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LEVELING THE DIGITAL PLAYING FIELD FOR SMALL SUPPLIERS



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What's Next In Payments®

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India is currently *making a name for itself* in the B2B eCommerce world thanks to some of the largest corporations – including Walmart and Amazon – launching online wholesale marketplaces in the nation. But suppliers without the resources of a major conglomerate are often hampered by the costs of setting up their own digital marketplaces. Unilog has emerged as one of the early leaders in B2B eCommerce thanks to its cost-effective CIMM2 platform, giving smaller suppliers a chance to compete in the big leagues. PYMNTS caught up with Unilog's President for North America operations, Suchit Bachalli, to discuss the rise of B2B eCommerce and how the company is resolving suppliers' digital needs in the U.S. and India, two very distinct markets.

As one of the early facilitators of B2B eCommerce, what does Unilog consider to be the largest barriers for wholesale distributors to migrate their operations online?

SB: Wholesale distributors have really struggled to migrate their operations online for a few main reasons.

First, wholesale distribution is a segment of the market that has been virtually neglected by eCommerce solutions. Most of the eCommerce platforms out there are geared toward B2C environments, but wholesale distributors have very unique integration requirements that most e-commerce platforms just can't address.

The other big problem is that B2B customers expect and demand the same seamless and user-friendly online shopping experience as consumers do – even though their business requirements are very different. So, it's really difficult for a lot of wholesale distributors to deliver an online shopping experience that can both meet their customers' expectations and still address their unique requirements.

Lastly, because of these challenges, implementing a best-in-class eCommerce site has been notoriously cost-prohibitive for many wholesale distributors – which has consequently made it difficult for them to stay competitive with their giant eCommerce rivals, like AmazonSupply and Grainger.

Your CIMM2 software platform includes data analytics capabilities. How can suppliers benefit from Big Data flowing in from their sales operations?

SB: B2B eCommerce organizations have to pick every chance at making a sale through their online engagements, whether it's through their website or their social media presence. Applying Big Data Analytics tools, the sales team will be able to manage the relationship with customers by optimizing product/offer releases, and will be able to follow up with abandoned carts. Furthermore, they'll be able to provide real-time personalized offers to buyers.

Unilog is based in India but recently launched operations in the U.S. Both nations have expansive eCommerce industries, but what are some key differences between the two nations you have encountered regarding the state of B2B eCommerce?

SB: The state of B2B eCommerce is very different in India and the U.S. B2C and mobile commerce are probably closer in comparison than B2B commerce. The biggest difference is the maturity model of B2B. The U.S. clearly is ahead on that graph and it will take India a fair bit of technology adoption to catch up.

The B2B space is notoriously slow to adopt new technology, and that includes digital commerce. Where do you see manufacturers and distributors in the next year or so in terms of e-commerce adoption? What goals do you have for Unilog to accomplish in 2015 and beyond?

SB: I only see the adoption of e-commerce by manufacturers and distributors to continue to grow at a faster and faster rate because it really has become a prerequisite to stay competitive. B2B customers today expect and demand that their suppliers deliver a seamless, user-friendly shopping and browsing experience, just as consumers do. Large online marketplaces like AmazonSupply and Alibaba are encroaching on wholesale distributors' market share – they have no choice but to keep up.

The primary goal for Unilog in the next year is going to be building scale. We have doubled our customer roster last year, and we expect to double it again this year. Everything we are doing, we are doing at scale. Our biggest area of focus is building very nimble, highly scalable business processes.

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