



Media information

B2B e-commerce: 9 trends for 2019

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B2B e-commerce will continue to gain in importance in 2019. Forrester Research has shown that the global B2B online trading market will grow to \$1.2 trillion by 2021. In 2019 companies will have to further consider whether they are prepared for this development, and what they must still improve. For the coming year Roland Kumin, CEO of Balluun AG, sees 9 major trends that will shape and influence the area of B2B commerce.

1. The B2B buyer journey is primarily digital

In recent years buyer demographics have changed - more than half of buyers are millennials. And this new type of digitally savvy buyer is primarily looking online for trends, information, offers and new suppliers. According to a study by Lenati, 67% of the B2B buyer journey is already digitally based - a figure that will increase further in 2019 and is intended to take the customer into account - especially when it comes to cross-media and personalized offers.

2. Personalizing the customer experience

In 2019 personalization, which is already extremely important in the B2C sector, will also become increasingly important for the B2B sector, not least due to digitally savvy buyers. However, B2B is not only about personalized and localized product offerings, but also about individualized communication, and building long-term relationships and trust.

3. Customer success management for shaping the customer journey

Customer success management (CSM) will become increasingly important in 2019 in order to ensure personalization, localization, adaptation to customer requirements and accordingly active customer loyalty. CSM teams hold together the basic core of the customer journey, and use data to develop holistic, flexible and anticipatory approaches to customer management, customer development and ultimately value delivery.

4. B2B social selling

Last year there was already plenty of buzz about the term 'social selling'. But what does this mean in concrete terms? It's all about using social networks to find potential business partners and to network

and exchange with them. In 2019, online social networks and increasing integration into a company's omnichannel mix will play a major role. However, it is also about integrating these channels sensibly into existing communications to reduce complexity.

5. "Holisms": a holistic approach as the key to success

The touchpoints through which customers come into contact with a company or a product are diverse and will constantly increase. The challenge for the omnichannel customer journey in 2019 will be to keep activities, audiences, channels and technologies together, streamline content to counteract increasing fragmentation and keep an eye on achieving the ultimate seamless experience to customers which we are all striving for.

6. Reputation beats price

The development of e-commerce has developed in the spirit of B2C - and B2C customers are guided by price when deciding on a purchase. In the B2B sector, however, the focus is on long-term contacts - and trust. In the rapid rise of B2B e-commerce in recent years this has long been neglected. As a result, the trend will be an increase in the importance of those tools and solutions that favor long-term relationship building rather than promoting and propagating commoditized one-off purchases.

7. Democratization and disruption of the market through software-as-a-service solutions

More and more organizations are realizing that they have to be present and sell online, but many still shy away from the cost and effort involved. SaaS applications will play an increasingly important role here. The reason for this is that their scalability offers companies a rapid solution and a manageable investment in terms of resources and finance, enabling even medium-sized companies to become easily digitally active.

8. SaaS-enabled marketplaces

SaaS-enabled marketplaces are a business model that combines the advantages of the SaaS technology with a online marketplace. In other words, these platforms link supply and demand and facilitate relationship, matching and connections between buyer and seller. In addition, they link and entire supply chain on a single digital market network and offer a completely new business model for the providers of these platforms which can be monetized.

9. Combining everything: the year 2019 belongs to market networks

All these points culminate in one solution: social commerce platforms, otherwise referred to as 'market networks'. These combine the advantages of industry communities and digital marketplaces, and are

therefore the solution for all vertical markets. They enable wholesalers, retailers, suppliers, international brands and buyers to communicate with each other, establish and maintain relationships and do business efficiently at all times. They offer a solution for all the challenges confronting companies in the B2B online sector: they reduce the fragmentation of the customer journey and move the customer further into the center of attention. All data flows together on one platform, which means that social commerce marketplaces enable targeted customer success management. Long-lasting networks and secure communities create trust during the sales process.

Conclusion:

Roland Kūmin states: "2019 will continue to be an exciting year for the B2B commerce sector. On the one hand, it will be a question of focusing even more on the customer with technologies and comprehensive customer success management. The reason for this is that the buying process has changed once a for all: complexity and the increasing fragmentation of the omnichannel customer journey must be addressed.

At the technical level, software-as-a-service solutions will play an even more important role, because they offer companies manageable effort and costs, combined with full scalability. Overall, the importance of social commerce marketplaces will therefore increase offering the one-stop for lead generation and management, e-commerce, business networks, customer success, marketing and social selling and finally digital transformation."

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Balluun – Powering the Future of Business Networks

Balluun is a leading global provider of social e-commerce solutions for the B2B market. With flexible Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) solutions, Balluun supports global B2B trade around the clock 365 days a year with industry-specific digital marketplaces. Balluun enables wholesalers, retailers, suppliers, international brands and buyers to communicate with one another and do business efficiently at any time. Headquartered in Zurich and with US offices in Silicon Valley and New York as well as branches in Hong Kong, Lausanne and London, Balluun works closely with the international B2B community. Balluun offers powerful technology, an open and scalable cloud solution and a worldwide marketing and support organization. Its social e-commerce platform "Balluun365" makes it possible to easily and cost-effectively build digital marketplaces with a fully integrated social architecture, and to scale them

as required. With a three-tier system, a vibrant social community, a dedicated digital showroom and a state-of-the-art transaction level, "Balluun365" differs significantly from linear e-commerce solutions.
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