSupply.com, where Amazon itself was the only seller, Amazon Business—a marketplace where Amazon joins more than 30,000 other sellers—hit \$1 billion sales within its first year and is growing at a month-to-month clip of 20%, Wilson says.

Wilson attributes that growth to steady increases in numbers of customers, suppliers and products. "We're adding new businesses every week, on both the buy side and sell side," he said. He noted that

Amazon Business now has 300,000 registered business accounts among buyers, up from 200,000 at the end of last year, and is adding thousands more every week. Among its new and growing customer segments, he adds, are schools, universities, hospitals, medical clinics, small restaurants, construction contractors and government agencies.

'Amazon Business has 300,000 registered business accounts among buyers, up from 200,000 at the end of last year, and is adding thousands more every week.'

Amazon Business is also expanding its number of products and entering new business and industrial product categories. The B2B portal offers at least 9 million business-specific products, Wilson says. Among new and expanding product categories on Amazon Business are equipment and materials used in the life sciences industry and medical equipment to healthcare organizations.

Among the services it's offering buyers and sellers are business accounts, which allow a company to add thousands of individual buyers, or groups of buyers and departments, authorized to place orders under the same account. A company can run analytics reports to monitor spending by individual buyers or groups of buyers.

WebJaguar assists brands in easy, seamless integration of online systems

Today's B2B retailers and brands share one major challenge when it comes to e-commerce: recreating the customers' offline experience online.

"Some B2B customers have been running their businesses for 10, 20 or 100 years, so the challenge is the ability to get into a place where they can mimic their offline business online, and yet not force them to change the way they run their business," says Bachir Kassir, founder and president of WebJaguar. In order to do this, companies like WebJaguar provide B2B brands with the tools to maintain their current organizational structure, while upgrading to the latest e-commerce technology.

Yet another concern of B2B e-commerce retailers and brands in 2016 is making that e-commerce integration with their current web platforms easy and seamless.

"We at WebJaguar have these solutions to be able to take your current e-commerce world and communicate back and forth with your ERP system, data entry system, etc.," says Kassir. "It can't be an isolated island. With hundreds of orders a day, you don't want to have to manually enter everything into the ERP system."

In addition, many B2B vendors are concerned with acquiring the latest technology to assist sales reps in better performance, while making sure the platforms do not compete with employee jobs.

"We're definitely not going to get rid of the sales rep," says Kassir. "On the contrary, the technology empowers the sales reps and makes them more efficient. In fact, the sales rep's role will be morphed or changed."

WebJaguar currently offers two important tools in the way of assisting sales reps in becoming more efficient. The first tool helps reps to build an online interactive catalogue. What traditionally offline can take weeks or months to build can now be ready in as little as 30 minutes using a company's existing data. The second tool assists reps in building B2B presentations. Rather than going into Powerpoint, building a presentation, then copying and pasting it to send to a client,

the WebJaguar allows a sales rep to click and create a presentation that can be sent to clients within minutes and with pricing.

WebJaguar's platform offers many other tools that help its B2B clients improve e-commerce sales. For example, the Dealer Store solution allows WebJaguar to build a master site for a large B2B company, which the brand can use to generate turnkey websites for their distributors and dealers. The results' benefits are two fold. First, the brand's complete product line is easily made available to all of its dealers. Second, having access to the entire product line empowers dealers to have the right tools in-store and online to present these product options to their B2C consumers.

Other trends that Kassir has seen in the B2B e-commerce space include the need for automation. Simple, quick and easy is what all B2B retailers strive for and what is already the norm for those in the B2C space. WebJaguar's tools in the automation space include E Sign, which automates the process of digital signatures. And yet another tool helps with creating pricing quotes for B2B customers.

In addition, brands in 2016 are looking for technology that allows them to sell products not only on their own e-commerce sites, but also on marketplaces. Technology can enable other sellers to host the brand's products on their site or give access to a view of inventory. The WebJaguar platform can also help with fulfillment of an order through automation, allowing the technology to decide where and how a large purchase order is filled (using different distribution centers if necessary).

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Tuesday, June 7, 10:30-11:00 am

The B2B Customer Journey: When to Offer Guideposts and When to Step Out of the Way

What's a likely course for a B2B buyer, from researching through purchasing to the final sale—and how can sellers best interact with buyers along the way?

Adrienne Hartmann, director of e-commerce, government and customer insights at J.J. Keller & Associates, will share her experiences in how her company uses the web to acquire customers, engage them, close more deals, and build a loyal following.



Adrienne Hartmann,
Director of
E-Commerce,
Government and
Customer Insights,
J.J. Keller & Associates

The process can involve knowing which content—such as product brochures or promotional offers—to display with search marketing and display ads; knowing when and how to reach out with e-mail or live chat; and when a sales rep should step in with the personal touch. J.J. Keller sells compliance manuals, online training courses and services to help companies deal with government regulations in such areas as workplace safety, transportation, human resources and handling of hazardous materials, so every customer need is different. Its customers include 91% of the Fortune 500.

While helping its customers comply with operating regulations and standards, J.J. Keller has also been working to encourage more of them to place orders on JJKeller.com. With average order size notably higher through phone orders than through its e-commerce site, the company has taken several steps to persuade more customers to order online, lowering the cost of processing orders and freeing up sales reps from to focus on more complex orders, Hartman says.

Tuesday, June 7, 11:00-11:45 am

How Well Can Buyers Really Use Your Site?

Developers and clients can be so close to a project that they don't really understand how actual customers shop a site. The only way to know for sure is to observe real customers trying to accomplish a task.

Sonesh Shah, director of digital at Robert Bosch Tool Corp., and Scott Kincaid, vice president of user experience at Usability Sciences Corp., have performed a usability study focusing on subjects attempting to gather information and buy items on B2B websites.

Members of the audience will be able to test their own knowledge of website design when Shah and Kincaid share case study videos, with user commentary, then ask the audience to vote on which next steps the users took.

This session will open eyes as to what seems obvious to business owners but obscure to their online customers.

Shah and Kincaid's study reflects an important trend in B2B e-commerce, involving how companies can succeed in selling online to other businesses—an ongoing process of learning what customers need and how they want to research and buy online, experts say.



Scott Kincaid,
Vice President of
User Experience,
Usability Sciences



Sonesh Shah,
Director, Digital,
Robert Bosch Tool
Corp.

Tuesday, June 7, 12:45-1:30 pm

Selling Complex Products? Build the Right Set of Online Selling Features

A seemingly simple B2B shopping task, such as buying an electronic component, can involve many steps—some complex, some simple. Buyers and sales reps alike make many assumptions, some spoken and some tacit, when working together on an order.

On the Internet, however, buyers have to spell out everything they need. An e-commerce platform that misses a step or presents vague options will fail as a selling medium.

Matt Clark, global director of e-commerce at industrial electronics distributor Premier Farnell, which includes Newark Element 14, and Gene Alvarez, managing vice president of technology research and advisory firm Gartner Inc., will address the multiple e-commerce technology platform options that companies can install, and they'll explain the features that can be important to buyers involved in complex purchases, and help the seller earn the loyalty of repeat customers.

Alvarez will highlight several emerging trends the technology advisory firm has recently spotted in B2B e-commerce, including mobile, the consumerization of the e-commerce experience and the blurring of the physical business and online worlds. Clark will provide examples of how the distributor of electrical components has tackled such particular online hurdles as complex pricing.



Matt Clark, Global
Director of
E-Commerce,
Newark element 14



Gene Alvarez,
Managing Vice
President, Gartner Inc.

Tuesday, June 7, 1:30-2:00 pm

The Foundation of B2B E-Commerce Success: Your Product Information Strategy

When a ground up rebuild of an e-commerce system is necessary, one of the first areas ripe for change is usually the catalog. Creating a consolidated Product Information Management, or PIM, system can easily become the initiative around which development of an e-commerce strategy revolves. Julie Schmitt, e-commerce marketing analyst for Tops Products, a division of printing services company RR Donnelley, will talk about how one company developed its product management platform, the staff and monetary resources it required and how it supported the rest of the e-commerce implementation.

The importance of PIM technology is underscored by a 2015 report by Forrester Research that found many business buyers prefer to purchase products online—but also prefer to purchase only from companies that provide clear and accurate product information.

Forrester surveyed 200 buyers in China involved in such industries as manufacturing, consumer products, life sciences, and oil and gas. The largest group of those buyers—57%—cited accurate product information when asked to name “very important” features for making work-related online purchases.

In another study, of 420 e-commerce executives across several industries, research firm Vanson Bourne found that 54% of respondents had already integrated PIM technology into their B2B e-commerce technology.



Julie Schmitt,
E-Commerce Marketing
Analyst, Tops Products/
RR Donnelley

Tuesday, June 7, 2:00-2:45 pm

Does E-Commerce Self-Service Top the Performance of Sales Reps?

As executives compare e-commerce strategies to traditional selling through account managers and field sales reps, it's helpful to view data on what works. Justin Racine, director of marketing and e-commerce at Geriatric Medical Supply, and Dwayne Doshier, director of customer growth services at Insite Software, will discuss how to use an online dashboard to gain a comprehensive look at such data as sales of product categories and particular SKUs via self-service e-commerce and through sales reps.

Companies can use that data to determine which products sell well without discounted prices through online self-service and which require a sales rep's expertise. Companies can also view customer satisfaction ratings for the purchase of the same products sold through self-service e-commerce and through sales reps, then decide what they need to do to improve customer satisfaction through each channel.

Racine and Doshier will explain how using dashboard analytics provides executives with the perspective to ensure both their e-commerce system and their sales reps are performing at the highest levels for the best return on investment, and how they can use dashboard data to determine the steps to improve performance.



Justin Racine,
Director, Marketing,
E-Commerce,
Geriatric Medical Supply



Dwayne Doshier,
Director, Customer
Growth Services,
Insite Software

Tuesday, June 7, 2:45-3:15 pm

Using Mobile Technology to Keep Sales Reps in the Game—And Hitting Home Runs

As more companies buy products through self-service e-commerce, sales reps face the challenge of evolving to make their contributions more valuable in customer relationships. One way to change is through the use of mobile devices that field sales reps can use to help customers research and buy products.

As customers place more orders through self-service online methods, sales reps can be freed from helping customers place basic orders. And, equipped with the right tools tied to such information as available inventory and customers' contract pricing, reps can spend more time helping customers place larger, higher-margin orders and develop new business with prospects. Brian Finkle, director of e-commerce, Evergreen Enterprises of Virginia, will explain how a field sales rep can, for example, spend more time helping customers choose the best selection of merchandise, and view available and planned inventory to prepare for peak seasons, while using tablets to display detailed images of new products.

Evergreen knows about the importance of arming sales reps with data to serve customers.

Evergreen designs most of the 15,000 SKUs it sells, ranging from license sports merchandise for several professional leagues as well as college teams to home décor, apparel and furniture. It then contracts with Chinese factories to produce the goods. Each season brings new styles and hot items.



Brian Finkle,
Director of
E-commerce,
Evergreen Enterprises
of Virginia

Tuesday, June 7, 3:30-4:00 pm

Helping Small Businesses Shop—Wherever They May Be

A thorough mobile strategy is essential for any company that wants to target online sales to busy buyers. Olam Specialty Coffee, a coffee supply chain management company that connects coffee roasters with coffee producers, has experienced a significant jump in online sales since deploying a mobile commerce strategy in early 2015. Hayden Kwast, Olam's manager of e-commerce and marketing, will discuss how Olam synced its marketing initiatives and e-commerce platform to launch and maintain an effective mobile strategy.

Kwast also plans to discuss how adapting to industry trends drove online business sales at the distributor of coffee beans. He will talk about why OlamSpecialtyCoffee.com relaunched in January 2015 with responsive design, which adapts the layout of an e-commerce site to the size of a shopper's screen, including smartphones and tablets as well as PCs. "A large number of our customers travel frequently. Buyers are shopping from us on the road, travelling and need to check pricing, availability or request samples from whatever device is convenient," Kwast says. "I plan to talk about how we've addressed some of the unique issues facing the B2B industry, share our best practices, and hopefully it helps people."

That redesign produced a 17% spike in online traffic and order volume, Kwast says.

"We had a steady increase in sales beforehand, but there's definitely been a jump since then," he says. "We've seen a big jump in traffic and sales, and we attribute that to the responsive site."



Hayden Kwast,
Manager of
E-Commerce and
Marketing, Olam Coffee

Tuesday, June 7, 4:00-4:45 pm

You Can Make a Retail Site Work in the B2B World—If You Know What You're Doing

As retailers take on more sales to business buyers—such as bulk sales of gifts or uniforms to corporations—they need e-commerce sites that deliver the basics to B2B buyers: a retail-like set of site features that make finding and purchasing products fast and easy and a complementary set of B2B features that ensure the buyer is acting within authority and within budget.

Beyond that, buyers want extensive product specs and installation instructions; the ability to share planned purchases with colleagues and supervisors before completing a purchase; and the option to pay with purchase orders integrated with their accounts/payable system. Our speakers, one a provider of e-commerce technology and the other a B2B seller, will share insights on how to design an effective site for B2B e-commerce.

Ed Stevens became chief operating officer of Kibo at the company's launch in January 2016. He has a proven and varied background in both retail operations and in managing growing companies. Most recently, Ed served as Chairman and CEO for Shopatron for the past 15 years. He previously served as founder of NORVEL Ltd, an importer of components for the toy and hobby industries.

He will be joined by a retailer (who was not yet named by the time of this report) who is also working in the online B2B world and will discuss what it takes to engage customers in both markets.



Ed Stevens,
Chief Operating Officer,
Kibo

IF IT WAS ONLY THIS
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Internet Retailer

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