



PRESS RELEASE

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Record run on digital channels: strong increase in new customers drives e-commerce business at BERNER to new all-time high

The Berner Group's omnichannel sales model and course of bold digitalization have literally paid off during the coronavirus pandemic. As a result, the wholesale enterprise was able to achieve a growth in sales of 1.2% compared to the previous year in the recently ended 2020/21 fiscal year – despite highly difficult conditions. E-commerce business made a significant contribution to this positive result. Driven by an exceptionally strong increase in new customers (+54%), the B2B specialist recorded a new all-time high in orders placed via digital channels.

Overall, the Group's e-commerce revenue increased by 30% across Europe in the April 2020 to March 2021 financial year – more strongly than ever before in the company's history. The absolute frontrunner was Italy, which was hit particularly hard by the crisis early on. Here, BERNER grew by a whopping 113%. The most successful region was the Region East, including Austria and eight other markets from Latvia to Hungary and Croatia, which increased its e-commerce sales by a remarkable 40%.

In total, the Berner Group generated more than every eighth euro through digital channels over the past financial year. In the BENELUX countries – the region with traditionally the highest e-commerce share – this even reached nearly every fourth euro. In addition to classic consumables (e.g. screws), tools, power tools and smart chemical “all-in-one” aids, products from BERNER's safety/protection product range, including gloves, face masks, cleaning agents and disinfectants, were also in particularly high demand among automotive and construction professionals as a result of the coronavirus.

The Berner Group recorded the biggest e-commerce push in the second major coronavirus wave from October 2020, where across the Group twice as many orders were processed through digital channels than in the previous year in phases. “As we have done our homework in terms of stability, we were able to continually keep the availability of our web shop systems at the top level of 99.99%, despite significant traffic increases,” stresses CEO Christian Berner.

The purchasing behavior of tradespersons showed a clear correlation with the pandemic: the steeper the infection curve, the more skilled craft businesses preferred to use the digital sales channel instead of picking up products directly from the local warehouse, for example, or procuring them via one of some 5,200 sales representatives, as is usually the case. As a result, there was a sharp increase in first-time buyers, including a very large number of new customers (+54%). By far the highest number of new customers were acquired by the Berner Group in the Region South. In this way, positive business development was spurred on quite significantly by the e-commerce run in Spain (+128% new customers), France (+95% new customers) and Portugal (+88% new customers).

“Thanks to our omnichannel offer and the high investments we have made to digitally transform our company, we were able to continuously serve our customers 24/7, even during the lockdown periods,” emphasizes Christian Berner. “Whether on the construction site or in the car repair shop, we delivered on our value proposition and kept our customers' world running.”

The Berner Group

The Berner Group is a family-run European commercial enterprise. Our vision is: “We keep the world together and moving.” This means we are the central B2B trading partner for all materials in the maintenance, repair, and production



segments for our customers in the building, mobility, and industry sectors. With more than four channels we create an integrated omni-channel purchasing experience for our customers. In the steel and C materials as well as chemicals segments we are also an innovative manufacturer. We are represented in over 23 countries for our customers with more than 200,000 items and 8,200 employees.