



*The bounce rate has improved significantly, especially on the search result pages.*

**Anja Hochmeier**

*Head of eBusiness, Marketing and Customer Solutions*

# Next Generation drives sales in 13 online shops

The PBS Holding Group is one of the leading paper, office and stationery product distributors and resellers in Europe. Active in wholesale, B2B and B2C, the group is represented in eight countries by more than 20 companies and has been a FactFinder customer for more than 20 years. Anja Hochmeier, who is responsible for eBusiness and marketing at PBS, remarks how this long-standing partnership in the ever-changing eCommerce industry is unique. She credits “the innovation that always comes with the new versions of the product” as the element that sets FactFinder apart. In 2021, PBS migrated its online shops from FactFinder 6.8 to Next Generation, a decision that’s already yielded positive results.



## About PBS Holding Group

PBS has a decentralized structure when it comes to sales and logistics, but higher-level topics such as IT and eBusiness are decided centrally and implemented decentralized. This allows the company to manage its IT, logistics and product data “as locally as possible” and with “as much centralization as necessary”, guaranteeing sustainable competitiveness while maintaining the greatest possible proximity to customers.

It's one of many ways PBS delivers an ideal shopping experience. Of course, the technologies they choose to support them in doing so must also be up to the task. Anja explains, “The search needs to know exactly whether it's the head buyer accessing the entire assortment, or

whether it's buyer X choosing from only 10 pencils and not 700. The search results are naturally very different. Getting that right so that neither the head buyer nor the ‘normal’ buyer notices a difference in performance is a big challenge.” Transforming ordinary B2C and B2B moments into inspiring shopping experiences is a task PBS has put in the hands of FactFinder for over two decades. With the switch to Next Generation, the company is on the right track to continue offering more to its customers.

## PBS at a glance:

**HQ**

in Austria

**50,000+**

products in stock

**8**

countries

**20**

companies

**1,400**

employees

**€330M**

sales in 2021

**200,000**

customers

## Knowing what customers want with the Predictive Basket

PBS is aware that the majority of B2B sales are generated by returning customers. With the help of the Predictive Basket, the company can now process repeat orders easier, faster and more convenient. How? The AI-powered solution accurately predicts which products shoppers are likely to want to order during their current online session. These predictions are a result of analyzing previous purchases, purchasing frequency, and seasonal changes. So, before they can run out of certain office supplies, the neural network reminds them to reorder. Customers can then add the suggested products directly to their shopping cart. All without having to search for anything and removing the possibility of forgetting something important.

## Digital merchandising made easy

Displaying content in a targeted manner is a way PBS entices customers, draws attention to product ranges and ultimately turns visitors into buyers. Using FactFinder's merchandising tools, Anja and her team easily promote compelling landing pages for brands, seasonal events, offers, information pages and more. These merchandising functions enable fast and flexible digital marketing, especially when managing content shared between companies and countries. Instead of requiring starting from scratch for each independent shop, FactFinder creates synergy. "This gives us the opportunity to keep looking at new topics instead of 'more of the same' all the time," remarks Anja.

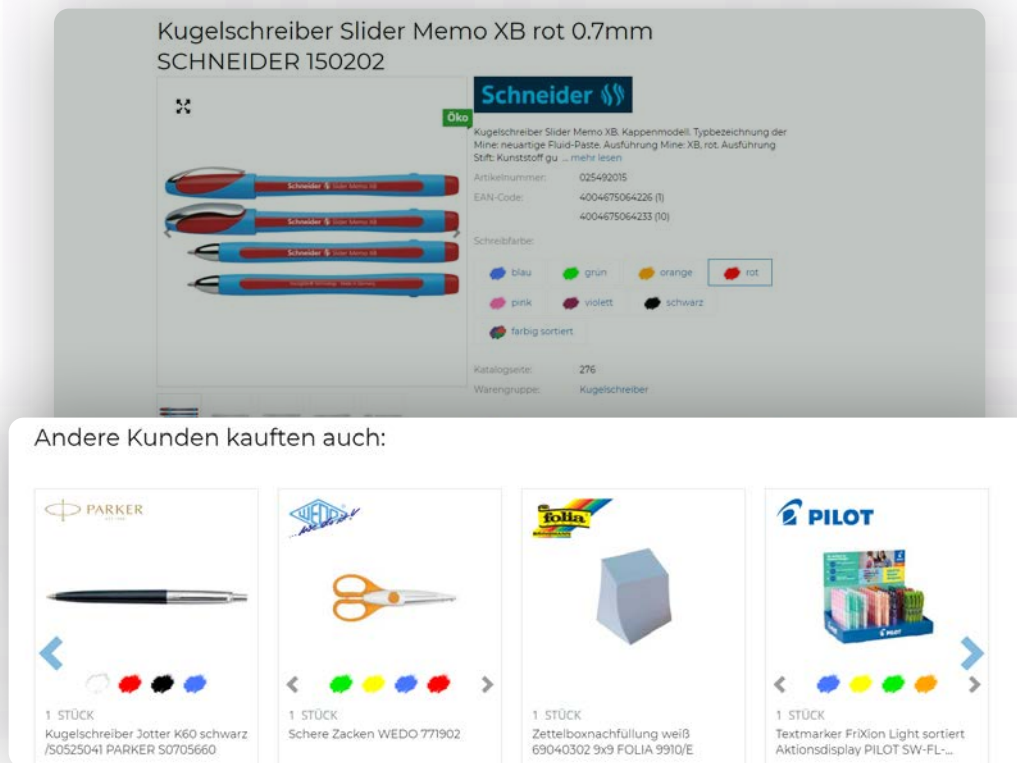


## Self-optimizing product recommendations

Next Generation helps online shoppers find both the right products and relevant accessories faster. On every product detail page, FactFinder shows recommendations that match the product being viewed - increasing the average order value without any manual maintenance effort. "Previously, this was solved completely differently," explains Anja. "I am very happy that we now have an automated solution." The PBS team doesn't have to decide for each product in the assortment which recommendations are relevant in each case. FactFinder does it for them. By analyzing clicks, shopping carts and combined sales in the store, the AI generates a recommendation logic that it tailors to each individual customer in real time and optimizes independently.

## Machine learning as a conversion lever

Anja explains that since the go-live with Next Generation, the wisdom of the crowd aka the behavior of all users in the store, also plays a role in the order results are displayed. For example, how often was a product clicked? Added to the shopping cart? Purchased? FactFinder automatically tracks all this information to optimize the results behind each search query. This way, the most popular products continually move up in the product results where customers see them first. The effects are visible in the quality of the search results and category pages, and with it the conversion rate increases in parallel.



*Search less, buy more with automated product recommendations. Online shoppers can easily view complementary products and complete their shopping cart with just a few clicks.*

## Interactive customer consulting with guided selling

For shoppers in this industry, not all purchases are as straightforward as they seem. Take paper shredders as an example. What is the exact application for the buyer? How much paper must be able to be shredded at once? What safety level does it need? To support and guide buyers in choosing the appropriate product, PBS uses a campaign called guided selling. It works by using a question-and-answer format which prefilters the search results and then delivers only the most suitable products. Anja gives another example: "What you might not expect is that it can be very complicated. After all,

they come with windows, without self-adhesive and in many formats. Often, the initial search reflex is to enter the word 'envelope' and then you have 500 results, and you say "For God's sake – what do I do now? So, our customers are happy to be guided through this."

The screenshot shows the 'Bürohandel' website with a search for 'kuvert ABC'. A guided selling overlay is active, asking the user to choose between envelopes with or without windows. Below the overlay, three OKI envelope products are displayed:

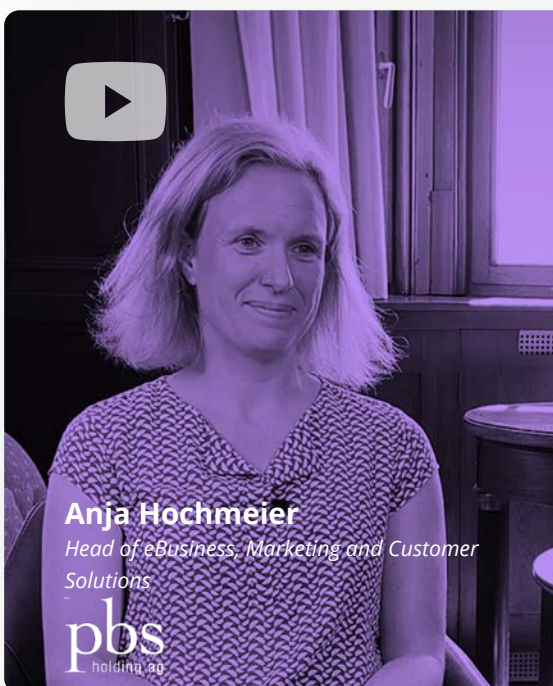
Product	Price
1. KARTON   1.000 STÜCK Fensterkuvert holzfrei weiß Abziehstreifen OKI CS-OF/CLAB0F	48,95 €
1. KARTON   1.000 STÜCK Fensterkuvert holzfrei weiß Abziehstreifen OKI CS-6-OF/CLAB0F	50,00 €
1. KARTON   250 STÜCK Fensterkuvert holzfrei weiß Abziehstreifen OKI CAB-OF/CLA100F	52,00 €

*Sometimes even professional B2B buyers aren't sure which product version they need. Guided selling offers online shoppers sound advice - interactively and completely digitally.*

## Ideal conditions for new sales records

While reflecting on the new conversion tools at their disposal, Anja is optimistic about “all the things that PBS didn’t have before but is now using.” She lists clear priorities for the coming weeks and months, starting with the roll-out of Next Generation across all shops in the PBS world. Two online shops will soon be launched in multiple languages, which will adjust to customer preferences of seeing content in either English or German - and the search will adapt accordingly. “Of course, this means additional complexity for the entire system, but the tests are very promising that it will work well,” says Anja. Next, the eCommerce team wants to “get even more out of the bouquet of features that FactFinder features now offer us.” One of the modules that is particularly promising, as Anja sums up, is the Predictive Basket. “It’s still in its

infancy and, of course, we want to get the most out of it. In other words, do we have enough topics that are going to be implemented with Next Generation? Yes.”



// *By having so many sites, so many campaigns that we share between brands in one country or across countries, that we can work with it easier and faster. That’s a big asset for us because the teams aren’t endlessly large. That definitely helps us.*

## About FactFinder

FactFinder is the European leader in eCommerce product discovery and search. We help over 2,000 online shops worldwide like MyTheresa, Intersport, OBI, Stihl and Elkjöp Nordic increase revenue by 20-33% with outstanding shopping experiences.

By combining human and artificial intelligence, we understand every shopper's intent from the first click. We call that authentic intelligence. Smarter algorithms and human expertise create a union that will always give a competitive edge.

Every day millions of B2C and B2B shoppers find what they are looking for with FactFinder – fast, personalized and with joy.



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Our eCommerce experts can offer support in multiple languages.

2,000+ online shops grow and excel with FactFinder

