



**HANDSHAKE**



CASE STUDY

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# Reactivating Dormant Accounts with B2B eCommerce

How outdoor accessories manufacturer Buff, Inc. saw inactive buyers return to place orders online with B2B eCommerce.

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# One often surprising outcome of a B2B eCommerce implementation is the reactivation of dormant customers.

Suppliers across manufacturing and distribution are rapidly implementing online ordering portals in an effort to keep pace with competitors and give B2B buyers a self-service channel comparable to the consumer eCommerce experience.

Often, a surprising and unintended outcome of a B2B eCommerce implementation is the reactivation of previously dormant customers.

B2B buyers may become inactive for a number of reasons. In many scenarios, inactivity can be traced back to the operational decisions of the manufacturer or distributor. One example: a supplier might deem an account “unprofitable to serve” with a sales rep and stop actively servicing the account. In other scenarios, a buyer will choose to give their business to a competitor with a more convenient ordering process.

B2B eCommerce, however, allows suppliers to provide a highly automated, self-service buying experience to all customers, regardless of profitability. This has led many suppliers to witness inactive customers return once they’ve launched their online ordering portals.

One such example is the story of Buff, Inc., a leading accessory manufacturer that sells their multifunctional headwear to both independent and big box outdoor retailers. Just a few short months since the well-crafted marketing launch of their B2B eCommerce portal, they’ve seen powerful results: the reactivation of previously dormant accounts, increased sales, and half of all customer orders now being placed through their self-service channel.

## Why Buff, Inc. Needed B2B eCommerce

Buff Headwear’s sales operation consists of a full-service channel—with sales reps selling at trade shows and customer visits—and customer-driven ordering.

Buff, Inc. invested in two of Handshake’s platform solutions:



**Handshake Rep**, a mobile order writing app for their reps



**Handshake Direct Online (HSDO)**, a web online ordering portal for their buyers

# Buyers were increasingly asking for self-service access, directly requesting online ordering.

Selling a tactile product with technical benefits that are best explained in person, the full-service sales channel is very important to their business. Explains Marketing Specialist Tara Hansen:

“Buyers really have that a-ha moment when they have the product in their hands and can see in-person the different features and benefits it offers.”

Orders were submitted manually by customers and sales reps, and it was becoming unwieldy. Some buyers would fax in orders that had been scribbled down on napkins, and sales reps would send in orders over email without including any item numbers, which required more back-and-forth communication. In cases of orders getting placed for out-of-stock items, reps and buyers would have to be notified of backorders, causing order fulfillment and shipping delays. According to Customer Service Supervisor Molly Izenstark, “Lots of things were piling up, and it was getting to be too much to manage.”

It was not only the customer service team that was feeling the pain from these manual processes. Buyers were increasingly asking for self-service access, with many inbound orders coming in along with a request for online ordering.

The Buff, Inc. team knew these manual processes were not scalable, and decided to put technology in place to streamline order submission by both reps and buyers. Buff, Inc. chose Handshake, and invested in two of the Handshake platform solutions to enable both their full-service and self-service channels:

- **Handshake Rep**, a mobile order writing application for their reps to write orders at trade shows and customer visits.
- **Handshake Direct Online (HSDO)**, a B2B eCommerce online ordering portal for their buyers.

## Before Handshake:

- Orders submitted manually by reps and customers
- Too much back-and-forth communication over email
- Order fulfillment and shipping delays



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*Lots of things were piling up, and it was getting to be too much to manage.*

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Molly Izenstark  
Customer Service Supervisor

# The Handshake-NetSuite Integration



**ERP System:** NetSuite

**Data Flows:** Customers, Products, Pricing, Promotions, Orders, Inventory

Before launching the Handshake technologies to their sales reps and buyers, it was important to build a seamless integration between Handshake and Buff Headwear's highly customized instance of NetSuite, their ERP.

Given this level of customization—each department across the business had its own custom views and permissions across the system—Buff, Inc. was often designated a self-proclaimed “problem child” whenever a third party integration was required. Luckily, given Handshake's deep experience building integrations for other NetSuite users, Buff, Inc. was able to leverage Handshake's turnkey NetSuite integration to get up and running quickly.

Buff Headwear's vision for the Handshake-NetSuite integration was to ensure that both buyers and reps could view live inventory data in Handshake, and use this accurate data to place orders themselves. The order would then be automatically pushed to NetSuite, so the customer service team would never have to touch the order at any stage of the process. They also wanted their dealers to receive automatic order confirmations and tracking information.

## **Leveraging Expertise of the NetSuite Consultant**

Buff Headwear's NetSuite instance, as in the case of other manufacturers and distributors who lack in-house technical expertise, is managed by a value-added reseller (VAR). Says Hansen about their VAR, Heather Greene: “She comes in with a NetSuite background, and is very familiar with the software. She understands the backend, the way the systems speak together, and what can or can't be done.”

Given the amount of data that would be syncing between Handshake and NetSuite, Buff, Inc. had Greene manage both the initial integration and any subsequent sync profile changes.

## **Creating Custom Workflows**

In addition to flipping on the turnkey NetSuite API integration, including standard transmission of customer, order, product and inventory data between Handshake and the ERP, Handshake worked with Buff to further customize the integration given their specific business needs.

In Buff Headwear's NetSuite instance, a sales rep is associated with each buyer, so a custom workflow was needed to ensure that new buyers that are created in NetSuite are automatically created in Handshake, eliminating the need to create these accounts twice. There was also custom work done that ensured their complex promotional code structure was represented in both systems.

## **The Result: Seamless Order Placement & Fulfillment**

With the Handshake-NetSuite integration in place, the Buff, Inc. team no longer needs to manually enter any orders into the NetSuite interface.

What's more, buyers automatically receive an order confirmation when their order is submitted through Handshake, an official sales order confirmation once the order is synced over to NetSuite, and tracking information once the order is shipped. This seamless integration has drastically reduced the amount of manual work required by the team and has considerably improved the customer experience.

# Buff, Inc. commissions their sales reps on all orders, whether or not they are placed online.

## The HSDO Launch

Buff, Inc. was committed to omnichannel selling best practices and modern marketing tactics when it came to the launch of their online ordering portal.

First, Buff, Inc. knew that creating alignment between their full-service and self-service channel was key to a successful B2B eCommerce implementation. As such, they commission their sales reps on all orders from their respective accounts, whether or not they are placed online. This served to establish the sales team as ambassadors, rather than adversaries, of their self-serve channel.

Next, Buff Headwear's marketing team was directly involved in the launch, and had success with the following tactics:

1. An **email campaign launching the portal**, offering a time-sensitive 10% off promotion for every customer's first online order. This email linked directly to their portal login page, which prompted buyers to register for their online ordering account. The campaign was so effective that they extended the promo for an additional month.
2. A **customized dealer login page** that created a cohesive, polished brand experience. Buff, Inc. asked the Handshake onboarding team to tailor the dealer login page with custom HTML, creating a more visual landing page. This ensured that any dealers who were directed via email directly to their B2B eCommerce portal—but were not logged in—were still given an on-brand experience.
3. **Ongoing email marketing campaigns** that highlight specific products and seasonal launches. Buff, Inc. has also segmented their dealer list by "type" and are in the process of experimenting with more targeted email campaigns. These emails will highlight specific products relevant for buyers who specialize in fishing, backpacking, or running, for example.

Buff, Inc. drives use of HSDO with the following marketing tactics:



An email launch campaign offering a 10% off promotion



A customized dealer login page



Ongoing targeted email marketing campaigns

# Within a few months of launching HSDO, 50% of Buff Headwear's orders are now placed online.

## The Results: Increased Sales & Customer Reactivation

After having Handshake Rep in place with their sales team for over six months, Buff, Inc. rolled out HSDO to their customers in January 2017. Within just a few short months of their launch, they have seen impressive results, with over 50% of orders now being placed through their B2B eCommerce self-serve channel.

Buff, Inc. was not surprised to see how quickly dealers started placing orders online. Explains Izenstark:

“Our dealers are used to B2B sites with their other suppliers. Knowing that Buff has one just makes it easier for them. They prefer to log in and buy, rather than making a call or sending an email, and then having to wait on a response.”

### Bringing back dormant accounts

Buff Headwear's dormant buyers were referred to as “house accounts” and resided in territories where there were no reps on the ground. Buff, Inc. was pleasantly surprised to see that on Day One of their B2B eCommerce portal launch, orders began coming in from previously inactive accounts. After seeing this immediate result, they connected why previously inactive buyers would place orders again once a self-serve option was made available to them. According to Izenstark:

“In some cases, because our inside sales reps and customer service team are not on the road, we aren't even sure if the store is active anymore. We would outbound call the accounts or personally email them. And nothing. To order with us, they would either have to speak to someone on the phone or fill out an order form. With our B2B, they don't have to communicate with anyone, and it's done.”



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*Our dealers are used to B2B sites with their other suppliers. Knowing that Buff, Inc. has one just makes it easier for them. They prefer to log in and buy, rather than making a call or sending an email, and then having to wait on a response.*

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Molly Izenstark  
Customer Service Supervisor

# With HSDO in place, buyers are placing orders for items they've never ordered before.

Sales reps are also excited about this customer reactivation. As one rep experienced:

“Oh, wow, I just got a notification that my account placed an order. I've been bugging them for months, and they just did it so easily.”

After only 2 months, Buff, Inc. has reactivated 25 previously dark accounts, and they expect this number to grow.

## **Product discovery, clearing inventory, and at-once orders**

With HSDO in place, buyers are placing orders for items they've never ordered before. Buff, Inc. attributes this to a few factors. For one thing, the strong visual browsing experience of the digital catalog facilitates better **product discovery**. Additionally, the customer-specific pricing in the portal has eliminated the friction once caused by buyers having to cross-reference the paper catalog with a separate pricing list. Now, all the information is one central place, and the dealer can just log in and buy.

In addition, Buff, Inc. has also used their online ordering portal to sell older items that were historically never printed in the current version of their paper catalogs. This has helped them **clear out old inventory** and sell items that buyers did not previously have access to.

Finally, Buff, Inc. has used a smart approach to drive **more at-once orders** at trade shows. An environment often used to secure pre-season orders, Buff, Inc. offers promotions to buyers who make at-once orders through their portal at the show. This tactic not only brings in additional revenue, but also serves to familiarize buyers with the HSDO buyer interface with in-person training.

## After Handshake:

- ✓ Dormant customer reactivation
- ✓ More product discoverability
- ✓ Clearing out of old inventory
- ✓ More at-once orders at trade shows



of Buff Headwear's orders are now placed through HSDO

# Self-service B2B eCommerce portals lead to increased sales and reactivation of previously dormant customers.

## The Undeniable Impact of Self Service

Manufacturers and distributors who have implemented self-service B2B eCommerce portals are reaping the benefits of increased sales and the reactivation of previously dormant customers.

To provide your buyers with an online ordering portal that will drive real results for your business, contact us today.

Email: [info@handshake.com](mailto:info@handshake.com)

US Toll Free: +1 (855) 532-9044

International: +1 (646) 434-2553



*In some cases, we aren't even sure if the store is active anymore. We would outbound call the accounts or personally email them. And nothing. To order with us, they would either have to speak to someone on the phone or fill out an order form. With our B2B, they don't have to communicate with anyone, and it's done.*



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