

B2B platforms – what for? 5 impulses!

Digitally visible – close to the customer –
ahead of the competition.

Editorial

B2B platforms – the key to success in the digital age

Dear business-to-business professionals,

It's a cold morning in the garage at Weber & Scholz. The mechatronics engineer is faced with a problem: a rare component, urgently needed, is not in stock at the wholesaler. In the past, this would have meant days of waiting or time-consuming phone calls. Today, one click is enough: The supplier's B2B platform displays the available items in real time. And delivery takes place the very next morning.

This scenario describes the relevance **of digital B2B platforms** in the automotive aftermarket. This is also reflected in the figures: According to the “B2B-Marktmonitor 2024”¹, e-commerce **sales** remain the B2B growth driver this year. Sales via online shops and marketplaces are recording double-digit growth rates despite the mood of crisis.

In this **series of expert articles** by my esteemed colleague and **specialist author Wolfgang Vogl**, we are focussing on the new digital reality of the automotive aftermarket. A reality in which customers expect immediate availability of information, services and products. In five expert articles, you will learn to what extent a powerful **B2B online portal** can be the answer.

Take a look at our expert guide and discover how **platform business models** are opening up new markets. Strategically well thought out, B2B portals not only boost sales. They offer the opportunity to rethink business models – and thus achieve a growth spurt.

A B2B online portal helps manufacturers and wholesalers to master the digital transformation. See this as a driving force to remain **competitive**. Read from page 12 onwards how such a portal ensures **new** and sustainably **satisfied customers** and increases **sales**.

The digital route is also essential when it comes to further training. **B2B e-learning platforms** can be used to train more than just employees. You can find out how they cleverly reduce costs and increase the attractiveness of the company from page 16 onwards. Finally, we venture a real change of perspective for the automotive aftermarket: Those who understand **the vehicle as a customer** realise that it's not just about trading parts.

One thing is certain: The future of the automotive parts trade is digital. **B2B platforms** offer the **key** to new markets, satisfied customers and long-term **success**. Those who take the right steps now will be a decisive step ahead of the competition.

We wish you valuable insights



Anja Melchior 

Editorial Speed4Trade Trends & Insights

¹ [B2B-Marktmonitor 2024 by IFH Köln, Creditreform, Intershop and CGI](#)

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#1 Platform business models in B2B: Conquering the market with innovative approaches

Traditional business models still dominate the market

While platforms such as Amazon and Ebay have long been part of everyday life in the B2C sector, the B2B sector is still lagging behind when it comes to the platform economy. Traditional business models still dominate here. In contrast to conventional companies that sell products or services directly, platform business models create an environment in which suppliers and buyers can network with each other and conduct business. The value of the platform arises from the interaction of the users and grows with their number.



Examples of B2B platforms:

- **Alibaba:** The huge Chinese platform connects manufacturers with retailers and buyers.
- **XOM Materials:** A marketplace for steel and other industrial metals
- **Mercateo:** Platform for the procurement of industrial goods and services

What distinguishes the platform approach from other business models

Platform business models are unique because they do not offer any products or services themselves. Their value comes from their reach and use. The more people use the platform, the more valuable it becomes. Let's take Ebay as an example: The company does not sell any products itself, but provides the infrastructure on which merchants can offer their goods and customers can make purchases. Ebay's success is based on the large number of retailers who offer their products there and the millions of customers who shop there.

Success factors for B2B platforms

The key to the success of a [B2B platform](#) lies in the critical mass. Only when a sufficient number of users are active on the platform will the added value be created that attracts companies. In order to achieve this critical mass, platforms need to consider a few important points:

- **Unique value proposition:** What makes the platform more attractive than existing offers?
- **Network effects:** The more users utilise the platform, the more valuable it becomes for each individual.
- **Data aggregation and use:** Platforms collect valuable data that can be used to optimise the platform and develop new services.
- **Scalability:** The platform must be able to keep pace with the growth in user numbers.

Strategic approaches for a B2B platform business

Successfully establishing a platform in the B2B sector requires well thought-out strategic approaches. A platform can revolutionise the way companies interact with each other and open up new business opportunities. Here are some proven strategies that can help you build your B2B platform and make it successful.

1. **Develop a network for new demand:** In the B2C sector, there are already platforms that bundle demand and thus offer attractive prices. Think of Zalando or Autodoc, which can achieve discounts through high demand. In B2B, a wholesale platform could work on the same principle. Alibaba is an example of such a platform on a large scale.
2. **Establish a network for suppliers:** Smaller companies in particular face the challenge of selling their products cost-effectively to B2B customers. A B2B platform could help here by offering a wide reach and thus supporting smaller suppliers. In the area of tyres and car parts, for example, the B2B marketplace Tyre24 fulfils this function.
3. **Strengthening previously unused networks:** There are often underestimated or barely utilised traditional networks that offer great potential. A platform that specifically addresses these networks can significantly increase their reach. Platforms can thus serve niches that are neglected by competitors.
4. **Integrate additional lines of business:** Platform business models offer many opportunities for expansion. Amazon is a prime example: In addition to the marketplace, it offers business customers warehousing, cloud services, payment processing and shipping. These extensions increase reach and sales.

Business models for B2B platforms

The success of a B2B platform depends heavily on the chosen business model. Different models offer different approaches to how companies can create value and generate revenue. Here are some of the

most promising business models for B2B platforms that can help you optimise your platform business to meet the specific needs of your target group.

1. **Data-based business models:** Digitalisation has triggered a veritable flood of data. Many companies are faced with the challenge of processing this data in a meaningful way. Platforms can help here by analysing and processing data. They use the data collected on the platform to develop new services or optimise existing offers. In addition, anonymised data could also be sold to third-party companies outside the platform.
2. **Customer-centred business models:** Platforms bundle products and services to meet the needs of specific sectors without being manufacturers or service providers themselves. They merely mediate between customers and providers. This creates a broad portfolio of product ranges and services.
3. **Fee-based or transaction-based business models:** Digitalisation offers numerous opportunities for monetisation. For example, platforms only charge fees for processing transactions (e.g. PayPal). The margin from the [sale of products](#) and services remains with the provider. Or users pay fees for access to the platform – this can be done, for example, through so-called "pro versions". A free basic version can in turn promote distribution, while the pro version offers additional services.
4. **Advertising as a further source of income:** B2B platforms offer companies an excellent opportunity to reach their target group with high-selling advertising. In contrast to traditional forms of advertising such as TV adverts or print ads, the placement of advertising on B2B platforms enables a much more granular approach to potential customers. Platform operators can utilise this additional source of revenue by offering appropriate advertising formats, such as banners, text ads, video ads and sponsored content.

Success factors of a B2B platform business model

The development of a B2B platform business model begins with the definition of strategic goals: What should the platform achieve? Practical use cases should then be developed: What specific problems should the platform solve? Possible options and scenarios can then be derived from observing the business environment. An inventory should then be carried out to check feasibility. Finally, it is important to build up a network of co-operation partners: Who can contribute to the success of the platform? Marketing campaigns, such as the provision of a beta version, can help to establish the platform and attract users. How can the target group be made aware of the platform? Other success factors are:

- **A critical mass of users:** The platform must have a sufficient number of providers and users in order to offer added value.
- **Network effects:** The value of the platform increases exponentially with the number of users.
- **Trust and security:** Users must be able to trust the platform.

- **Continuous further development:** The platform must adapt to the needs of the market.

Conclusion

Platform business models offer enormous opportunities for companies in the B2B sector. With innovative approaches and the right expertise, companies can tap into new markets, strengthen their customer loyalty and increase their turnover. Digital platforms can create new sales opportunities and complement or even replace existing business models. With the right strategy, they can become a driver of growth and innovation.

#2 Digitalisation in the automotive parts trade: How a B2B online portal strengthens your competitiveness

The B2B online portal is the central hub for your business relationships

In the rapidly changing automotive industry, car parts manufacturers and dealers are facing unique challenges. Digitalisation, new mobility concepts and changing customer expectations are shaping the business environment. A powerful B2B online portal is proving to be the key to success. It addresses the most pressing issues and creates a central hub for your business relationships. Let's explore together how such a portal can be the answer to the current market changes in the car parts trade.

The new buying behaviour: Serving self-determined customers optimally

Today's B2B buyers of car parts are like racing drivers on a digital racetrack. They search independently for information on spare parts, accessories and innovations long before they get in touch with you. A B2B online portal acts as a digital pit crew and information centre.



How does an online portal support you in this?

- It offers a central platform for technical documentation, compatibility lists and detailed product information on car parts.
- Implement a parts finder that allows customers to quickly and accurately identify the components they need for specific vehicle models.
- Integrate a customer portal with personalised information on delivery status, availability and model-specific recommendations.

Example: A manufacturer of brake systems has expanded its online portal into a comprehensive knowledge database. Garages and dealers can find not only product specifications, but also installation

instructions, training videos and a forum for exchanging experiences on specific vehicle models. The result: better-informed customers who make more targeted enquiries and faster purchasing decisions.

Digitalisation and technological change: The online portal as a driver of innovation

In the digital transformation of the automotive industry, your B2B online portal is like a turbocharger that drives your company and makes it fit for the future.

How do you harness the power of digitalisation through your portal?

- Implement [e-commerce functions](#) for smooth online ordering of spare parts and accessories.
- Use AI-supported recommendation systems to suggest suitable additional parts or upgrades.
- Integrate real-time data on availability and delivery times to increase supply chain transparency.

Example: A provider of vehicle electronics could link its online portal with an AI-supported diagnostic platform. Garages could upload vehicle data and automatically receive fault analyses and repair recommendations. The result: more precise diagnoses, optimised parts orders and more satisfied end customers.

The extended competitive environment: Differentiation through digital excellence

In a market full of competitors, your company will stand out from the crowd with a first-class online portal. It becomes a digital showroom for your car parts and your expertise.

How do you use your portal to differentiate yourself?

- Offer exclusive online services such as virtual product presentations or 3D models of car parts.
- Implement an interactive configurator for complex components such as chassis or engine parts.
- Create a community platform for the exchange of experience between garages and dealers.

Example: A supplier of body parts could integrate a "virtual fitting room" into its portal. Dealers could use it to simulate the visual effect of add-on parts on various vehicle models. This unique function could prove to be a strong differentiating factor and significantly increase sales figures in the tuning segment.

Precise customer identification: The portal as a data gold mine

Your B2B online portal collects valuable data about the ordering behaviour and preferences of your customers in the automotive parts industry. This information helps you to understand and address your target group more precisely.

How do you optimise customer identification with your portal?

- Implement advanced analytics tools to analyse order patterns and product preferences.
- Use lead scoring models to identify promising dealers or garages.
- Rely on personalised product recommendations based on the customer's vehicle fleet.

Example: A wholesaler of engine parts could implement an AI-supported forecasting system in its portal. This analyses historical order data, vehicle inventories and seasonal trends to predict future parts requirements. The results: a reduction in excess stock and improved availability of critical components.

Visibility in the digital world: Your portal as a beacon in the spare parts market

In the flood of digital information, your B2B online portal acts as a central point of contact for garages, dealers and fleet operators. It bundles your online presence and makes you easier to find for search engines and potential customers in the automotive industry.

How do you increase your digital visibility with the portal?

- Optimise your portal for search engines with relevant keywords for specific car parts and vehicle models.
- Integrate a blog or news section for regular updates on product innovations, industry trends and repair tips.
- Link your portal with industry platforms and [online marketplaces](#) for a broader distribution of your offer.

Example: A supplier of drive technology could expand its online portal into a comprehensive information hub for e-mobility. In addition to product information, it offers white papers on future technologies, webinars on repair techniques for electric vehicles and a podcast on industry trends. This content strategy leads to a doubling of organic search traffic and positions the company as a "thought leader" in e-mobility.

Conclusion: The B2B online portal as the driving force behind your success in the car parts market

In the new reality of the automotive industry, a powerful online portal is proving to be an indispensable tool for car parts manufacturers and dealers. It not only addresses current challenges, but also creates the basis for future growth and innovation in a changing market.

For you as a decision-maker in the car parts market, this means:

1. Think of your online portal as a digital shop window and sales channel for your car parts and services.
2. Develop and optimise your portal continuously to keep pace with technological changes in the automotive industry.

3. Use the collected data to recognise trends in demand for spare parts and adapt your product range accordingly.
4. Train your employees in how to use the portal and how to utilise the knowledge gained to advise customers.
5. Stay agile and regularly adapt your portal to changing vehicle technologies and customer needs.

A B2B online portal is more than just a digital parts catalogue. It is the key to sustainable competitiveness in an increasingly digitalised automotive parts market. It combines your expertise and your product range with the possibilities of modern technology. As a result, it creates real added value for your customers in the automotive industry.

Use the power of your online portal to turn the challenges of the new reality in the automotive parts industry into opportunities. Position your company as a customer-orientated partner in the digital era of mobility. The future of the car parts business is digital – and your online portal is the turbocharger for your success.

#3 The digital transformation of online car parts sales and how a B2B online portal can help

Many purchasing decisions are made online

Digitalisation has also fundamentally changed the distribution of car parts. Car repair shops and parts dealers now obtain information about products and prices online, compare offers and often make purchasing decisions without direct contact with the parts supplier's sales department.

In this complex landscape of B2B online sales, car parts manufacturers and wholesalers face numerous challenges. In particular, adapting to changing purchasing behaviour requires innovative solutions. The same applies to building trust and relationships as well as effectively acquiring and qualifying new customers.

To be successful in this dynamic environment, companies need to reorganise their sales strategies. A B2B online portal can provide crucial support for manufacturers and wholesalers of automotive parts and offers numerous advantages that strengthen sales and lead to greater success.



Adaptation to the new purchasing behaviour of vehicle car repair shops and parts dealers

Today's shopping behaviour has changed dramatically. Customers increasingly favour the convenient and efficient online purchasing process, which allows them to find and order products quickly. Traditional sales channels alone are no longer sufficient to meet customers' needs.

A dedicated B2B online portal enables companies to provide a customised [e-commerce platform](#) that meets the needs of their customers. With intuitive search functions, detailed product descriptions and smooth order processing, portal operators can offer an outstanding shopping experience and retain customers in the long term. Desired functions of a perfect customer journey can be:

- **Online research:** A car repair shop searches online for a specific spare part for a customer. They want to be able to quickly and easily compare the availability, prices and delivery times of different suppliers.
- **Comprehensive product information:** The portal provides detailed information on all products from the manufacturer or wholesaler, including product descriptions, specifications, images, videos and installation instructions.
- **Self-service functions:** Customers can configure products themselves, order the spare part they need directly online, track the status of their orders and download invoices.
- **Transparent pricing:** Garages and dealers can view prices, including all conditions and framework agreements, online or request special offers.
- **Individual advice:** In the event of complex enquiries or technical problems, the garage requires individual advice from an expert from the manufacturer or wholesaler.
- **Personalisation:** The portal can display personalised content and offers tailored to the individual needs of each customer.

Building trust and relationships with garages and dealerships

Online retail eliminates the possibility of personal contact, which has long been the basis for trust and customer relationships in B2B business. However, building trust also plays a major role in the digital world.

Customers want to ensure that they work with reliable partners who understand their needs and deliver high-quality products. Companies should not forget that there are real people behind the screens who are looking for reliable partners.

By using their own online portals, car parts manufacturers and wholesalers can enable more personalised interaction with their customers. Be it through regularly updated content, customised offers, individual advice or dedicated customer service. This strengthens trust in the brand and promotes long-term business relationships.

Functions of a B2B online portal to build trust and relationships with potential and existing customers via online channels can be:

- **Communication platform:** The portal offers a central platform for communicating with customers. Manufacturers and wholesalers can publish news, blog posts and specialist articles here to demonstrate their expertise.
- **Community features:** Forums and wikis enable dialogue between customers and providers as well as among the customers themselves.
- **Customer loyalty programmes:** The portal can integrate a customer loyalty programme that rewards customers for their loyalty.

- **24/7 availability:** Customers have round-the-clock access to product information, prices, ordering options and support.
- **Individual support:** Garages and dealers can contact experts from the manufacturer or wholesaler via live chat or video consultation if they have any questions or problems.

Winning new car repair shops and parts dealers as customers

Generating high-quality new customers and effectively qualifying them is crucial for success in B2B online sales. Traditional methods of lead generation, such as cold calling, are often time-consuming and inefficient. The key to successful lead generation and qualification lies not in the sheer quantity, but in the quality of the leads. Car parts manufacturers and dealers should focus their marketing strategies on attracting high-quality leads and ensuring that these are actually potential customers.

By using their own B2B online portals, companies can address their target group more precisely, provide relevant content and organise the entire lead management process more efficiently. The portal makes it possible to precisely analyse the behaviour of their website visitors and identify potential leads. By using tools such as lead scoring and automated follow-up processes, companies can target their sales activities to the most promising leads and maximise their closing rates.

More effective generation and qualification of leads leads to a higher conversion rate and an improved return on investment (ROI) of your marketing budget, for example via the following methods:

- **Lead capture forms:** Forms in the portal enable companies to capture the contact details of potential customers.
- **Lead Nurturing:** The portal can carry out automated lead-nurturing campaigns to lead potential customers step by step to a purchase decision.
- **Lead scoring:** By analysing customer behaviour on the platform, portal operators can assess the maturity of leads and thus manage sales activities in a targeted manner.
- **Marketing automation:** The portal can be connected to marketing automation software to further automate lead generation and qualification.

Additional advantages of a B2B online portal for manufacturers and wholesalers of automotive parts

B2B online portals also offer many other advantages to increase sales efficiency, for example:

- **Cost efficiency:** The automation of sales processes through a B2B online portal can lead to cost savings.
- **Improved collaboration:** The portal can improve collaboration between sales, marketing and customer service.

- **Increased market intelligence:** By analysing the data from the B2B online portal, companies can gain valuable insights into their customers and the market.

Conclusion

A B2B online portal is a key tool for successful B2B sales of automotive parts in the digital age. It helps manufacturers and wholesalers to master the challenges of digital transformation and utilise the opportunities of online sales. A well-designed and implemented B2B online portal can lead to more customers, higher sales and increased customer satisfaction.

#4 B2B e-learning platforms in the automotive aftermarket: What really matters

Competitiveness needs further training

Competition in the automotive aftermarket is fierce. Manufacturers, suppliers and garages are fighting for the favour of customers and to keep their specialists up to date. In the aftermarket in particular, companies must continuously train their employees, dealers and partners in order to remain competitive. B2B e-learning platforms are an effective way of achieving this. But what makes such a platform successful? What criteria should you consider when selecting and implementing one? Let us clarify these questions step by step.



User-friendliness and flexibility: The backbone of every platform

Imagine this: A car mechanic wants to find out about the latest diagnostic technology after work. But as soon as he logs in, he fails because of the complicated user interface. Frustration sets in, learning is postponed until tomorrow – and may never take place.

User-friendliness is the top priority. Intuitive operation is the be-all and end-all of any e-learning platform. Self-explanatory design ensures that everyone, from the administrator to the end user, quickly finds their way around. Clear structures, self-explanatory menus and clear navigation are essential. The fewer clicks required to reach the destination, the better.

Flexibility means that the platform grows with your company's requirements and can be customised. Whether new course content or integration into existing systems – a good platform should make this possible without great effort.

A practical example: A car parts supplier could use a platform to regularly train its sales staff on new products. If the platform is flexible enough, the training courses can be easily updated as soon as new parts are added. This saves time and keeps employees' knowledge up to date at all times.

Target group-orientated content: More than just dry theory

Even the most user-friendly platform is of little use if the content does not fit. In the automotive aftermarket, we operate in a highly specialised environment. And: Nobody likes to learn by heart. Target group-orientated content is the key to effective learning. Your dealers, partners and business customers expect content that is directly tailored to their needs. General training courses on vehicle technology are not enough.

Instead, customised content is needed for the respective target group, e.g.:

- Product-specific training for dealers and sales partners
- Technical training on diagnostics and repair for garages
- Management courses for managers in the aftermarket

The more precisely the content is tailored to the needs of the learners, the greater the benefit – and thus the acceptance of the e-learning programme.

A customised training course for a garage could include, for example, how to use a new diagnostic device. Instead of teaching general technical theory, the course shows the specific steps to be followed when analysing faults. This saves time and provides practical knowledge that can be applied directly.

Interactivity and gamification: Learning must be fun

Learning can and should be fun. Interactive elements and gamification are not gimmicks, but proven methods for increasing motivation and learning success. Quiz apps, competitions and ranking lists make the learning process more dynamic and engaging.

Pure text passages or presentations to click through do not motivate anyone in the long term. Interactive elements, on the other hand, turn learning into an experience, e.g.:

- Simulations in which technicians virtually work on vehicles
- Quiz apps that allow sales employees to deepen their product knowledge in a fun way
- Augmented reality applications for visualising complex technical relationships

There are virtually no limits to creativity here. The decisive factor is that the learners are actively involved and can apply what they have learnt directly.

Playful elements such as points systems, ranking lists or virtual badges appeal to people's natural instinct to play. Learning becomes a competition – with yourself and others. This spurs people on and ensures that what they have learnt is better remembered. Studies show that playful elements can significantly increase the willingness to learn – and this is particularly true in the B2B sector, where the learning content is often complex and technical.

For example, participants collect points for every training course they complete. Once they reach a certain number of points, they receive the status of "Aftermarket expert" and qualify for exclusive additional offers. This creates an incentive to stay on the ball and continue learning.

Reporting and analysis: Knowing what works

You have implemented the platform and carried out the first training sessions. But how do you know whether the measures are successful? Reporting and analyses are essential here. "If you can't measure it, you can't improve it." This quote from management guru Peter Drucker also applies to e-learning. You can only recognise weaknesses and make improvements if you keep a close eye on how the platform is being used.

A powerful B2B e-learning platform therefore offers comprehensive analysis and reporting functions, e.g.:

- How many users complete which courses?
- How long do they engage with the content?
- Which topics are particularly popular, which less so?
- How do individual participants or groups perform in tests?

Record as many key figures as possible, such as the number of users, completion rates or the time spent on certain courses. Valuable insights can be gained from this data: Which training formats are working well? Where are there still gaps in knowledge? How do employees' skills develop over time?

This allows you to quickly see which content is well received and which may need to be revised. For example: If you notice that the dwell time in a particular module is very short, this could indicate that the content is either too difficult or not relevant enough. With this knowledge, you can continuously improve your e-learning programme and adapt it to the needs of your target group.

Support and assistance: No success without help

Even the most sophisticated technology can sometimes go on strike. Or users are faced with problems that they cannot solve on their own. The best platform is of little use if nobody knows how to use it optimally. In moments like these, the quality of support can make the difference between frustration and satisfaction.

Competent and responsive support is therefore essential. Whether it's a telephone hotline, chat or ticket system – it is crucial that help is available quickly and easily. Comprehensive support from the provider is essential. This starts with a good introduction and ends with fast, competent support when problems occur.

Proactive support in the form of training or documentation should also be provided. The better administrators and users are trained in using the platform, the smoother operations will run.

An illustrative example: During the introduction of a new platform for a large workshop chain, the provider could offer on-site training sessions in which the most important functions are explained. A support team should be quickly available in the event of questions or technical difficulties. This is the only way to ensure smooth implementation and utilisation.

Scalability and future viability: Growing with the requirements

The automotive industry is changing. Technological developments, new business models and a constantly changing legal situation require flexibility and adaptability. A future-proof platform grows with your requirements. Be it the integration of new user groups, the expansion of additional functions or the connection of further systems – flexibility and scalability are crucial for long-term success.

Think of the introduction of a new e-car model. The platform should be able to quickly integrate new courses on this topic while ensuring that the existing content remains up-to-date. It must be robust enough to run stably even with an increasing number of users.

The platform should also be state of the art in terms of technology. Modern cloud architectures, mobile usability and openness to new technologies such as AI and virtual reality or augmented reality ensure the future viability of your e-learning solution. It should still have its finger on the pulse in five or ten years' time.

A final thought: Keep your eye on the goal

No project without a goal! Only if you define clear goals can you focus your e-learning measures on them. Short-term goals could be successful implementation and the first training sessions. Medium-term goals may include reducing training costs or increasing employee satisfaction. In the long term, you may want to increase the attractiveness of your company as an employer and increase turnover per employee.

B2B e-learning in the automotive aftermarket is not a sure-fire success. Success depends on many factors – from the technical platform and content to implementation and support. **These criteria form a compass for your e-learning strategy:**

(1) User-friendliness & flexibility as a basis	(2) Target group-orientated content as the centrepiece
(3) Interactivity & gamification as motivators	(4) Reporting as a management tool
(5) Support as a lifeline	(6) Scalability as a safeguard for the future

If you take these points into account, you are well on the way to a successful e-learning solution. A solution that not only saves costs and increases efficiency, but also creates real added value for your employees, customers and partners and ultimately your entire company.

#5 Change of perspective in the automotive aftermarket: Understanding the vehicle as a customer

It is not the driver who triggers the purchase of parts, but the vehicle

Let's take a closer look at the car parts market. An everyday business segment, you might think. But a closer look reveals a fascinating paradox: The vehicle owner standing at the counter or ordering online is not, strictly speaking, the trigger for a spare part purchase. It is the vehicle that needs this spare part. Let's take a brief look at this change in perspective: It harbours immense potential for car parts dealers in terms of sales strategies and marketing, particularly through the use of their own B2B online portal.



Focus on vehicle requirements

The automotive aftermarket is fundamentally different from other markets. Who really buys here? The driver? The car owner? No, it's the vehicle itself. When a car needs a new spare part, be it an alternator, new brake pads or a water pump, this need is independent of the person who owns or drives the vehicle.

Practical example: A Mercedes-Benz E-Class needs new brake discs. The driver may notice the problem through squealing noises or reduced braking power. However, the decision-making process begins with the car: A workshop check reveals the need for replacement, not the driver.

Understanding the vehicle: With a B2B online portal for precise diagnostics

The B2B online portal of a car parts supplier not only offers a [platform](#) for orders, but also tools for precise diagnostics. Modern portals integrate vehicle master data, maintenance and order histories. This gives garages a comprehensive overview of the vehicle, its previous repairs and the parts required.

Practical example: A garage diagnoses a BMW 5 Series in which the check engine light comes on. The mechanic calls up the vehicle master data and maintenance history via the online portal. This enables him to recognise that a particular component that was recently replaced is causing problems again. This saves time and avoids unnecessary repairs.

The role of the garages

In this scenario, garages play a decisive role. They are the actual "buyers" on behalf of the vehicle. Mechanics identify the need, search for the right spare part and install it. The owner simply authorises the purchase and repair.

A dedicated B2B online portal can offer significant advantages for suppliers of automotive parts. Garages can use it to quickly and efficiently access a comprehensive range, check availability and place orders.

Practical example: In a garage, a defective wheel bearing is discovered during the inspection of a VW Golf. The mechanic logs into the B2B online portal, finds the specific spare part and orders it directly. The decision is made in favour of the B2B portal because it provides the right parts reliably and quickly.

Proactive advice and customised offers thanks to intelligent data analysis

Another advantage of an online portal is the use of intelligent data analysis. By collecting and analysing data, portals can provide proactive advice and tailor-made offers. Garages benefit from recommendations for future maintenance and the timely replacement of wearing parts.

Future perspective: Imagine your car automatically sending you reminders when an oil change is due or when the brakes should be checked. A B2B portal takes on this role for garages by providing proactive maintenance recommendations based on data analysis.

Manufacturer and brand loyalty

This is another special feature: Brand loyalty in the spare parts market is often not established directly via the vehicle owner, but via the garage. Garages favour certain brands due to their reliability, price-performance ratio and availability. A spare parts supplier's own B2B online portal strengthens this loyalty through customised offers and exclusive access.

Metaphor: Imagine the car parts market as a restaurant. The customer (car owner) orders a dish (repair), but the chef (mechanic) decides which ingredients (spare parts) are used. The chef has his favourite suppliers (spare parts manufacturers) whom he trusts because the quality and price are right. A B2B online portal acts as the preferred supplier that delivers the best ingredients.

Quality and price

Quality and price play a decisive role. High-quality spare parts extend the service life of the vehicle and reduce future repairs. A dedicated B2B online portal can make the decision-making process easier with targeted offers and detailed product information.

Analogy: This is like buying shoes. An expensive pair made of high-quality leather lasts longer and offers more comfort, but sometimes a cheaper pair is sufficient for the purpose. A B2B portal helps garages find the right balance by providing comprehensive information and customer reviews.

Digital showroom and spare parts catalogue

Another advantage of a B2B portal is the digital showroom. Garages can browse through comprehensive spare parts catalogues, view product information and check availability. This makes it easier to select the right parts and ensures that they meet the vehicle's requirements.

Practical example: A mechanic is looking for a specific shock absorber for a Renault Clio. In the B2B portal's digital showroom, he finds detailed product descriptions, technical specifications and customer reviews to help him make a decision.

The importance of fast delivery

Fast delivery is crucial in the aftermarket. A car waiting for a spare part causes downtime and inconvenience for the owner. A B2B online portal of a parts dealer that guarantees fast and reliable delivery is favoured.

Practical example: A garage has a choice between two suppliers for a Toyota exhaust. One can deliver within 24 hours, the other in three days. With a B2B portal that enables lightning-fast deliveries, the garage opts for the faster option in order to satisfy the customer and minimise the vehicle's downtime.

24/7 availability and faster ordering process

In today's world, time is a precious commodity. A B2B online portal that is available around the clock enables garages to access spare parts and place orders at any time. This leads to a significant reduction in downtime and speeds up the repair process.

Practical example: A mechanic discovers a problem with an Audi A6 late at night and urgently needs a spare part. He can order the part immediately via his parts dealer's B2B portal and install it the next morning. This ensures a seamless and fast service that increases customer satisfaction.

Digital transformation and data

The digital transformation is rapidly changing the spare parts market. A dedicated B2B online portal that offers digital catalogues and real-time tracking of orders makes it easier than ever to find and order the right part. Intelligent data analyses help garages and suppliers to better forecast demand and manage stock levels efficiently.

Practical example: A garage uses its B2B online portal to identify a faulty starter motor for a Ford Fiesta. The part is ordered with just a few clicks and the workshop manager can track the delivery status in real time. This saves time and minimises errors.

Customer loyalty and service

Even if the direct "end user" is the car, customer loyalty plays a major role. A B2B online portal that offers good service and high-quality parts gains the trust of garages. Satisfied garages come back and recommend the portal to others. In turn, a garage that offers a fast and high-quality service to customers with the help of a B2B online portal will retain them in the long term.

Practical example: A vehicle owner whose BMW 3 Series has repeatedly been repaired reliably and quickly will continue to visit this garage in the future and recommend it to others. The garage in turn chooses the online portal as its preferred supplier.

Improved communication

A B2B online portal also improves communication between suppliers and garages. Real-time updates, direct communication and transparent ordering processes promote closer collaboration. This leads to stronger customer loyalty and long-term partnerships.

Practical example: A garage has a question about a recently ordered part. They can communicate directly with the supplier via the B2B portal and receive an answer within a very short time. This fast and efficient communication strengthens trust and satisfaction.

Conclusion: Becoming a customer-centred market leader with a B2B online portal

The car parts market is complex and unique. By changing their perspective and viewing the vehicle as the actual end user, car parts retailers are opening up new approaches to sales and marketing. A dedicated B2B online portal that takes the needs of garages into account and focuses on fast availability, quality and efficient service offers considerable advantages here.

By integrating vehicle master data, maintenance histories and intelligent data analyses, garages can make precise diagnoses and provide proactive maintenance recommendations. Round-the-clock availability, a digital showroom and improved communication increase efficiency and customer satisfaction.

Successful strategies are based on the needs of the vehicle – and therefore indirectly on those of its owners and the repair garage. A well thought-out B2B online portal can turn companies in the automotive aftermarket into customer-orientated market leaders. Use these opportunities to increase your competitiveness and strengthen long-term partnerships.

Publisher

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About Speed4Trade - Smart Digital Commerce & Service Platforms

Speed4Trade supports companies in digitalising and automating their trading and service processes. The software provider specialises in setting up digital sales and service platforms and integrating them into existing IT systems. Since 2005, Speed4Trade has stood for first-class software products, high-performance interfaces and excellent project know-how. The experienced software architects accompany their customers in all project phases – from the initial idea to successful implementation. More than 250 manufacturers and retailers from 19 countries, B2B as well as B2C, gain access to more customers and sales securely, reliably and efficiently thanks to Speed4Trade. This is, what 100 employees at the company headquarters in Altenstadt a. d. Waldnaab in Bavaria are working for every day.

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