HANDSHAKE

From Resource to Partner:
How IT Can Drive Business Value with
Sales Order Management Software

Wholesale IT is moving beyond the "cost center" stigma to deliver business value.

Since the IT boom of the 1980s and early 1990s, the world of technology has undergone massive change, with rapid advancements in cloud computing, data analytics, mobile technology, and user experience design.

Within this fast-moving technology environment, IT has been struggling to catch up, constrained by their perception as cost centers, the ongoing maintenance of outdated IT infrastructure, and the struggle to convince C-suite stakeholders of the pressing need for change.

As enterprises begin to embrace mobile devices, the cloud, and intuitive user experiences that echo those of our consumer lives, however, IT has a growing opportunity to move beyond the "cost center" stigma.

According to *Harvard Business Review*, "IT must be seen less as merely developing and deploying technology, and more as a source of innovation and transformation that delivers business value, leveraging technology instead of directly delivering it."

In wholesale in particular, where the status quo is characterized by outdated paper processes and major technology gaps in the critical areas of sales and customer service, CIOs and IT teams have a huge opportunity to deliver this kind of business value:

Wholesale IT can enhance sales enablement and transform customer experiences by taking greater control over how information flows through the organization.

Imagine a wholesale IT department no longer mired in a sea of inefficiencies. An IT department no longer at risk of delivering projects late and over-budget. Instead, IT

is helping to reengineer existing processes to develop reporting mechanisms that increase upsell and average order value, and they're giving customer service teams the data they need to proactively reach out to retailers.

In the following pages, this paper will address:

- **Why** taking greater control over this data is crucial to business success in today's information economy.
- **How** to enable seamless, value-driving information flows with turnkey SaaS solutions.
- **What** business results IT can deliver.

> **WHOLESALE IT CAN ENHANCE SALES ENABLEMENT AND TRANSFORM CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES BY TAKING GREATER CONTROL OVER HOW INFORMATION FLOWS THROUGH THE ORGANIZATION.**

As wholesalers seek to keep pace with competitors in an ever-changing marketplace, more and more businesses are realizing that an unfettered flow of information is key to how they deliver products and services to customers.

By implementing solutions that can be delivered quickly to provide greater access to data and tangibly impact revenue, wholesale IT departments are finally moving from the back of the house to the front lines.

Taking Ownership of Sales Intelligence in an Information Economy

In an industry where the focus inevitably remains on sales, IT is often on the periphery at best, or in an antagonistic position at worst, typically responsible for back-office technology related to supply chain, inventory, and logistics. While CIOs are stewards of this technology, it's time for them to take more control over the information that is the lifeblood of the organization (inventory data, sales reporting, etc.) and how it is processed, disseminated, and used.

While wholesale businesses have widely adopted technology to run their back office operations (accounting, inventory management, etc.), the analog world remains woefully well represented in the critical customer-facing areas of sales and customer service, where countless B2B sales transactions are still occurring on paper, and resources are spent on 1980s-style manual data processing.

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In this shuffle of paper, form fields, and bad handwriting, wholesale companies continue to underutilize data, creating a crisis-level lack of data collection and analysis. As a result, many wholesalers are unable to see clear gaps and opportunities, as well as provide the

insight-led sales experiences that B2B customers need to make purchase decisions. IT intervention is the answer to this crisis, stepping into one of the most critical enterprise roles in the new information economy. IT will become the insight center at the core of a wholesale business, driving sales and revenue by:

- Aggregating sales data to influence key product, marketing, and sales decisions.
- Enabling reps to sell more strategically with real-time access to customer notes, order history, reports, and inventory data.
- Improving the customer experience with a more consultative approach.
- Giving customers 24/7 access to online product information and an eCommerce platform.

Ultimately, it is the interplay between people and information that pushes business forward, and IT teams must be at the epicenter of that activity.

Unlocking the Power of Data with an Off-the-shelf Solution: Sales Order Management Software

In order to become this insight center and partner to the core business, IT no longer has to take on the risk and ongoing maintenance of building an internal solution. Instead, they can leverage off-the-shelf, customizable software that can be fully integrated with existing backend systems and databases of information.

Increasingly, more sophisticated organizations are looking beyond their internal systems to compete in an "API economy," in which Application Programming Interfaces are enabling instantaneous information exchange and more seamless collaboration across

# A simple, integrated approach to a complex problem.

departments.

APIs are already instrumental among online businesses, but wholesale IT departments are discovering that integrating existing backend systems with SaaS solutions designed for the front-end sales process can eradicate inefficient, high-touch sales and order processing workflows and drive efficiency across the entire order-to-cash cycle.

The solution needed to drive this level of efficiency must provide easy access to information for sales enablement while streamlining order writing and submission. It must give retailers a modern, multi-channel experience, with the ability to find information and place orders wherever and whenever they like. It must allow for seamless information exchanges between reps in the field and back office personnel, providing a holistic, detailed picture of the brand's entire relationship with the customer.

Encompassing Mobile Order Writing, B2B eCommerce, centralized Web Order Management, and back office integration, Sales Order Management software is the comprehensive solution wholesale brands are looking for––designed to completely change the way brands and their sales reps interact with customers:

• The Mobile Order Writing application allows sales reps to access a digital product catalog, customer order history, customer specific pricing, and inventory data on the road. In just a few taps, orders are written offline at field appointments and trade shows. Once back online, orders automatically sync with back office systems and email confirmations can be sent off to customers.

• The B2B eCommerce portal allows retail buyers to log into the brand's wholesale online store, view products, and place orders 24/7. It's a platform that keeps information like product specs and availability, marketing promotions, and merchandising guidelines readily accessible to customers.

• The Web Order Management platform acts as a central hub, allowing customer service teams and internal administrators to manage all incoming orders, update product and customer information from one location, and compile sales performance reports at the customer level, rep level, and product level.

• Back office integration, the final piece, is key. When orders are written in the field or placed online via the B2B eCommerce portal, they can be synced back to an ERP for quick invoicing and fulfillment. Likewise, data like inventory levels can be seamlessly transferred to sales reps' mobile devices in the field.

Mobile Order Writing

B2B eCommerce

Web Order Management

Back Office Integration
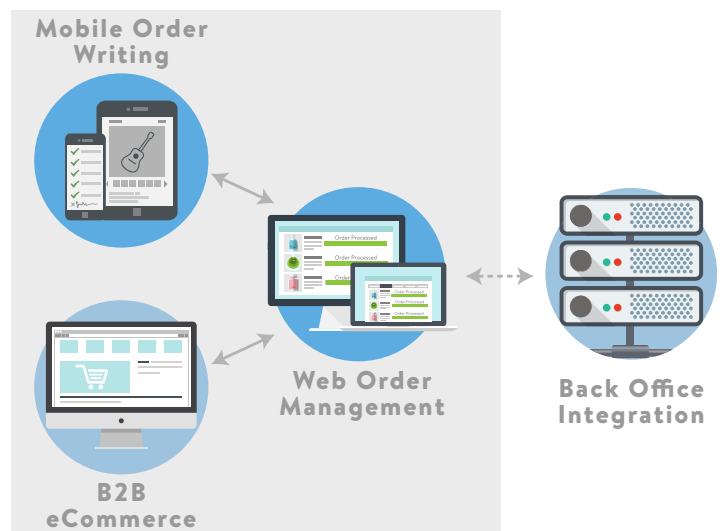
Sales Order Management Software can drive revenue, efficiency, and and productivity.

Delivering Value Across the Organization

Whether it's a company with limited IT resources or a large enterprise with an extensive IT infrastructure, sales order management software delivers the rapid time-to-value and low risk that modern businesses are looking for.

After implementation, training needs for administrators and sales reps are minimal, placing little additional burden on IT teams. While the maintenance work required by legacy systems are often viewed internally as budget "black holes" that can reinforce negative opinions of IT, simple, controlled projects like a sales order management software implementation are viewed as worthwhile, revenue-generating, and––most importantly––strategic.

Sales order management software can deliver value across Sales, Operations, and IT in the following ways:

• In Sales, reps gain access to data to provide strategic insights like inventory levels, customer order history, and regional sales performance to drive better decision-making among retailers. With transactional, buyer-initiated interactions like routine reorders coming through a B2B eCommerce portal, sales reps can concentrate more on upselling and providing a consultative experience in higher-stakes conversations. Wholesalers using Handshake's sales order management software, for instance, have seen 33% increases in orders written and 20% increases in Average Order Value.

• In Operations, the instantaneous sync of order information from the field to the back office enables faster, more efficient order fulfillment. Order processing costs are lowered, errors and misshipments are reduced, and customer service resources are redirected toward proactive outreach and process improvement rather than data entry. One Handshake user saw data entry man-hours reduced by 50%, while another saw an incredible 99% increase in order fulfillment speed.

• In IT, the ability to make a positive impact on the bottom-line raises the team's standing in the organization. By automating the order writing and submission process, IT has become the source of not just greater efficiency, but also critical data insights, increased sales, higher fill rates, and faster fulfillment.

> **66 IN IT, THE ABILITY TO MAKE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE BOTTOM-LINE RAISES THE TEAM'S STANDING IN THE ORGANIZATION. 99**

From Resource to Partner

For years, companies have underinvested in IT, a department often forced to maintain existing systems without a long-term strategy. Today, however, IT executives have the opportunity to connect new, game-changing systems to their existing infrastructure, and achieve these implementations with smaller budgets and lower risk than ever before.

IT teams are becoming valued partners to the line of business.

These changes go beyond technology––they're about taking control of an organization's information flows and leveraging them to drive profits. They're about IT creating more collaborative relationships with sales and operations. They're about changing IT's role in the wholesale ecosystem, and enabling greater communication, engagement, and value among departments, partners, and customers.

The competitive landscape is changing. In the wake of the sudden flood of mobile, cloud, and eCommerce technology in the market, IT teams have become more instrumental than ever. The IT department is no longer an adjunct to the core business, but a partner critical to the very products and customer experiences a brand has to offer, driving revenue and propelling the entire organization into a modern future.

> **"THE IT DEPARTMENT IS NO LONGER AN ADJUNCT TO THE CORE BUSINESS, BUT A PARTNER CRITICAL TO THE VERY PRODUCTS AND CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES A BRAND HAS TO OFFER."**

About Handshake

Founded in 2010 and headquartered in New York City, Handshake is the leading sales order management platform for wholesale, supporting both global distributed sales teams and small to medium sized businesses. Handshake has raised $9.5 million to date from notable investors including Emergence Capital and SoftTech VC.

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