

# Confex - the future is bright, the future is digital

**T**he future of delivered wholesaling is digital, says Confex's Business Development Director Tom Gittins. "We are putting all our time and effort into digital, with our online portal and weekly e-newsletter, which has a ninety percent open rate. Thirty percent of members used the Confex website three years ago, now it's ninety-five percent."

Members primarily use the site for online information and marketing resources. But the biggest development is Confex's "white label" app. If you're a local wholesaler, joining Confex, the national wholesale buying group and agreeing to a minimum annual spend gives you FREE access to your very own "white label" app, with your own logo and branding, which you can offer to your customers to give them online ordering.

With 49% of wholesalers saying their investment priority is online marketing and execution, Tom Gittins says the Confex Members App is enjoying a growing uptake among Confex's 244 current members:

"Businesses sell twenty five percent more on an app, and digital is the way forward. Being able to order twenty-four seven is how independent retailers and foodservice operators now want to buy. By giving our members access to a free, own-branded app which they can offer their customers, we're enabling them to use the tech to drive growth at no extra cost."

The app was developed for Confex by RNF Digital, who have also developed apps for other UK wholesalers.

Confex is enjoying strong turnover growth, up from £1.7bn in 2013 to £2.84bn in 2018 and projected to hit £3.5bn by 2022. "Delivered wholesalers are our priority," says Tom, "and digital is our focus. We remain the only Buying Group with no joining fee."

Confex's national promotional schedule includes a new national promotional feature, "Health Saver," which Tom Gittins says is part of its commitment to giving members access to exciting new products with in the growing health & wellbeing category.

"Our members are leapfrogging into the digital sphere and this gets them to the forefront of wholesaling. Once a local wholesaler has our App, which is available on the App Store and Google Play, they are playing in a global marketplace with access to millions of customers."

As Confex help more people with their digital platforms, these local wholesalers are also selling more to overseas customers. Tom Gittins mentions a Leeds wholesaler with ten percent of sales online and a global customer base.

Confex is open to taking on new wholesale members. As Tom puts it, "The more buying power we have then the better deals we can leverage with our suppliers. If any wholesaler would like to know more about the benefits of joining Confex, just reach out or PM me!"



*Tom Gittins, Business Development Director, Confex.*

"Member diversification is the key to growth. We help our members become the local wholesaler of choice within their geographical area, which pushes our members into diversifying into new product categories. We find that upselling to a customer is far more effective in growing business than finding new customers."

Following the merger between Landmark and Today's, Confex remain an associate member of Unitas, as they were with Landmark, and continue to have an aligned promotional programme and terms: "We see it as protection against external threats: the supermarkets, Amazon and others are all nibbling at the wholesale sector."

Confex's 2019 activity programme kicks off with the Annual Trade Show at Cirencester Water Park on Wednesday 10 April. The same evening sees the Members' Annual Dinner, which culminates in the presentation of the Green Wholesaler Awards.

The awards include best foodservice wholesaler, best retail wholesaler and best practice, including employee wellness and how staff are treated. We will bring you the results in our next issue. ■

