HANDSHAKE
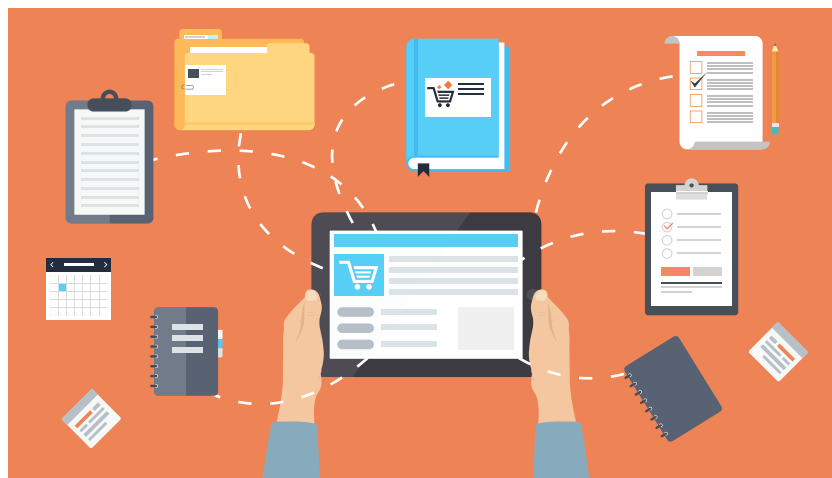
Digitizing An Extensive Product Catalog with Handshake

How three brands with a high volume of SKUs and product variants were able to make the switch to digital catalogs and sell more effectively.

# Many wholesalers struggle to manage their high-volume businesses on paper.

We live in an economy of choice. Customers are demanding, competition is fierce, and many wholesale businesses have built incredibly diverse product portfolios to meet the needs of their retailers. Whether it's a large number of SKUs or a dizzying array of colors, sizes, and styles, many wholesale distributors are rising to the challenge and selling from enormous catalogs.

In this age of mobile technology and constant connectivity, however, wholesalers across industries are still managing their high-volume businesses on paper. They are printing expensive, unwieldy product catalogs that are difficult to sell from, struggling to deal with complex variants, and sorting through order forms hundreds of line items long. While these manual processes present efficiency challenges for many businesses, it is especially difficult for wholesalers with hundreds or even thousands of products. To make matters worse, many companies simply can't find alternative solutions that can accommodate the sheer scale of their catalogs.

With the ability to digitize large amounts of product data, Handshake's B2B commerce technology is specifically designed to handle the true volume of these catalogs, making products more visible to customers, variants easier to organize, and orders faster to write. Unsurprisingly, wholesale brands that have adopted this technology have seen a huge impact, from increased order volume to faster fulfillment.

Getting a Comprehensive View of the Catalog

Paper catalogs are a familiar tool for many wholesale businesses, but they present several limitations. For businesses with a large number of SKUs, it can be impossible for customers to see all the products offered, especially when flipping through pages and pages of a catalog resembling a telephone book.
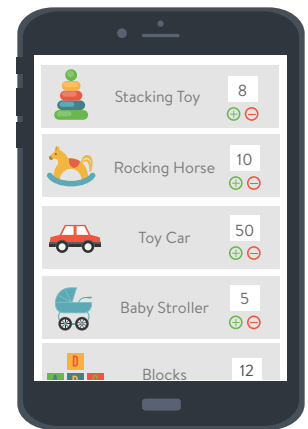
Wholesalers who've transitioned from paper to digital catalogs have seen increased order volume and faster fulfillment.

B2B commerce technology should simplify complex variants.

For Australian toy distributor Childsmart, the ability to transfer all of their product images from paper to digital helped them increase their average order size by 20%. According to Inventory Manager Mary Licandro, the reason is deceptively simple. Customers are now simply aware of the existence of certain products that were never shown to them in the paper catalog. "We've found that when buyers are able to quickly see all the products and images in one digital interface, they tend to add more products to their order," says Licandro.

Digitizing a large product catalog allows companies to showcase their products in a more organized, detailed, and visual way than ever before. Handshake also allows brands to store customer-specific pricing information, so that each customer only sees the pricing that applies to them, and sales reps can focus less on memorizing pricing terms and more on selling.

Organizing Product Variants

Product variants, or variations in color, size, or style, can be incredibly confusing to manage--especially when a product can have multiple variants, creating a complex matrix of options. Every business treats its variants a little differently. Some have separate SKUs for each size or color combination, and others have master SKUs for each item. Some brands use both systems for different products. B2B commerce technology should be able to accommodate a clear presentation of any and all variants, no matter how complex.

Take jewelry brand Martin Flyer, for instance. The company has been creating designer engagement rings since 1945, and now has over 20,000 unique products. IT Director Cherian Chacko explains, "It's how the bridal industry works. For any one product, you'll have different variants--six different metals and varying diamond weights and sizes. For any one product, you could end up with up to fifty SKUs. As a result, our catalog was enormous."
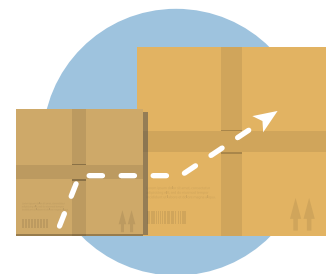

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Mary Licandro
Inventory Manager, Childsmart

Childsmart's average order size increased **20%** after switching to digital catalogs.

Digital catalogs make it easier to sell multiple brands.

The company couldn't print detailed descriptions for every SKU and variant in their catalog, making product details available only for certain styles. To remedy the issue, the company tried to put all of their catalog information into a Dropbox folder, but it was just too much data. According to Martin Flyer's IT Director, Cherian Chacko, that's when "we came to a point where we decided that our reps had to be able to carry the information with them everywhere they went."

Chacko came up against several software vendors that could not accommodate the size of their catalog. But after finding Handshake, Martin Flyer's sales reps now carry iPads and can scroll through their catalog with ease. Each product's available variants are organized in either a grid or list view, making it easy to choose particular variants to add to an order. As more products are added, the new SKUs and details are synced from headquarters to all reps in the field, keeping everyone on the same page.

Writing the Order with Ease

Having a large catalog can also be a challenge when it comes to actually writing an order, especially when an average order is dozens or even hundreds of line items long. American Crafts sells over 4000 active SKUs under both the American Crafts brand and a family of nine other owned and licensed brands, including Crate Paper and Bazzill Basics. Many of their retailers––craft and hobby stores––purchase from some or all of these lines.

While many wholesale reps carry order forms, American Crafts' reps were using an order booklet. This multi-page form was actually an attempt at making the order writing process easier, with all the products under each of their ten brands listed by category on several pages. Sales reps could then check off products that were being ordered. This proved to be an incredibly cumbersome process. Indeed, no matter what they did to better organize and segment the form, sales reps would find it incredibly difficult to find the right product boxes to check off.

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Cherian Chacko
IT Director, Martin Flyer

A digital catalog can increase order volume and speed up fulfillment.

According to VP of Marketing Grant Madsen, "It has made order taking faster and more efficient. Everyone has jumped on board using it and enjoys it...Handshake has cut down the duration of time spent during a booth appointment by half." Because the company no longer needs to manually enter order information into their ERP by hand, their order processing speed has gone up.

From Paper to Digital

For wholesale distributors, the paper-to-digital transition is more critical than ever. No matter how extensive their catalogs, brands are increasingly giving their reps and customers the ability to view products, descriptions, and pricing in a highly visual, easily navigable format.

No longer limited by an endless shuffle of paper and solutions unable to accommodate large collections, wholesalers, manufacturers, and distributors across a wide variety of industries are now using Handshake to increase sales and provide a modern customer experience.

Within Handshake, each of American Crafts' product lines is easily navigable, and reps have the option to use a Bluetooth scanner to add a product to an order. Where before, reps would have to open up a catalog or use printouts to walk a customer through all their available products, they can now use Handshake to simply swipe through all the different categories in the system. They can even pull customer order history reports to see if there are any product gaps they need to fill.

Want to know more about how Handshake can digitize your product catalog and streamline your ordering process? Contact us today.

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AMERICAN CRAFTS™
THE COLOR OF MEMORIES™

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Grant Madsen
VP of Marketing, American Crafts