



MDM Special Report:  
**2015 State of E-Commerce  
in Distribution**



## Table of Contents

E-Commerce on Path to Maturity.....	3
E-Commerce: Integrate or Stagnate.....	6
2015 State of E-Commerce in Distribution Webcast & Survey Results.....	10

### MODERN DISTRIBUTION MANAGEMENT

Founded in 1967  
by J. Van Ness Philip

**Publisher**  
Thomas P. Gale  
tom@mdm.com

**Editor**  
Jenel Stelton-Holtmeier  
jenel@mdm.com

**Associate Publisher**  
Craig Riley  
craig@mdm.com

**Associate Editor**  
Eric Smith  
eric@mdm.com

### Editorial Advisory Board

**John Allenbach**, SVP, Professional Sales, Apex Tool Group

**Chester Collier**, SVP, Global Distribution, Walter Surface Technologies

**Ted Cowie**, Vice President Sales, Safety & Industrial Products, Motion Industries

**Larry Davis**, Chief Commercial Officer & EVP, Stellar Industrial Supply

**Charley Hale**, President, FCX Performance

**Julia Klein**, Chairwoman & CEO, C.H. Briggs Company

**Doug Savage**, President & CEO, Bearing Service Inc.

**Burt Schraga**, CEO, Bell Electrical Supply

**Ted Stark**, President, Dalco Enterprises

### Contact Information

Questions, comments, article proposals, address changes or subscription service to:

Gale Media, Inc.  
2569 Park Lane, Suite 200, Lafayette, CO 80026  
Tel: 303-443-5060 Fax: 303-443-5059  
Website: <http://www.mdm.com>

### Subscription Rates

To subscribe to Modern Distribution Management, please call 303-443-5060, email [dillon@mdm.com](mailto:dillon@mdm.com) or <http://www.mdm.com/subscribe>.

Subscriptions are available by online delivery and/or first-class mail. Nine years of archives of MDM are available online to subscribers.

Published twice monthly; \$395/yr., \$415 U.S. funds other countries). Six-month and two-year terms are now available. For group subscription rates and site licenses, please contact Dillon Calkins at 303-443-5060.

Copyright © 2015 by Gale Media, Inc. All rights reserved. Modern Distribution Management® and mdm® are registered trademarks of Gale Media, Inc. Material may not be reproduced in whole or in part in any form whatsoever without permission from the publisher. To request permission to copy, republish or quote material, please call 303-443-5060.

ISSN 0544-6538

# E-Commerce on Path to Maturity

*Expectations remain high for distribution e-commerce in 2015*

The fourth annual MDM distribution e-commerce survey conducted with Real Results Marketing revealed several key trends:

- The percentage of companies with at least 10 percent of their total revenue from e-commerce grew 14 percent in 2014 from 2013.
- Barriers to entry for deploying an e-commerce site have dropped significantly, allowing many more mid-market and small distributors to sell online.
- The primary objectives among distributors for e-commerce remain acquiring new customers, enhancing their company brands and improving the user experience.
- Distributor satisfaction with mobile enablement on their e-commerce site and mobile applications increased in 2014 from 2013, while satisfaction with mobile optimized websites remained the same.

This article examines the results of the 2015 State of E-Commerce in Distribution Survey and how the industry's e-commerce offerings are maturing. Part 2 will look at best practices for distributor-integrated

marketing approaches to support electronic shopping and buying.

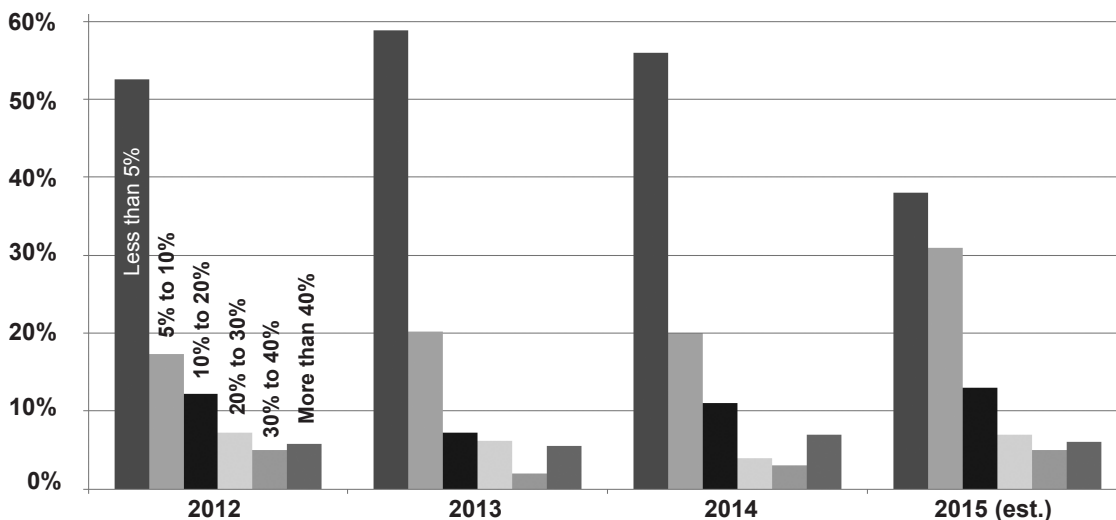
**By Jonathan Bein, Ph.D., and Dean Mueller**

E-commerce in distribution continues to expand. Results of the 2015 State of E-Commerce in Distribution survey indicated a 14 percent increase in number of respondents who have a mature e-commerce offering, i.e., where at least 10 percent of total revenue comes through the e-commerce channel. The percentage of respondents with 5 to 10 percent of total revenue from e-commerce remained at 20 percent. Companies with nascent e-commerce initiatives (revenue less than 5 percent) declined slightly.

Within the survey respondents and beyond, there are two trends shaping e-commerce. First, it is much easier and less expensive to launch an e-commerce initiative today in B2B than it was five or 10 years ago. In that sense, B2B e-commerce has followed the trend of B2C e-commerce in which early initiatives were often \$500,000 to \$1 million projects. After a few years, the entry price for retail e-commerce dropped significantly to a point where it was possible to

**Figure 1: Percent of Total Revenue from E-Commerce**

As distributors' e-commerce platforms mature, so does the percentage of revenue from e-commerce. The percentage of companies with 10 percent to 20 percent – the point at which the channel is considered mature – of revenue from e-commerce is expected to increase 50 percent in 2015.



enter for \$50,000 to \$200,000.

The same has happened in the B2B space. This has permitted mid-market and even small distributors to offer e-commerce to their end users. However, the enterprise class e-commerce platforms for larger distributors retain differentiating capabilities, particularly for merchandising, content management, search and personalization.

While it is easier to get into e-commerce, the second trend is that many distributors experience more time in the nascent stage of e-commerce maturity. Many distributors remain in the nascent stage for three to five years. Here is a typical breakdown of distributors' experience in the nascent stage:

- Development of the capability – six months to one year.
- Working out operational kinks after launch – one year.
- Getting to 5 percent of total revenue – two to three years.

Distributors often underestimate how long it will take to work out the operational processes for e-commerce, including inventory management, fulfillment, product content management and even Web technical support. Companies that stall after working out the operational issues usually do so because their e-marketing capabilities mature slowly.

All this is compounded by competition from the increased number of distributors that now have e-commerce.

This year's survey participants predict a significant shift from the nascent phase into the development and mature offerings in e-commerce, as shown in **Figure 1**. But predictions about future performance are known for being optimistic. Last year, 35 percent of respondents predicted they would reach maturity with their e-commerce offering, yet the numbers for 2014 show only 24 percent did so. In the 2015 survey, 31 percent of respondents predict that their offering will become mature this year.

### E-Commerce Priorities

The top priorities for e-commerce, as shown in **Figure 2**, are:

- Increase new customers and orders from the website.
- Promote the company brand.
- Improve ease of use.

While the highest priority in 2014 was to grow revenue from new customers, the next highest priority was to grow revenue with exist-

**Figure 2: Top E-Commerce Priorities**



ing customers. Taken together, these three priorities reflect a partial shift from the nascent stage of maturity where the focus is more on existing customers. In the growth stage of e-commerce, the priority to get revenue from existing customers diminishes as the focus on new customers grows. Promoting the brand and the user experience both support reaching a new set of customers.

The percentage of respondents focused on increasing transaction size grew to 4 percent from 2 percent last year. This becomes a priority for distributors who have a mature e-commerce offering. As such, few mid-market and small distributors are focused on this.

### E-Commerce Platform

This year's survey introduced a new topic to better understand trends in e-commerce platforms. It covers five categories of e-commerce platforms:

- Homegrown – These platforms are developed from scratch often with some third-party software components, e.g., a shopping cart.
- ERP-provided portal – The portal provides an e-commerce solution that is pre-integrated with the ERP system, typically with limited functionality and ability to customize.
- Hybrid – This approach could mix home-

grown development with open source tools, e.g., Magento, and combine with one of the other platform types.

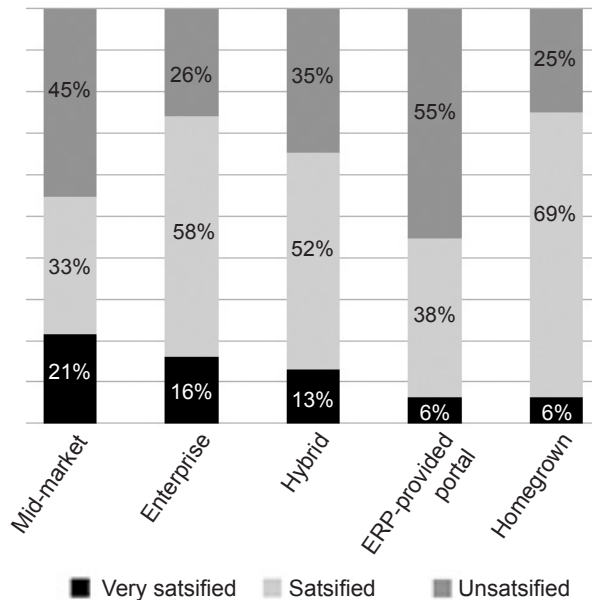
- Mid-market – These platforms have more functionality than the ERP-provided portal, but they are not bound to one ERP backend system. Generally, mid-market players appear in companies with revenues up to \$750 million.
- Enterprise – The enterprise platforms are distinguished by their ease of content management, powerful search, support for multi-sites and support for complex, high-end integrations. The entry point of enterprise solutions is generally in organizations with a minimum of \$500 million in revenue.

Large distributors can usually cost justify an enterprise platform even in the nascent stage of maturity. The incremental revenue derived from these platforms makes them worthwhile.

For mid-market distributors, it depends on the competition; if it is other mid-market distributors, then the mid-market platform or ERP provided portal can work.

Since the nascent stage often takes longer than expected, there is almost always a good rationale for small distributors to use a mid-market platform or ERP-provided portal to get

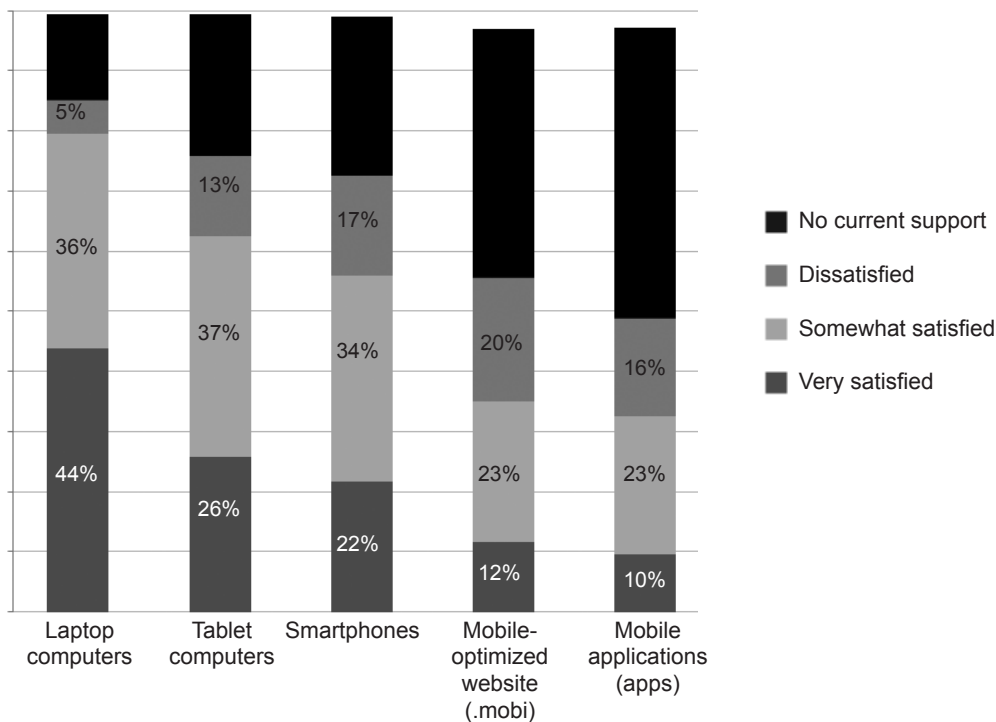
**Figure 3: Satisfaction with E-Commerce Platform**



going. Switching to a more sophisticated platform can occur in the transition to the development stage.

As shown in **Figure 3**, there is comparable overall satisfaction between enterprise and homegrown platforms. But there are almost

**Figure 4: Satisfaction with Mobile Web Technologies**



three times as many respondents who are very satisfied with the enterprise platform than the homegrown approach. As expected, satisfaction correlates well with e-commerce maturity.

### The Mobile Trend

Last year, respondents reported mixed satisfaction with their companies' support for smartphones and very low satisfaction for .mobi implementations and mobile apps. One change from 2014 is that respondents expressed somewhat higher satisfaction with their mobile-enabled e-commerce sites. The biggest change from 2014 is 20 percent higher satisfaction with mobile apps that they offer.

While respondents were more satisfied with their company's mobile-enabled sites and mobile apps, the satisfaction with website optimization for tablet and smartphones remained about the same as 2014. The Real Results Marketing Shopping and Buying Survey indicates that 35 percent of distributors' customers consider optimization for tablet important within the next year. Forty-five percent consider optimization of the website for smartphones important within the next year. Some sectors of distribution are seeing 25 to 50 percent year-over-year increase in website visits and orders from a mobile plat-

form.

### Moving Forward

The increase in distributors that are approaching e-commerce maturity combined with the large number of small and mid-sized new entrants indicates that competition is heating up for distributor e-commerce. Many distributors are now in a second-generation e-commerce platform. There are two key implications for any distributor who has an e-commerce platform or is contemplating development:

1. The industry has moved past the point of it being sufficient merely to have an e-commerce offering. End users are expecting more and have more choice now.
2. It is important to really understand what end users expect. Qualitative and quantitative research should be employed to get a clear understanding.

While there is still plenty of opportunity for companies in the nascent stage, the approach to e-commerce should be strategic rather than tactical.

*This survey was conducted and produced by MDM and Real Results Marketing and sponsored by hybris, an SAP Company.*

## E-Commerce: Integrate or Stagnate

*Integrated marketing will help drive e-commerce demand*

*The fourth annual MDM distribution e-commerce survey conducted with Real Results Marketing revealed that the barrier to entry for e-commerce has lessened, but distributors are still deciding if they should launch e-commerce capability on their websites.*

*Part 1 of this series showed how the industry's e-commerce offerings are maturing.*

**By Jonathan Bein, Ph.D., and Dean Mueller**

The fourth annual MDM distribution e-commerce survey, conducted with Real Results Marketing, revealed several key trends, including:

1. Distributors of all sizes have launched or are launching an e-commerce capability

because the barrier to entry has been reduced. However, a significant percentage of these distributors are seeing very little revenue traction through their e-commerce site, even after several years.

2. Many distributors are still trying to determine if, not how or when, they will develop and launch an e-commerce capability. The reluctance is often based on an incorrect perception of how quickly the world is changing or outdated assumptions about the cost of entry.

While these trends appear to be conflicting, there is an underlying commonality between distributors that have launched with little growth and those unsure if they should develop an e-commerce capability at all: Both groups

have a limited tactical view of what e-commerce does and how it relates to their businesses. In this tactical view, distributors view e-commerce as an ordering mechanism that is part of a cost center driven by IT. For the first group, this tactical view results in a passive approach to promoting the site or driving demand. For the second group, this tactical view reinforces a belief that, despite losing some transactions to e-commerce, they can retain the customer for other business in the branch or with a customer service representative.

The strategic view of e-commerce is of a shopping and ordering mechanism that is part of a profit center driven by marketing or a dedicated e-commerce division. The strategic view recognizes that shopping and buying trends are changing rapidly among all generations, not just millennials. It further recognizes that a distributor's digital presence is increasingly becoming the first or the most significant impression a potential customer has. Distributors that have a strategic view of e-commerce place a big emphasis on ROI from demand generation through marketing programs and through the sales organization.

**Marketing Vehicle Effectiveness and Spend**

This year, the question on marketing vehicle effectiveness for driving e-commerce demand

included field sales and customer service as choices for vehicles. The survey demonstrated that offline vehicles have a significant impact on driving e-commerce demand. Four of the top seven most effective vehicles are offline including sales rep, CSR, catalog and direct mail.

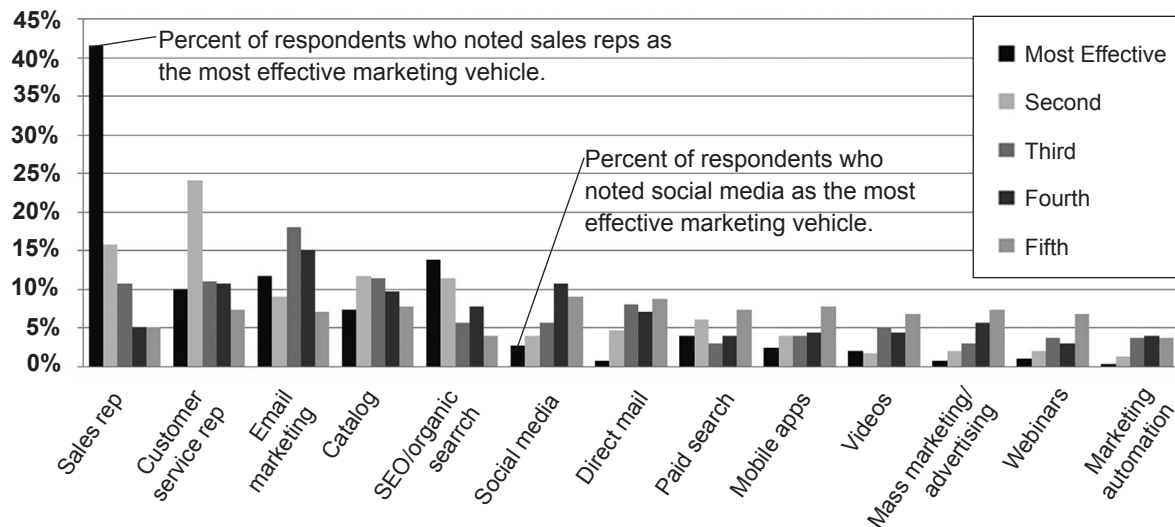
As shown in **Figure 1**, the sales rep is overwhelmingly considered the most effective vehicle for driving e-commerce demand. Customer service reps are considered second most effective and are comparable in effectiveness to email marketing. Email, catalog and SEO were the top choices in last year's survey, and their order remains the same as last year.

While respondents consider SEO/organic search effective, they do not consider paid search effective. Of more than 100 distributor websites, fewer than 20 do much with paid search; it is a competency that most distributors develop as they reach the end of the nascent stage of e-commerce maturity. And, as with last year, marketing automation still plays no role for almost 90 percent of distributors.

Distributors spend the most to drive e-commerce demand through email marketing and catalog. However, in last year's survey, direct mail was third among the choices for spend and this year it is fourth, replaced by SEO/organic search. Mass marketing moved down to seventh this year from fifth last year.

**Figure 1: Marketing Vehicle Effectiveness**

Distributors were asked to rank their most-effective marketing vehicles out of the 13 listed in the chart below. This chart illustrates, for example, what percentage selected email marketing as the most effective, second most effective, and so on for each vehicle.



### The Integrated Marketing Approach

Though the survey showed the importance of offline marketing for driving e-commerce demand, many distributors make the mistake of assuming that since buying is digital, shopping must also be digital. This restricts the marketing vehicles to SEO, paid search and email marketing or marketing automation when other offline vehicles are relevant. (See **Figure 2**).

Real Results Marketing is performing a syndicated shopping and buying survey with several thousand end users from multiple distributors to answer four key questions relevant to an effective integrated marketing approach for e-commerce:

**1. How do my customers shop (not order)?** The aggregate data in the survey says that the most common shopping methods are:

- going to a manufacturer website.
- using search.
- going to a distributor website.

While distributors might take comfort that going to a distributor website is third among a list of 10 choices, they should be concerned that an end user is more likely to go to a manufacturer website. Distributors that want to be successful with e-commerce need to ensure that their own e-commerce site is a destination – rich with information that is easy to find.

**2. How do my customers order?** Among a choice of 10 ordering methods, the ones used most prevalently, in order, are:

- email.
- over the phone with a CSR.
- website.

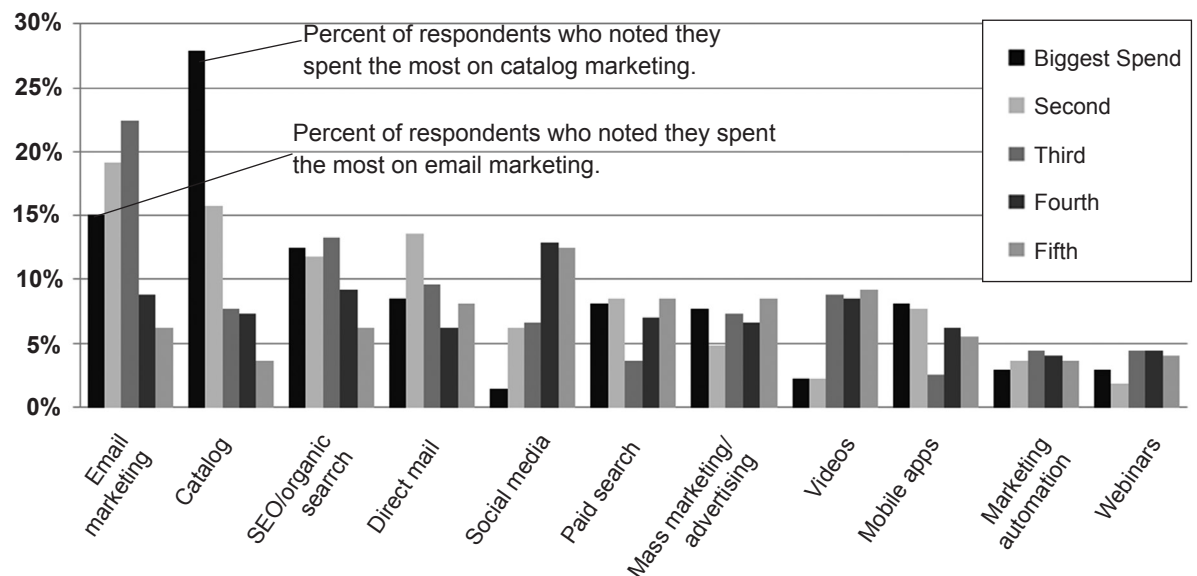
However, the preferences of end users for a single distributor may vary significantly from the aggregate. For one distributor whose end users participated in the study, over the phone was by far the preferred method and in the branch was more popular than ordering by website.

**3. How do my customers want to receive communication?** Customers want to receive communication in more ways than distributors typically imagine. Most distributors project their own individual preferences as a consumer onto their customers and conclude that their customers don't want email, phone calls or print mail. But our research shows overwhelmingly that a significant portion of customers is willing to receive such communications. In addition, more than 80 percent are willing to receive a print catalog annually or more frequently.

The aggregate trend is moving away from field sales toward more efficient mechanisms for communication, shopping and buying. About

**Figure 2: Marketing Vehicle Spend**

Distributors were asked to rank their spend by marketing vehicle out of the 11 listed in the chart below. This chart illustrates, for example, what percentage allocated the highest spend to email marketing, as well as how many allocated the second-biggest spend to that category, and so on for each vehicle.





35 percent of end users either never want a field sales visit or want one only once per year. Again, individual mileage does vary significantly: more than 90 percent of one distributor's end users want a field sales visit at least monthly.

**4. What ordering methods do my customers require to continue business with me?** Many distributors assume they are losing some transactions as a result of having a subpar e-commerce site. Our research strongly indicates that many of these distributors are actually losing customers, not just transactions. It is imperative to find out what your customers require to do business with you. If they require good mobile ordering, you need to deliver that or you could easily lose 1 percent to 4 percent of your customers per year for the next several years.

Getting clear answers to these questions will deeply inform an e-commerce and integrated marketing strategy. Distributors must understand what their customers and prospects require to determine where the focus should be. The integrated marketing strategy will systematically grow revenue and retain customers who might otherwise find another supplier.

*This survey was conducted and produced by MDM and Real Results Marketing and sponsored by hybris, an SAP Company.*

#### About This Research

This research was conducted by Real Results Marketing with Modern Distribution Management. The research included an online survey taken by 415 participants across a variety of distribution sectors.

There was heavier participation from industrial, safety, electrical, electronics, building materials, janitorial, HVACR/plumbing and hardware. Other participating sectors include oil and gas products, pulp and paper, chemicals and plastics, grocery/foodservice and pharmaceutical.

Nearly 40 percent are small distributors with less than \$50 million revenue, more than 30 percent are mid-market with \$50 million to \$500 million revenue, and 19 percent are large with more than \$500 million revenue. Others did not disclose the revenue range.

About 30 percent are primarily focused on MRO, 12 percent are focused on OEM customers, 28 percent serve trades/contractors, 20 percent are an even blend of MRO and OEM, and 10 percent are in other categories.

*Thank you for your purchase. Interested in more special reports?*

**MDM Premium subscriptions include full access to all MDM Special Reports at no additional cost.**

**Learn more about subscribing to MDM Premium at [www.mdm.com/subscribe](http://www.mdm.com/subscribe). Use SR10 to save 10%.**

# The 2015 State of E-Commerce in Distribution

Featuring: Jonathan Bein, Managing Partner, Real Results Marketing

Sponsored by:  **hybris software**  
An SAP Company

Date: March 26, 2015

# Speakers



**Featured Presenter: Jonathan Bein**  
Senior Partner  
Real Results Marketing



**John Fisher**  
Global Head of B2B Marketing  
hybris software, an SAP Company



**Thomas P. Gale - Moderating**  
President & CEO  
Gale Media, Inc.



hybris serves nearly 1,000 customers



Leader in both Forrester and Gartner analyst reports



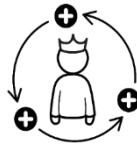
**Increase B2B customer satisfaction: demand for self-service capabilities**



**Enable growth: new markets/geographies**



**Increase average order size/ lead gen conversion**



**Reduce costs/ increase user experience**



1 million products  
3,000 suppliers  
2 million customers  
500,000 orders / day  
\$3B online sales



100k customers,  
10k products across  
100 warehouses  
\$0-\$100M sales in 18 mos

# Summary

- Key trends:
  - E-commerce revenue as a percent of overall revenue is rising, yet growth is slow
  - Lower barrier to entry for small companies
  - Key objectives are branding, growing revenue with new customers, and improving website usability
  - Grainger is still overwhelmingly considered the best website by other distributors
  - Respondents express mixed satisfaction with much of the B2B functionality on their own e-commerce sites
  - Marketing efforts are rudimentary and siloed for many distributors
- Information in this presentation is from two surveys:
  - February 2015, State of Distributor E-Commerce survey of more than 400 distributors conducted with Modern Distribution Management.
  - Ongoing Shopping and Buying survey of several thousand end users from multiple distributors

# Best Competitor Website

- Overwhelmingly, Grainger is named by competitors as having the best website for the fourth year.
- McMaster-Carr was a distant second.
- Nobody else was even close.

# Best Competitor Website

- Overwhelmingly, Grainger is named by competitors as having the best website for the fourth year.
- McMaster-Carr was a distant second.
- Nobody else was even close.

...Grainger added several hundred people to its e-commerce initiative in 2014

# Overview

- Revenue and growth
- Priorities
- Capabilities
- Platform
- Marketing
- Integrated Marketing

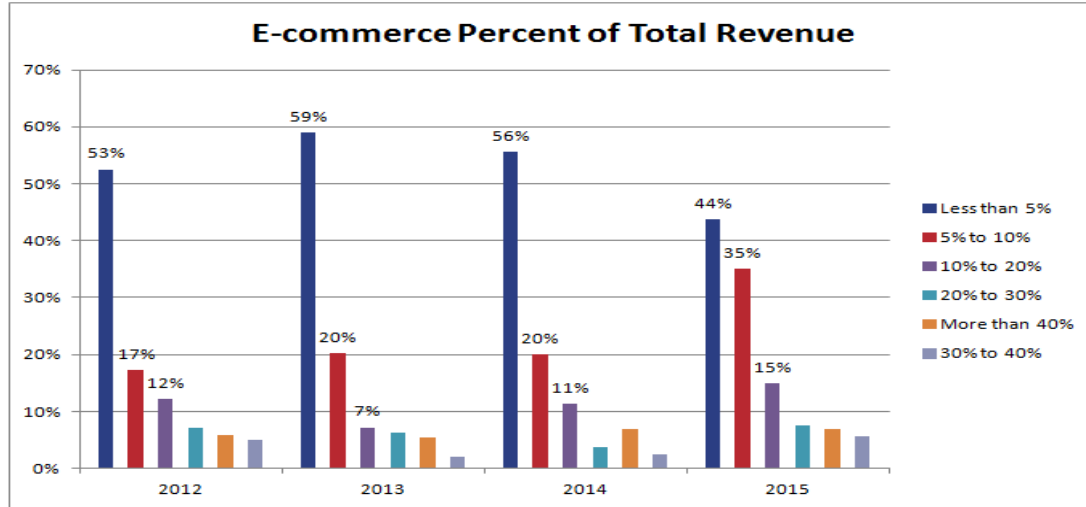


# REVENUE AND GROWTH

# Stages

- Nascent – less than 5% e-commerce revenue
- Growth – 5% to 10% e-commerce revenue
- Mature – 10% or more e-commerce revenue

# E-Commerce Revenue – 2012-2015



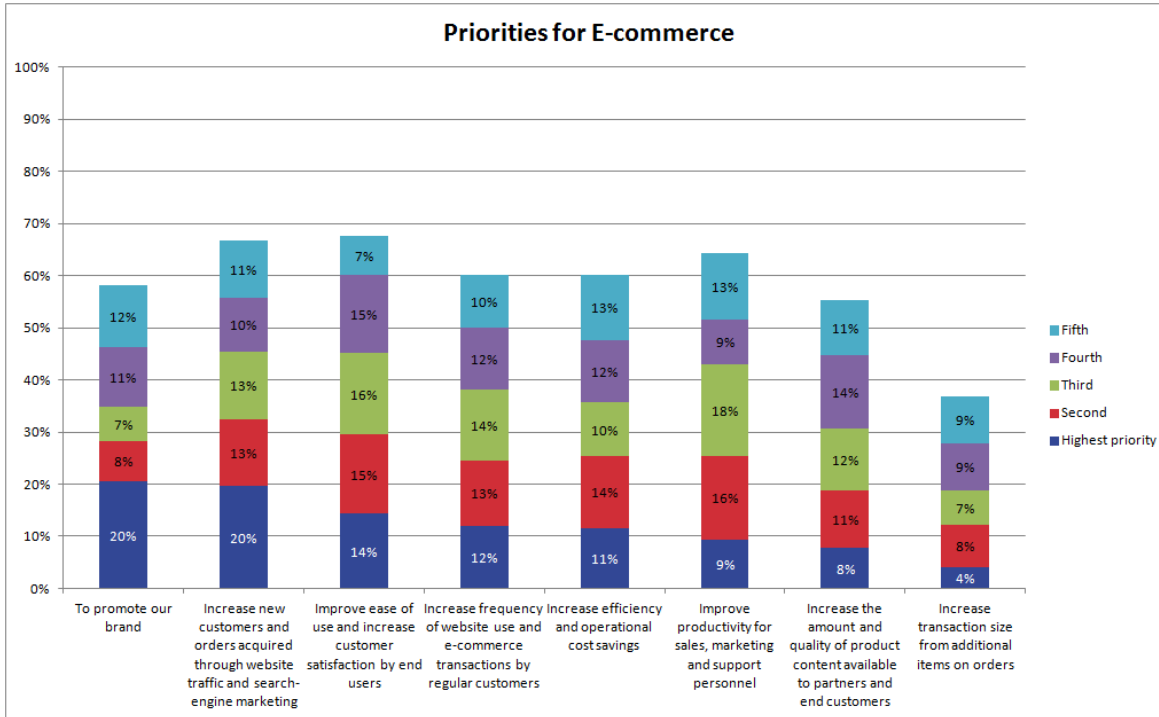
- 2013 – Increase of nascent and growth stage companies
- 2014 – Increase of mature stage companies
- 2015 – Projected
  - 75% increase in growth stage companies
  - 40% increase in mature companies

# Perspectives on E-Commerce Growth

- Nascent stage – 3 to 5 years
  - Development – Half year to 1 year
  - Working out operational kinks – 1 year
  - Getting to 5% of total revenue – 2 to 3 years
- Growth Stage – 2 to 4 years
  - Continued test and refinement (CRO – conversion rate optimization)
  - Content development for self-service and SEO
  - E-procurement build out, if needed
  - Strong multichannel marketing to support and promote online channel

# PRIORITIES

# E-commerce Priorities

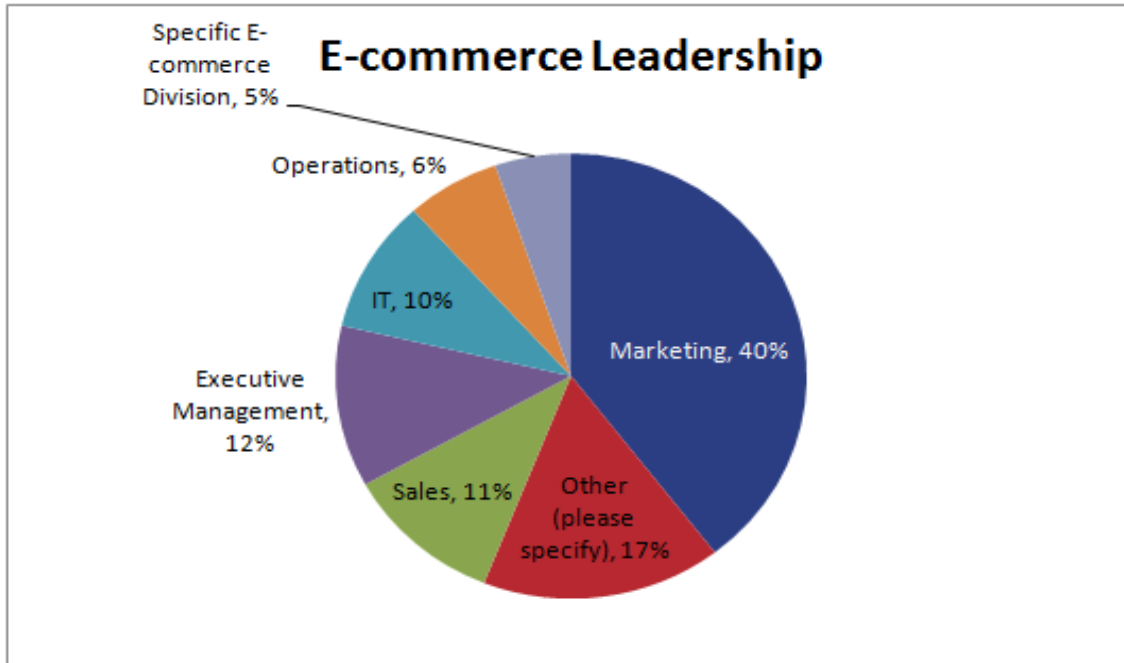


Top priorities are

- New customers
- Promote brand
- Ease of use

Priorities reflect the growth stage of e-commerce in which the priority is to get revenue with new customers with a better user experience

# E-commerce Leadership



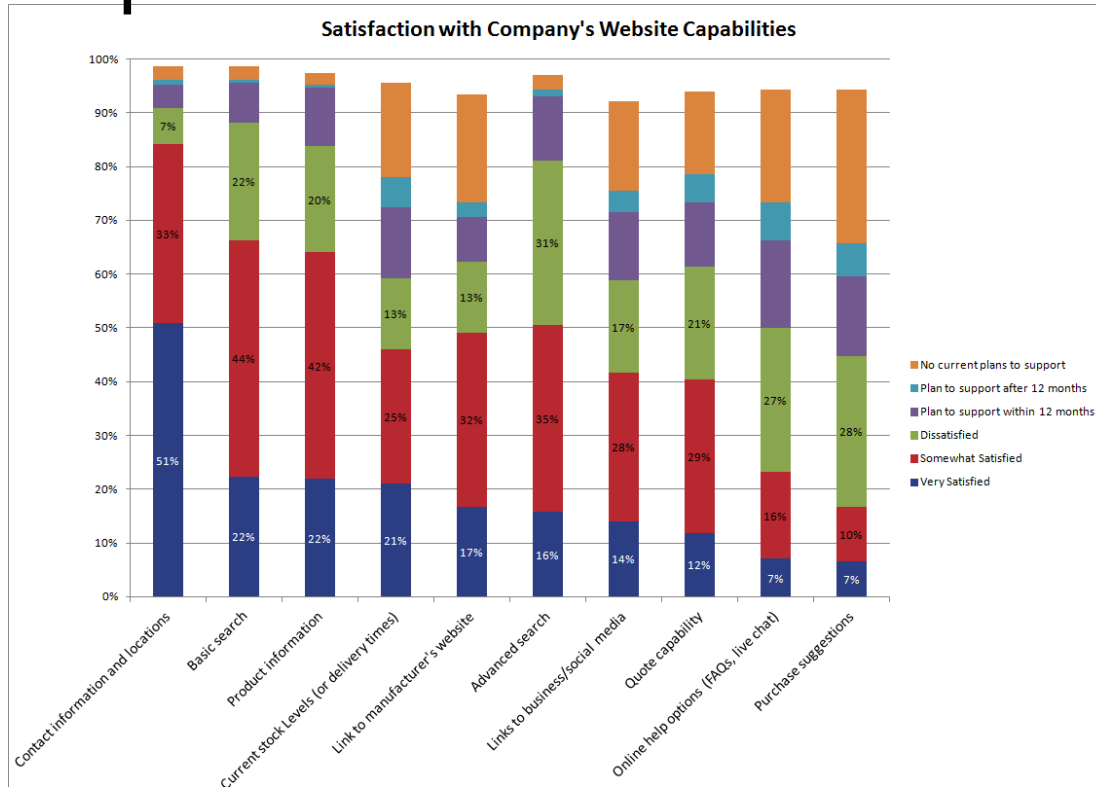
Among respondents with nascent stage e-commerce programs, only half have dedicated leadership vs. 70% who are in growth or mature stage.

**\* Data from 2014 survey**

# **CAPABILITIES**



# Capabilities



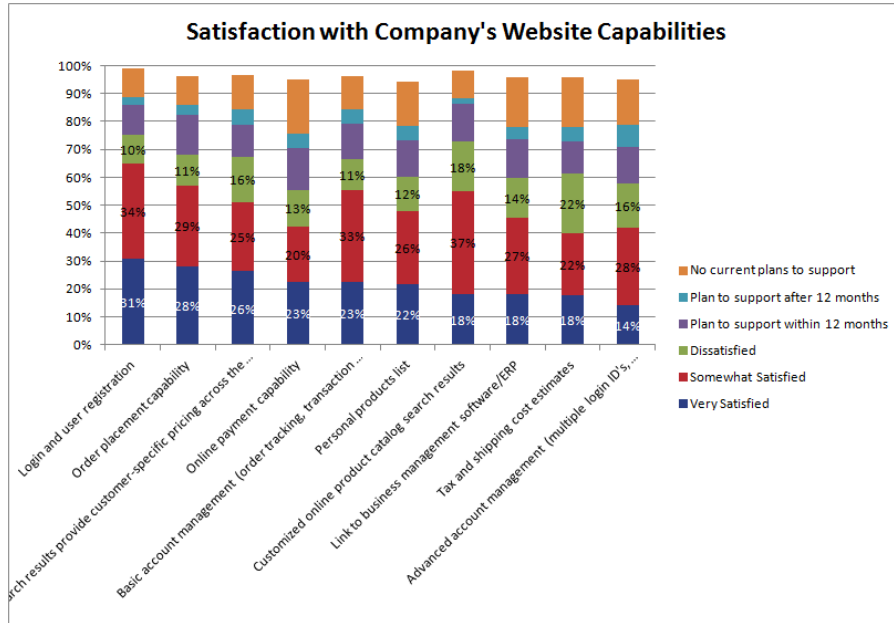
Respondents are satisfied with the basic functionality:

- Contact information
- Product information
- Basic search

For key capabilities that support self-service and increase conversion, satisfaction is low:

- Quote
- Live chat
- Purchase suggestions

# Capabilities



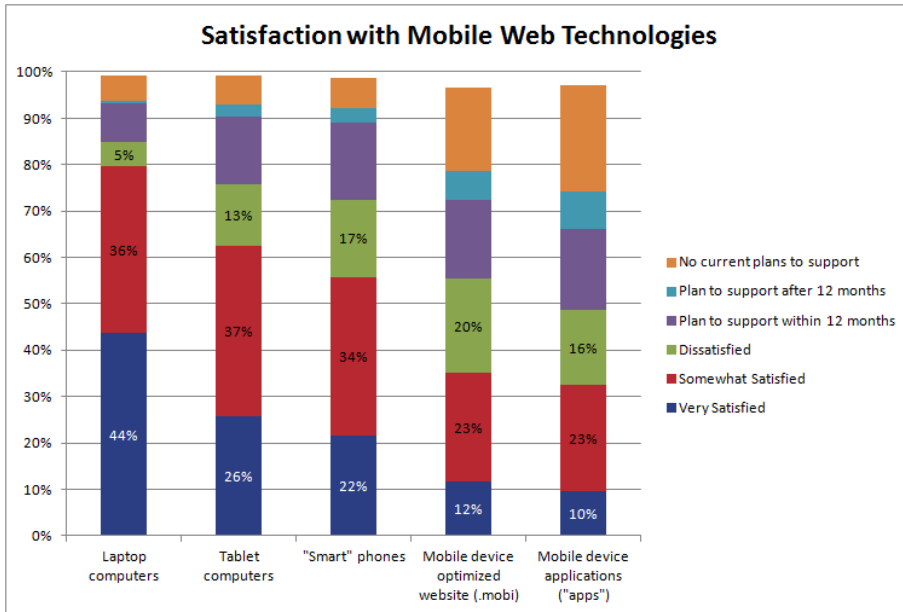
Respondents have high satisfaction with:

- Login
- Order placement
- Search results with customer-specific pricing
- Basic account management

Except for tax and shipping, other functions are B2B that have mixed or low satisfaction.

End users have higher expectation for tax and shipping that is derived from the B2C world.

# Mobile Capabilities



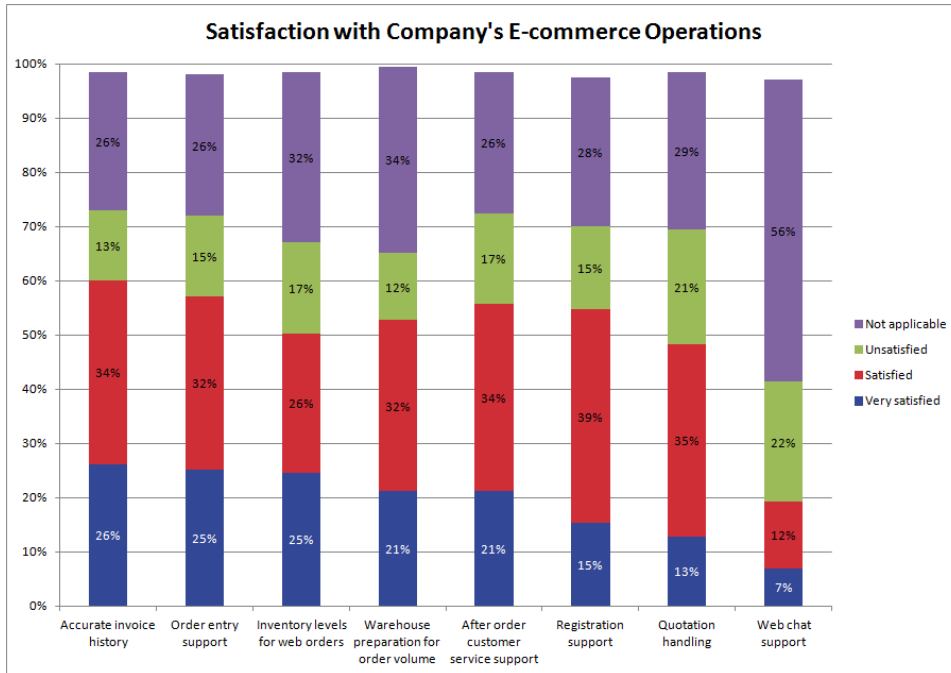
Biggest changes from 2014 are increased satisfaction with:

- .mobi
- Mobile apps

Satisfaction with support for tablet and smart phones remained about the same as 2014.

From shopping and buying, survey 35% consider tablet and more than 45% consider smart phone important within the next year.

# Operations



Fulfillment – Slightly lower satisfaction with warehouse and inventory levels.

Quotation handling – Still a big concern with nearly 20% unsatisfied.

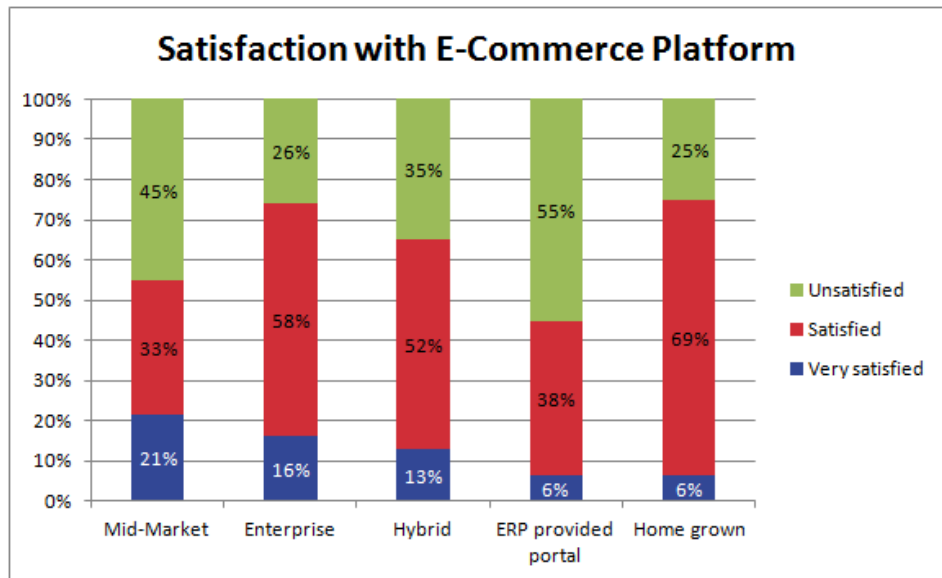
Order handling – Good, except chat is underutilized.

# Capabilities Summary

- There is maturation from last year in overall capabilities.
- Growth areas for many distributors are in B2B functionality.
- Specific functionality requirements should be derived from market research with your customer base.

# PLATFORM

# E-Commerce Platform



Overall comparable satisfaction between enterprise e-commerce at 74% and homegrown at 75%.

But, enterprise has a much higher percentage of very satisfied, 16% vs. 6%.

Companies with nascent e-commerce capability are the least satisfied with their e-commerce platform.

# Perspectives on Platform

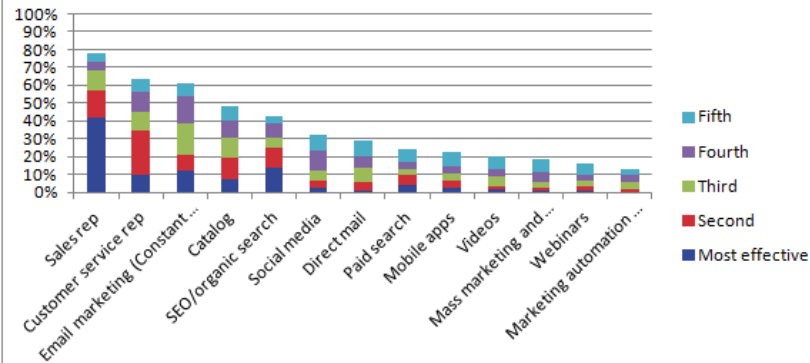
<b>Focus</b>	Tactical	Strategic
<b>Platform</b>	Mid-Market/ERP Portal	Enterprise
<b>Leadership</b>	IT	Marketing
<b>Measurement</b>	TCO	ROI or ROMI



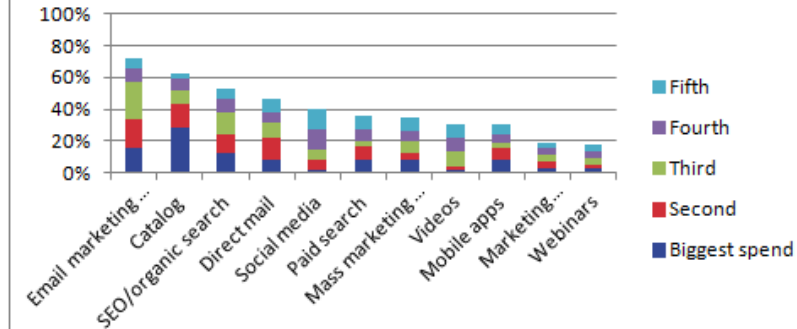
# MARKETING

# Driving E-Commerce Demand

**Effectiveness of Marketing Vehicles for Driving E-commerce Demand**

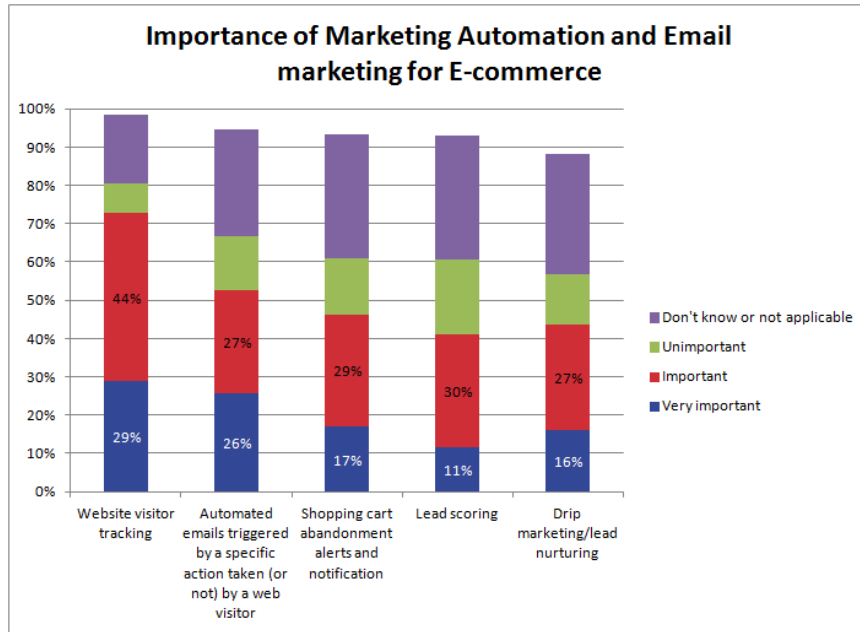


**Spend by Marketing Vehicle for Driving E-commerce Demand**



- Sales rep and CSRs are highly effective at driving demand.
- Email marketing, catalog and SEO are most effective and highest spend.
- Both paid search and marketing automation are underutilized in distribution relative to other industries.

# Marketing Automation and Email Marketing

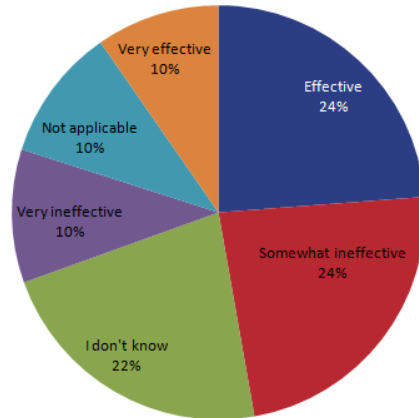


Many distributors use email marketing to promote products, special and branch events.

There is limited awareness among distributors about marketing automation and how it differs from email marketing.

# Search Marketing

Effectiveness of Organic and Paid Search at Generating New Customers



Many distributors start with search marketing as the primary or only means to drive traffic and generate demand.

Yet, only one-third of respondents consider search marketing effective for customer acquisition.

Our research of survey respondents shows:

1. Improving organic search is low hanging fruit and should be done.
2. Less than 20% are using paid search and few effectively.

# **INTEGRATED MARKETING**

# The Problem

- The way customers want to shop and buy is shifting toward more efficient vehicles and mechanisms.
- Most distributors still have a field sales-centric model even if they have begun a multichannel offering.
- National competitors who have effective multichannel offerings are taking market share from smaller competitors.
- Distributors understand they need some multichannel offering, but are uncertain about the timing and requirements both within and beyond e-commerce.

## Broad Shopping Trends

- 74% of business-to-business buyers said they research half or more of their work purchases online before buying. – Forrester
- 46% of potential buyers researching B2B products are millennials today, up from 27% in 2012 – Google, Millward-Brown

# Distribution Shopping Trends

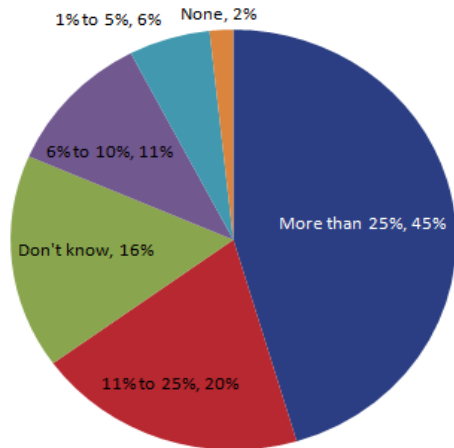
## Top Three Methods from Shopping and Buying Survey

1. Manufacturer website
2. Search – on the rise significantly
3. Distributor website



# Future Online Transactions for One Distributor

Two years from now, what percentage of your supplies purchases will be transacted online not including email?



In two years

- Nearly half believe that 25% or more of transactions will be online.
- One-fifth believe that 11% to 25% of transactions will be online.

**\* Predictions about future behavior should be treated as directional rather than precise.**

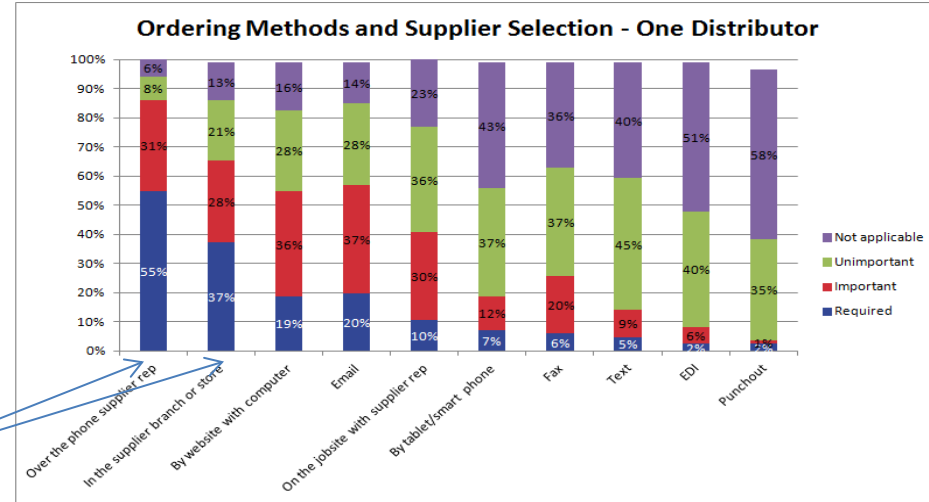
# Ordering Methods

In Shopping and Buying survey, the most essential ordering methods are

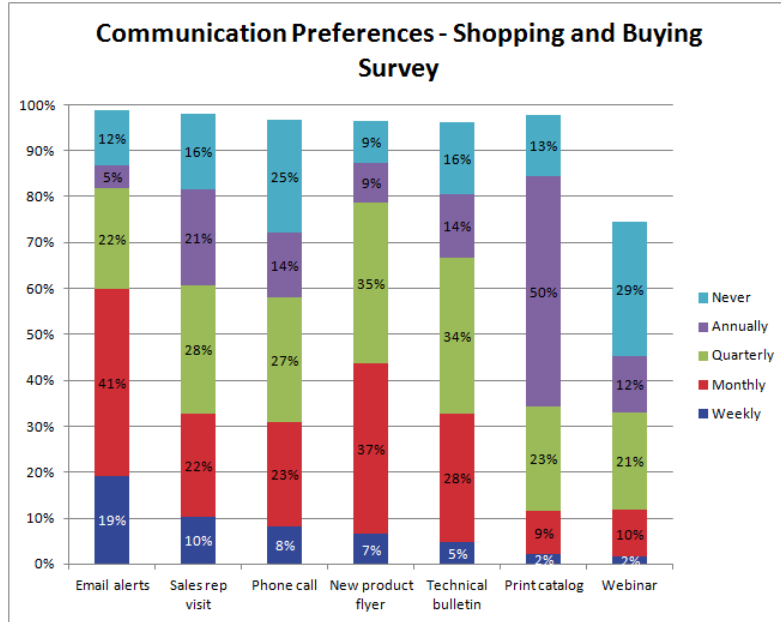
1. Email
2. Over the phone
3. By website.

Face to face, in the branch or at the job site are declining.

**Individual mileage does vary:** For one distributor's customers, ordering with personal interaction (phone or face to face) is a much more significant requirement than electronic (email or web.)



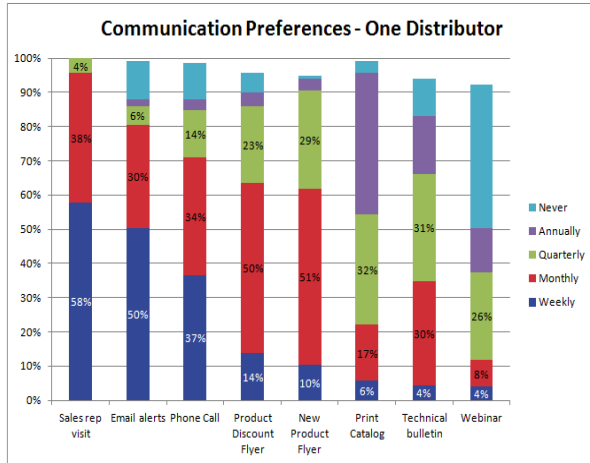
# Communicating with Customers



**Customers want to hear from you more than you know and in more ways than you suspect.**

- 16% of customers NEVER want a sales rep visit and 21% want a visit once per year.
- 84% want a catalog at least one a year.
- 60% will get email alerts at least monthly.

# Communicating with Customers



## Individual mileage does vary:

16% of customers NEVER want a sales rep visit and 21% want a visit once per year in the Shopping and Buying survey.

For this distributor

96% want a sales rep visit weekly or monthly.

95% want a catalog at least once per year.

80% will receive email alerts at least monthly.

**Respondents from this customer base differ in important ways from others in the Shopping and Buying survey.**

# Limited View of E-Commerce Marketing

Shopping/Buying	By website with computer	By tablet/smart phone
Search engine	Green	Green
Email	Green	Green
Distributor website	Red	Red
Print catalog	Red	Red
Manufacturer's literature	Red	Red
Manufacturer's website	Red	Red
Distributor's literature	Red	Red
Distributor's sales rep	Red	Red
Manufacturer's sales rep	Red	Red
Customer service rep	Red	Red
Colleague	Red	Red

Many distributors have the following limiting views of how shopping relates to buying on an e-commerce site:

- “Since buying is digital, shopping must be digital”
- “I’ve done my search marketing, we are set to launch”
- “Like me, my customers don’t like getting email”

# Expanded View of E-Commerce Marketing

Shopping/Buying	By website with computer	By tablet/smart phone
Search engine		
Email		
Distributor website		
Print catalog		
Manufacturer's literature		
Manufacturer's website		
Distributor's literature		
Distributor's sales rep		
Manufacturer's sales rep		
Customer service rep		
Colleague		

In this view, all shopping mechanisms potentially lead to buying over the web.

Other digital media can lead to digital buying.

Print shopping can lead to digital buying.

Personal interactions can lead to digital buying.

# Integrated View of Multichannel Marketing

Shopping/Buying	By website with computer	By tablet/smart phone	Over the phone supplier rep	In the supplier branch or store	Email	In person with supplier rep	Fax	Text	EDI	Punchout
Search engine										
Email										
Distributor website										
Print catalog										
Manufacturer's literature										
Manufacturer's website										
Distributor's literature										
Distributor's sales rep										
Manufacturer's sales rep										
Customer service rep										
Colleague										

Ultimately, each shopping mechanism can support any other buying mechanism. Finding the mix that works for your company is what matters.

# Key Questions for E-commerce and Multichannel Strategy

- How do my customers shop (not order)?
- How do my customers order?
- How do my customers want to receive communication?
- What ordering methods do my customers require to continue business with me?



# CONCLUSION

# Conclusion

- Many distributors experience “Build it and they don’t come.”
- Shifting the focus from tactical to strategic is key to having a mature e-commerce capability.
- Viewing e-commerce as part of a broader multi-vehicle and multichannel strategy is essential for success.

# Thank you!

Jonathan Bein, Ph.D.

Managing Partner

[jonathan@realresultsmarketing.com](mailto:jonathan@realresultsmarketing.com)

[www.realresultsmarketing.com](http://www.realresultsmarketing.com)

Questions?

# The 2015 State of E-Commerce in Distribution

Sponsored by:  **hybris software**  
An SAP Company

Date: March 26, 2015