SportScheck relies on expertise and high-quality data for its multichannel strategy

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>
> **Alexander Pischetsrieder**
> Head of organization and InfoManagement, SportScheck

We Are Sports

SportScheck is one of Germany's most successful multichannel businesses. SportScheck is an equipment and clothing specialist for almost every sport and its website gets over 52 million hits per year, making it one of the most successful online stores in Germany.

Each year, 1.1 million customers sign up for the mail-order business while over 17 million customers visit its brick and mortar stores. These figures undoubtedly describe the success of SportScheck's multichannel strategy. SportScheck also strives to deliver innovative concepts in all of its sales channels, while always aiming to provide customers with the best shopping experience possible. This philosophy can be carried out only in conjunction with modern systems landscapes and optimized processes.

The SportScheck Company

"The SportScheck name stands for all facets of sports and credible expertise based on real-life experience. Our entire staff is passionate about sports and

many of them have been, and still are, successful athletes. They love sharing their enthusiasm and expertise with customers. Our goal is that every visit to SportScheck – wherever and whenever – will be a fun experience you'll want to repeat again soon. SportScheck: living our philosophy every day for more than six decades. We are sports."

These guiding principles and business philosophy may sound more like a modern sports team than a retail company. Active participation and customer involvement are prominent features that permeate the entire organization.

Customer Experience Drives Sales

Currently, 85% of non-brick-and-mortar sales are generated by ecommerce. The remaining 15% is generated by mail order sales made by fax and telephone. It is noteworthy, however, that ecommerce sales account for only 45% of the company's total revenue.

Ecommerce and brick-and-mortar stores are by far the largest sales
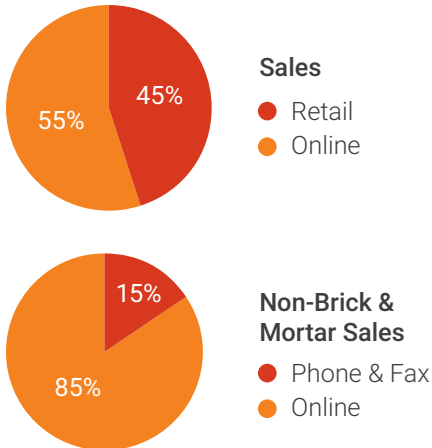
SportScheck

Benefits
- Centralized location for all product information across all sales channels
- An agile system that is capable of interweaving the different retail processes across sales channels into a smooth, cross-channel function
- Self-Service portal for agencies and suppliers with direct upload to the PIM system

Business Initiatives
- Providing the customer the same deals across all sales channels with a centralized location for all product information
- Improve customer service in all sales channels with perfect product data
- Make sure customers have enough product information to make a purchase without the order being returned

channels for SportScheck. The physical stores account for just over half (55%) of the total turnover of the company (€222 million of a total €408 million).

Figure 1: Revenue distribution & order paths at SportScheck 2011

Sales
- 45% Retail
- 55% Online

Non-Brick & Mortar Sales
- 15% Phone & Fax
- 85% Online

More in-store sales than online? "That will change," said Alexander Pischetsrieder, head of organization for SportScheck. "Buying decisions are ultimately made online." That's one of the the main reasons SportScheck decided to partner with Informatica: to create a centralized location for all product information.SportScheck recognizes the importance of providing the same, great online shopping experience that is found in its retail stores. "The future lies in ecommerce, where providing both in-depth and broad information is the key to success," said Pischetsrieder.

"Our customers are free to choose. In the end, they're the ones who are going to decide how they'll contact us." This is how Alexander Pischetsrieder describes his understanding of multichannel sales. For SportScheck, the quality of the information that is provided is just as essential as offering the best professional advice and making an emotional connection with customers.

SportScheck's television advertising is based heavily on emotional appeal. The products are brought to life in the sales experience. This starts, for example, in the mail order catalog. "The catalog today serves as motivation for

the shopper to conduct research and ultimately order online," says Alexander Pischetsrieder. This will continue to be the case. The purpose of print is to create interest and stir the consumer's emotions. Only the type and scope of print advertising will change. "Each print mailing has unleashed a tidal wave of internet sales," said Pischetsrieder.

Intelligent and Agile Processes are Key to Success

"Good customer service, whether online, in-store, or in print, needs perfect product data". At the Munich-based sporting goods retailer, there had been no centralized system for product data before now. After extensive research and evaluation, the company decided to implement the product information management (PIM) system from Informatica.

The main reason for the introduction of Informatica Product Information Management (PIM) solutions was its support for a true multichannel strategy. Customers should have access to the same deals across all sales channels. In addition to making a breadth of information available, customer service still remains key.

Sales staff is available in stores to offer advice to customers. But even online, SportScheck wanted to offer interactive product consultants. Depending on a customer's requirements, which may include the same questions they'd ask in-store, the website will suggest the right product, such as the perfect pair of shoes. For this to work, a variety of criteria (MDM experts speak of attributes) is needed to create these personalized suggestions. These attributes are now centrally managed in the Informatica PIM system.

The major challenges online retailers face are the number of returns and conversion rates. To make sure customers have enough information to make a purchase without the order being returned, SportScheck really wanted to focus on high quality images, video, and text. "To demonstrate our sports expertise at the highest level, we provide almost all product images and text ourselves," explains Alexander Pischetsrieder.

Herein lies the problem that makes controlling this process quickly and efficiently such a challenge. External agencies and photo studios are producing new product data virtually around the clock. To help meet SportScheck's demands for quality,

Figure 2: The online store as a central component of the strategy

the agencies upload these images directly to the Informatica PIM system via a web server – and the PIM system automatically assigns the product data to the corresponding image.

The online store is the showcase; the products come from a separate system. SportScheck emphasized the need for clear separation between the store and the product content. "This way we're always in a position to respond quickly to market needs," said Pischetsrieder. The web shop is based on Intershop Enfinity.

SportScheck's commitment to service also includes a promise to customers that in the near future the availability of products in retail locations will be displayed online. The online store will even go as far as to give directions to the nearest SportScheck branch. In addition, items ordered online can easily be returned to the retail store. These processes require an agile system that is capable of interweaving the different retail processes across sales channels into a smooth, cross-channel function. This creates a seamless customer experience.

Product Data Equals Demonstrated Expertise

"I am convinced that a well-presented product with lots of pictures and details sells better. For us, this signals knowing our product. That sets us apart from the large discount stores," notes Pischetsrieder. "In the end, we have to ask: who is the customer going to trust? We gain trust here with our product knowledge and our love of sports in general." Just like our motto says, "We get our fans excited."

By offering a professional search engine, product comparisons, and many other features, PIM adds value not only in ecommerce – and that gets us excited!"

Figure 3: The product data process with PIM at SportScheck

![Informatica logo]
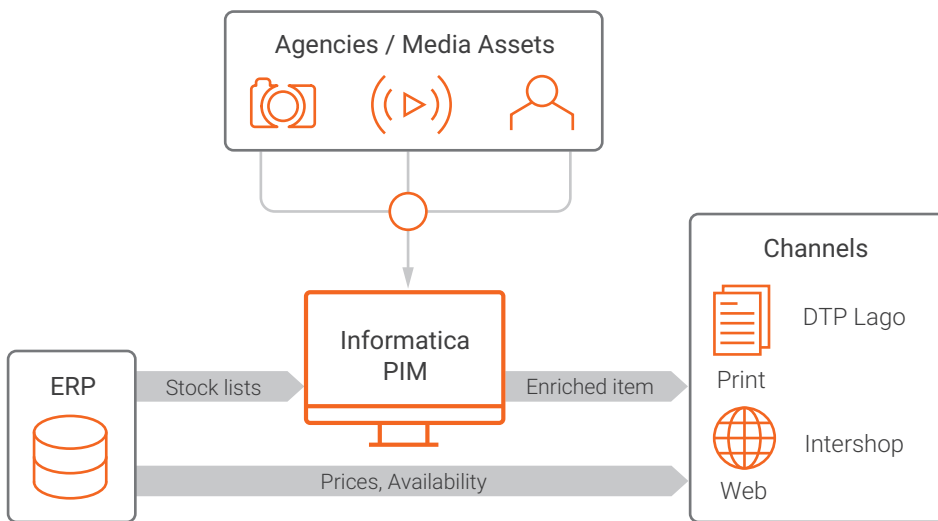
Digital transformation is changing our world. As the leader in enterprise cloud data management, we're prepared to help you intelligently lead the way. To provide you with the foresight to become more agile, realize new growth opportunities or even invent new things. We invite you to explore all that Informatica has to offer—and unleash the power of data to drive your next intelligent disruption. Not just once, but again and again.

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