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Oklahoma City-based Locke Supply ranks #22 on this year's Wholesaling 100. With 67 branch locations across five South Central States, Locke serves the plumbing, HVAC and electrical markets. The ESOP is led by officers (from left): CIO Larry Zeller, VP

of Company Operations John Orman III, CEO Tammi Bryant, EVP of Finance & Administration Jack Anderson, and VP of Sales, Branch Operations & Real Estate Mike Muzny. The Locke Supply story begins on page 32.

Featuring Our 43rd Annual

Wholesaling 100

Presented by



A Wholesale Commitment to the Industry

Section starts on page 58!

Granite Group to open 31st branch location

CONCORD, N.H. — The Granite Group announced they are opening their 31st branch location in Newport, Vt. This branch will be housed in a 10,000-square-foot facility located at 565 Union Street. The building is the former home of Fred's Plumbing & Heating. Construction of the branch began this spring, and is expected to be open for business by early July.

"This new Branch in Newport, Vt., like other recent branches we've opened, became a reality after customers asked us to find a way to build a presence in an under-served

(Continued on page 137.)



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ONE WHOLESALER TO ANOTHER

TORRACO™



BY DON POLLETTA
Special to *The Wholesaler*

As with most wholesalers in our industry, you've no doubt noticed the growing impact that e-commerce is having on your business and ability to stay competitive.

Today's B2B buyers want and

competitors' websites, and large online marketplaces, instead of us, to make buying decisions.

We wanted our customers to be able to get accurate and current product information, see their individual contracted pricing, view product images and spec sheets, and of course, buy products through our website, not our competitors' sites. But just having an e-commerce capability was not enough. The experience we delivered needed to be on par with the other industry sites out there in order to satisfy our customers' expectations.

As we explored our options, we discovered that few e-commerce platforms even existed that could

unilog Connecting Dots.
Delivering Insights.

Because we are in the wholesale business, not the web development and e-commerce business, we knew that we couldn't do it alone. It was time to go back to the drawing board. Fortunately, this time around we discovered Unilog's CIMM2.

Unlike any other software product that we had previously investigated, CIMM2 is specifically designed with B2B environments in mind. With a core focus on addressing the needs of the wholesale distribution space, it gave us a complete solution at an affordable price point. As we ran down our wish list, CIMM2 checked off all of the boxes, in-

traffic to the featured products on our site.

While still in our infancy stages, we're already starting to see an increase in registered users, online

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Beginners guide to B2B commerce

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complex integration requirements of your B2B environment.

As a fourth generation independent wholesale distributor of plumbing, piping & HVAC supplies who has fought through these battles first hand, I'd like to share with you some words of advice and insights I've learned that can help your business make e-commerce a reality.

Our e-commerce journey

The need to bring our company into the 21st century became evident a couple of years ago when we started seeing more of our customers turn to the Internet to research, compare and purchase the same products we offer. It was frustrating to watch our customers turn to manufacturers' and

accomplish what we needed because they were either mostly geared toward a B2C environment or too cost-prohibitive.

Ultimately we came to the conclusion that the best option

was to build our own site from the ground up. This would give us complete control over the project and the ability to build the site to our exact specifications.

But as we got deeper into the process, we encountered several setbacks that resulted in a number of fits and starts, further delaying our launch.

First, the e-commerce site needed to integrate with our ERP system, requiring custom development expertise and resources that we didn't have. We also struggled with figuring out how to build out our extensive product content and enrich it to keep it interesting, informative and current as our product portfolio grew and evolved. This task alone would require its own dedicated team.

cluding:

- Seamless integration with our ERP system
- Robust Content Management System (CMS), allowing us to manage millions of SKUs and our changing and growing product content
- Intuitive search and navigation features
- Mobile and tablet optimization
- Insightful analytics
- A marketing calendar to post events such as supplier training, counter days, etc.

Once we decided to implement CIMM2, it took us about nine months to have our site up and running. Today, after six months of being live, we now have 15,000 products listed on our website



and 200 registered customers. Rotating banners and promotions that we can easily create and change via our CMS also help us to reach our customers and drive

traffic and orders. In addition, our sales team uses the site as a tool to stay up to date and educated about our product offerings and inventory, so they can always be communicating the latest product availability and offerings to our customers.

What's the biggest lesson that we learned from this experience? Building an e-commerce site and making sure that it's constantly optimized to achieve your marketing and sales goals requires the right partner. It's crucial to choose an e-commerce provider that not only specializes in wholesale distribution, but one that will also be committed to your business for the long haul. 🌐

About the Author

Don Polletta is the Marketing Director for Torcco – a fourth generation independent wholesale distributor of plumbing, piping, HVAC, kitchen & bath and propane supplies serving Connecticut, western Massachusetts and New York. (www.torcco.com)

About Unilog's CIMM2 Platform

Unilog is a global technology and services company that specializes in e-commerce solutions and enriched product catalogs for the B2B marketplace. Its flagship product, CIMM2, is a fully integrated e-commerce platform designed to fit the unique requirements of the wholesale distribution industry. (www.unilogcorp.com / www.cimm2.com).

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