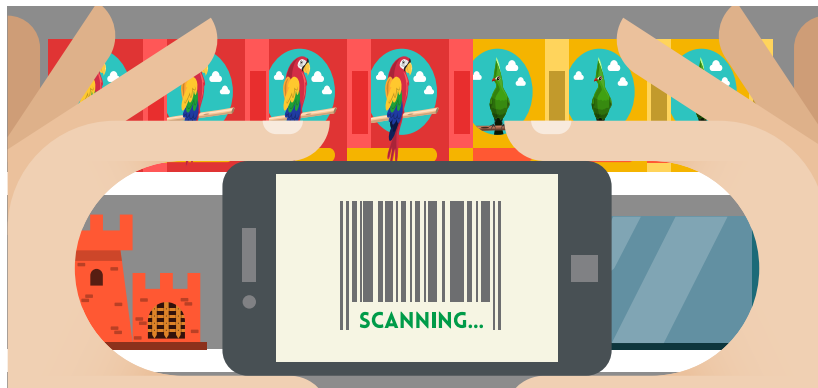




CASE STUDY

Winning with a Smart Mobile Ordering Strategy

How innovative distributor Pet Food Experts' sophisticated mobile ordering strategy drives more revenue and helps them win business from competitors.



The mission: to make the customer reorder process as quick and simple as possible.

Established in 1989, Pet Food Experts is an independently owned and operated pet food and supplies distributor delivering over 130 brands to independent pet retailers across twenty-nine states. As the third largest distributor in the industry, the company currently serves over 3,400 retailers from four warehouses located in Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Washington State.

As a company that works exclusively with independent pet stores, Pet Food Experts' motto of "When we win, you win" directly reflects their deep commitment to helping their retailers succeed. Motivated by this sentiment, they embarked on a strategic initiative in 2016 to make their customers' frequent reordering process as quick and simple as possible. According to Pet Food Experts President Michael Baker:

"We always believed in the value of operating an innovative and convenient mobile solution for our customers. Our partnership with Handshake allowed us to execute on that vision and to drive innovation in an industry that has sometimes been reluctant to change."

Pet Food Experts also realized the the success of this effort would require buy-in across the business, which required strong support from leadership. Explains Alex Silva de Balboa, Senior Strategy & Technology Consultant:

"In order to get a mobile app deployment right, you need engagement in the company from the top down. Having the CEO believe in the vision of mobile buying and being willing to take risk to introduce innovation into the market was critical."



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Michael Baker
President, Pet Food Experts

Providing an excellent B2B buyer experience requires a clear understanding of customer habits and preferences.

The Mobile Ordering Initiative

Pet Food Experts was the first in their industry to offer a strong mobile ordering solution, implementing Handshake Direct Mobile, a user-friendly, native mobile commerce application to allow their customers to place orders anytime, anywhere, from the devices they were already using every day.

According to Alex Silva de Balboa, Senior Strategy & Technology Consultant, the decision to adopt a mobile customer ordering solution was made on multiple fronts.

First, Pet Food Experts noticed how consumer expectations were expanding into the B2B sphere, recognizing that the modern buyer experience would be incomplete without a strong mobile application.

As Silva de Balboa explains:

“In order to take advantage of these growing expectations we were seeing in B2B, we needed to provide a reliable, user-friendly tool that would allow us to promote more convenient self-service buying.”

The company also knew that faster, more seamless ordering would drive operational efficiency. In some cases, customers were wasting hours per week placing orders over the phone, an inefficient experience for both the buyers and the inside sales reps processing orders.

Lastly, providing an excellent customer experience in manufacturing and distribution requires a clear understanding of customer habits and preferences. The average Pet Food Experts customer, like many independent retail business owners, tends to spend more of his or her day on the floor with customers. Given the very limited time for administrative tasks during store hours, buyers typically do all their ordering after closing time.

Mobile ordering solution requirements:

- ✓ 24/7 ordering access
- ✓ Intuitive user experience
- ✓ Ability to place orders shelf-side while taking inventory



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Senior Strategy & Technology Consultant,
Pet Food Experts

Pet Food Experts partnered with Handshake to roll out a sophisticated engagement strategy.

For this reason, Pet Food Experts realized the importance of a powerful shelf-side ordering tool that could accommodate the exact ordering workflow their buyers wanted. For some, it was the ability to place orders at the shelf while walking the store and taking inventory at the end of the day. For others, it was the ability to place orders during the day while in the front of the store, optimizing for customer face-time and eliminating the need to stay after-hours to place the orders.

In fact, a few years prior, Pet Food Experts had invested in legacy mobile barcode scanning units that they'd hoped would allow customers to place orders from store aisles. They struggled with customer adoption, however, when the technology came up short. According to Mark Pesce, Pet Food Experts' Data Analytics Manager:

“People didn't like using it. The unit's display was really small and limited. As soon as they scanned the next item, they'd lose all visibility on the previous item, and they couldn't easily review the entire order at the end.”

The company knew that in order to drive real success with their mobile ordering strategy and provide the familiar conveniences of B2C buying, it was important for their buyers to be able to place orders on familiar and ubiquitous devices like the iPhone and iPad. After vetting several solutions, they chose Handshake, confident that their buyers would love the straightforward, user-friendly buying interface.

The Rollout Plan

Well-aware that the majority of their buyers were not early adopters of new technology, the Pet Food Experts team knew it would take some effort to drive adoption of their new mobile ordering solution. They also knew that the new process would save time and streamline their buyers' ordering workflow, something that is not always front-of-mind for store operators. Explains Baker:



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Our independent retailers are passionate about providing the highest quality products to their customers' pets. They are experts on pet nutrition and pet health and really passionate about what they do, but not always as focused on efficiency and streamlining process.

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Michael Baker
President, Pet Food Experts

Pet Food Experts drove awareness of the Handshake mobile ordering app across multiple marketing channels.

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With this in mind, Pet Food Experts partnered with the Handshake team to roll out a sophisticated engagement strategy, creating a comprehensive plan that involved stakeholders across sales, marketing, and IT:

The Ambassador Program

Pet Food Expert’s most engaged, tech-savvy reps were trained on Handshake, and subsequently served as the points-of-contact to train and troubleshoot with buyers in their respective regions. They also collected valuable feedback from buyers that was used to improve the rollout strategy.

Weekly check-ins

A cross-functional task force made up of key stakeholders from sales, data analytics, IT, and select customers met on a weekly basis to share feedback and learnings on the new mobile ordering app. This was an especially important initiative early in the launch, so Pet Food Experts could understand what was or wasn’t working.

Marketing campaigns

Pet Food Experts drove awareness of the Handshake mobile ordering option across multiple marketing channels. At their buyer trade shows, they held information sessions and introduced Handshake to customers during in-person conversations. The bulk of their awareness efforts was executed via email, but also in-person in sales rep-customer conversations.

Customer testimonials

Pet Food Experts found that highlighting buyer success stories to be a valuable component of their launch strategy. These testimonials were produced and shared over multiple formats, including video and email.

Pet Food Expert’s thoughtful rollout strategy included:



The Ambassador Program



Weekly check-ins



Marketing campaigns



Customer testimonials



Customer incentives



Customer support hotline



Monthly sales presentations

A Power User segment has emerged, with buyers placing 80-90% of their orders through Handshake Direct Mobile.

Customer incentives

Pet Food Experts also put incentive programs in place to drive greater usage of the Handshake app. One particularly successful example was a customer raffle for \$10,000 in prizes. The more orders a buyer placed through the Handshake app, the more tickets they could enter.

Customer support hotline

Pet Food Experts provided all buyers with a phone number to call with Handshake-related questions. For suppliers with less tech-savvy customers, simply having a real person there to help is often more important than the troubleshooting process itself.

Monthly sales presentations

Finally, Pet Food Experts includes relevant updates on Handshake in their monthly sales presentations, to keep the sales force aligned and up-to-date on the customer ordering process.

The 4 Distinct User Segments

Since implementing Handshake Direct Mobile (HSDM), Pet Food Experts has seen a great deal of success among four distinct user segments.

- 1. Provisioned Buyers.** Pet Food Experts developed a prioritization metric that factors in revenue, cost-to-serve, and buyers' existing purchasing infrastructure. Buyers who fall in the priority category are then provisioned with an iPad Mini. Within this group, a Power User segment has emerged, with **buyers now placing 80-90% of their orders through HSDM.**

Pet Food Experts attributes this power usage to a number of factors. First, the prioritization metric identified these buyers as high-opportunity and therefore their higher- than-average usage was not surprising. Second, according to the reciprocity principle that refers to the human tendency to give something back when



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Marc Pesce
Data Analytics Manager

The Handshake app is critical to customer experience and customer retention.

something is received, customers that are provisioned with an iPad are more likely to use it.

Pet Food Experts also used EMM (Enterprise Mobile Management) software to remotely deploy and manage the Handshake app on provisioned devices. In this scenario, the buyer is always using the most updated version of the app, and simply needs to log in and place orders.

- 2. BYOD Buyers.** BYOD (Bring-your-own-device) buyers install HSDM on their own smartphones and tablets, preferring the convenience of placing orders on mobile to other manual methods. Pet Food Experts believes this segment to have a high growth potential.
- 3. Catalog Referencers.** These buyers have an existing buying infrastructure (point-of-sale system or EDI), so they use HSDM primarily as an information-rich digital catalog. In particular, they rely on the app to check product inventory availability, data that is not accessible in Pet Food Expert's paper catalogs or even their outdated web online ordering portal. This inventory data is always updated in real time, given the seamless API integration between Handshake and Pet Food Expert's ERP, Infor A+.
- 4. Sales Reps.** A small segment of Pet Food Experts' sales reps use Handshake's mobile order writing app to check inventory and place orders on behalf of their buyers. However, given the ease-of-use of the Handshake buyer interface, most customers prefer to place orders on their own time.

The 4 Distinct User Segments:



Provisioned Buyers:

Buyers that were provided an iPad Mini--many of whom are now placing 80 to 90% of their business through Handshake.



BYOD Buyers:

Buyers that install Handshake on their own smartphones and tablets.



Catalog Referencers:

Buyers that access the Handshake digital catalog for up-to-date inventory availability.



Sales Reps:

Sales reps that place orders on behalf of their buyers.

10% of Pet Food Expert's overall revenue now comes through their mobile ordering channel.

The Results: Revenue, Retention & Winning Business from Competitors

Prior to launch, Pet Food Experts set a metric for the success of their mobile ordering channel, shooting for 10% of their overall revenue coming through HSDM.

Just months after their engagement strategy began in full-swing, they have already reached this goal.

In addition to the positive growth in revenue and engagement, it turns out that the ease of use of the Handshake app is also critical to customer experience and customer retention. According to Pesce, “Our customers using Handshake Direct Mobile absolutely love it. It’s so easy to use.”

Before Pet Food experts had a mobile eCommerce app, the company was losing customers to competitors with mobile ordering tools. After adopting Handshake Direct Mobile, however, Pet Food Experts has actually won business from competitors. The immense impact of an easy ordering app can be summed up in one of Pet Food Experts’ many success stories:

“We had a particular customer who was ordering more from a competitor even though our pricing was significantly better,” says Pesce. “It was because that competitor had given them a device to place orders more easily. So we gave them one of our barcode scanning units, and they didn’t like it. Since we switched to Handshake, though, our ordering experience is so much better that they’ve given us the majority of their business.”

A Complete B2B Buying Experience

Today’s modern B2B buyer experience remains incomplete without mobile ordering. Recognizing this fact early on, Pet Food Experts has been able to charge ahead, helping a less than tech-savvy buyer base



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Pet Food Experts' mobile strategy has resulted in rapid adoption, customer retention, and sales won from competitors.

streamline their ordering process with a thoughtful strategy that reflects their commitment to their customers' success.

The results of that strategy have been undeniable: rapid adoption of new technology, increased customer satisfaction and retention, and sales won from competitors. Ultimately, Pet Food Experts was able to truly embody the company motto of, "When we win, you win."

Want to know more about how Handshake can give your customers the ability to place shelf-side orders? Contact us today.

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Results since launching Handshake:



Sales won from competitors



10% of overall revenue coming through mobile ordering



Positive feedback from buyers