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Triumph opens franchised web stores for its dealers

The motorcycle brand launched b2b and b2c e-commerce at once

Amy Dusto, Associate Editor

Triumph Motorcycles Ltd., which sells motorcycles and gear to dealers and consumers, has launched a series of e-commerce web sites for its North American headquarters and its franchises in the United States, the company recently announced.

The sites are all connected by a single inventory management and distribution system from UPS Global Logistics and Distribution. They include a corporate web store selling directly to consumers, a business-to-business site selling goods wholesale to distributors and franchised web stores for each of its more than 200 North American dealers, says Matt Sheahan, vice president of sales and operations.

The retailer selected Bridgeline Digital's iAPPS Product Suite to build and host its e-commerce platform at the suggestion of UPS, which had previously revamped Triumph's back-end infrastructure for warehousing and distribution, Sheahan says. Because Triumph was already integrated with UPS, it stood to save time and money implementing Bridgeline for e-commerce, he says, though he declines to estimate the savings.

Triumph launched the sites within 90 days of signing with Bridgeline. The retailer will also use Bridgeline to help it sell on Amazon.com Inc.'s marketplace, which the retailer was eager to join to expand its customer base and grow brand awareness, Sheahan says.

Triumph addressed four main goals in its e-commerce launch, he says. They were:

- To create a corporate e-commerce site to sell to consumers—Triumph had only sold to dealers online in the past—that also integrates to Amazon's marketplace.
- To have a single place to house the entire product catalog, including Triumph-branded products made by other manufacturers and sold by franchises.
- To be able to offer franchised e-commerce sites for its dealers, each with the same look and functionality but location-specific store and product availability information.
- To increase efficiency with limited resources by using a cost-effective, single back-end for all Triumph sites that could support both b2b and b2c sales.

Triumph's corporate headquarters, via UPS, handles all fulfillment and shipping for online orders, Sheahan says. If a consumer buys a motorcycle jacket from a dealer's web site, for example, Triumph is essentially selling the jacket wholesale to that dealer, which then



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sells it to the consumer and keeps the profit, he says. "The good part for dealers is they don't have the risk of inventory they have to carry, stocking warehouses, hiring warehouse workers, shipping items and maintaining the web site, but they still get profit-sharing," he says.

Bridgeline's average e-retail clients spend \$150,000-250,000 in the first year of service, which covers initial site development and software fees, and \$85,000 in subsequent years for continued service and maintenance, the company says.

Triumph required some specific features that Bridgeline added, Sheahan says. It needed the e-commerce platform to incorporate state-specific motor vehicle laws for franchises, maintain the existing relationship between Triumph and its dealers online—which Triumph manages in part by redirecting visitors from the corporate e-commerce site to their nearest dealers' sites—and simplify the returns process for customers so they needn't call Triumph or a dealer to return items, he says.

"The flexibility and speed with which they've been able to react to what we need in a very tight timeframe has been remarkable," Sheahan says. In the coming year, Triumph plans to add a Canadian e-commerce site, he says.

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