

Embracing the digital, but keeping it personal: Würth masters its digitization

About Würth

Würth is a B2B market leader in the field of international trade of assembly and fixing materials, selling via more than 35.000 sales representatives and an advanced B2B commerce platform in more than eighty countries all over the world. This traditional family business has transformed itself into an omni-channel organisation, with the customer at the center of all innovations.

www.wuerth.de

A smart vending machine for hand tools, warehouse cabinets that scan stock themselves, or even unmanned shops: with sophisticated digital solutions, Würth simplifies the purchasing process of 3 million customers worldwide. Nevertheless, the management continues to rely on the basis of their success: personal customer contact.

Numerous production lines in manufacturing, transport and automotive industries are supplied from its wide range of products: screws, anchors, plugs, machines, chemicals, workshop and protective equipment. The range is diverse, but Würth's strength lies in the process. The screw connecting part A to B is not expensive by itself. But the process costs are all the higher: "You don't want to have to worry about such C parts, they only become important when they aren't there. Because then, it really becomes expensive." Gerard Scheffel, E-Commerce Manager at Würth explains.

More than just a web shop

You can actually buy that one screw anywhere, but above all Würth wants to facilitate the difficult process of purchasing and stock management: "We can't distinguish ourselves in the specific articles, but we can in the connection with our digital solutions", Scheffel claims. "For us, e-business is more than just the web shop."

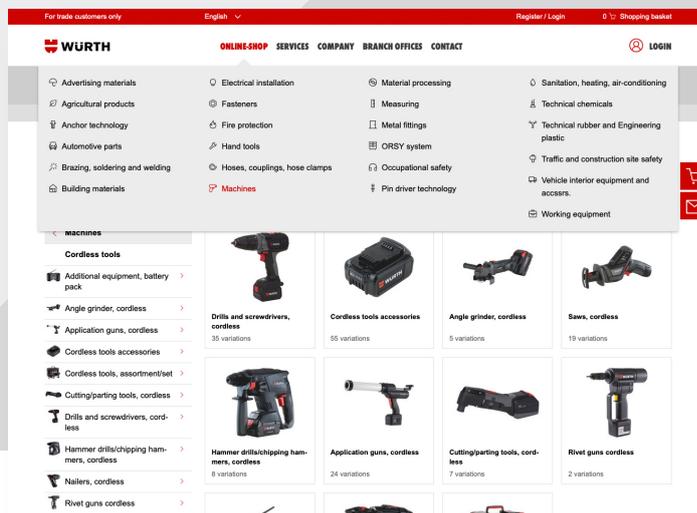
Ideas have become reality at Würth Netherlands, as a vending machine full of tools proves. An integration with the web shop and the dedicated app means that employees have the necessary tools at hand immediately. And there's more: a smart storage cupboard, which detects with a built-in scan strip whether your favorite product is on the shelf or not. Alternatively, there is the smart toolbox with custom inlay, which can also scan independently whether the content is complete. For customers who want it less fancy: With the app or a hand scanner they can just as easily manage stock and purchases on site.

Personal customer contact remains of high importance

It is true that the web shop remains the largest source of revenue among the digital solutions, followed by the app by a distance. But online and offline, a total turnover of 12.7 billion euros was generated worldwide in 2017. However, sales in the store or by a customer representative remains vital for Würth's company strategy. So, every Würth customer has its own sales accountant, who visits every now and then for advice or stock inventory. In an era of unprecedented digitization and automation, particularly in the industrial sector, personal customer loyalty remains the most important basis for Würth: "This way we get the sales transaction out of

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GERARD SCHEFFEL, E-COMMERCE MANAGER AT WÜRTH



anonymity, and ensure the survival of your company. The representative is not only there to sell articles, but also to advise and bind”, Scheffel says.

Customers who navigate the web shop not only can contact their sales representative without switching the channel, but also see their customer-specific price conditions based on their purchase volume and segment. “The absolute trick is to maintain this price at every touchpoint, whether you are in the store, running through stock with your sales representative or whilst placing an order in the app.”

Strikingly enough, the average order amount online is almost the same as that via a sales representative on location. It also appears that Würth’s customers return faster if they have a combination of online and offline contact points.

Large assortment, big competition

Returning customers do offer stability, but day-to-day business is more than that. Customers are taken over, go bankrupt or change their supplier. That’s why you have to make sure you keep growing. Because of Würth’s wide range of solutions and products, there is no direct competitor. Instead, there are several competitors from various sectors at stake: one from the automotive industry, the transport sector or chemicals, but most importantly it is the local specialist, who may have the biggest effect on each of Würth’s customers.

Scheffel: “When a company orders a drill, it is in 90 percent of the cases because their previous one broke down. We need to have a myriad of items in stock to be able to deliver the next day - or preferably even faster. Our competitor may be a local specialist shop, so our customer representative must be the one the customers can turn to first, and get personal advice tailored to their need.”

Therefore, Würth plans to expand their business in the future by making more use of Big Data. Based on their IP or geo tracking, prospects can be recognized and individually addressed. The omnichannel strategy remains at the core of all activities. The underlying commerce platform by Intershop is prepared to couple with future applications as well as extending use of existing systems to further support the growth of Würth.

Intershop is the leading independent provider of innovative and comprehensive omnichannel commerce solutions. How do you achieve ambitious goals in times of change? All you need is a partner who can help make complexity simple. Unlock your potential with the exciting possibilities of Intershop’s unrivaled technology and extensive market knowledge.

For more information on our solutions and services, visit www.intershop.com

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