



Digital convenience

user expectations of tomorrow

The American multinational corporation eBay is a world famous provider of B2C and B2B ecommerce and sales services, with over 150 million active users across the globe. The Danes, in particular, are certainly no strangers to this veritable online giant. >>



eBay Classifieds Group (eCG), eBay's specialist classified adverts division, which owns a number of sites that allow users to upload

free or paid-for adverts of products and services, has been active in the Danish market for seven years following its acquisition of two of the country's leading automotive and general classifieds websites, Bilbasen Bilinfo and DBA, in 2008. Due to these acquisitions, eCG is now the Danish consumer's first choice for trading automobiles online. In this article, Lars Herrem chats to Andrew Whitehair, Director of Motors at eCG Denmark, about what the modern user expects from digital services today, as well as what users should expect from digital services tomorrow.

What attracted you to the opportunity at eCG Denmark?

Having led several leading automotive online businesses in the UK, I decided to join eCG Denmark in 2013 for the opportunity to, on the one hand, manage a market leading online business and, on the other, get involved in



international projects and strategy for one of the world's biggest internet companies. The challenge was also exciting as, prior to me joining, the market for trading automobiles in Denmark had become more competitive and eCG had also begun to lose the trust of local car dealers. My main priority, so far, has

therefore been to reconnect the business with its customers and re-establish the brand's reputation as an innovative connector of buyers and sellers. We're also developing the next generation product range to help car dealers engage more fully with the digital world.



Andrew Whitehair, Director of Motors at eBay Classified Group (eCG) Denmark (Bilbasen/Bilinfo/DBA)

After an early career with Nissan Motor Corporation developing IT applications in the UK and Germany, as well as launching and running his own IT management consultancy for two years, Andrew joined 2nd Byte, a UK based specialist automotive digital agency in 2000, as Head of IT and Operations. After five years, he stepped up to become Managing Director of the business and led 2nd Byte through its successful sale to Auto Trader, the UK's leading automotive site in 2006.

Over the next six years Andrew played a key role on the leadership team at Auto Trader, responsible for all digital B2B product development, managing 100 staff across five locations. He joined eBay in 2013 and today manages all aspects of Denmark's largest automotive website and dealer services business. Andrew lives in Charlottenlund with his wife and two of his three teenage children; his eldest son studies in the UK. His interests include spending time with family, world affairs, traveling, skiing, cycling and following Crystal Palace football club.

How is trading cars different to trading other consumer products online?

Cars are different to most consumer products because they are often the most expensive and emotive purchases people make. The purchase journey is usually long and complicated and requires people to navigate a wide selection of used and new vehicles, as well as decide which of a car's many different features and attributes will be the most beneficial to them. Added to these factors is that cars require regular maintenance and repair. It is therefore natural for consumers to want to deal directly with specialists such as car dealers, yet consumer trust in car dealers is historically poor. Transferring the process of buying a car online, where there is no face-to-face interaction, makes the trading of cars, in my opinion, the most difficult and complex online service to deliver. The internet creates transparency and this has changed the balance of knowledge between the dealer and the consumer. The rapid shift from desktop to mobile has accelerated this shift still further and car dealers need to adapt quickly to this very different trading environment while continuing to deliver a high level of customer service.

Is embedding digital convenience in your products and services a key part of this?

Absolutely, consumers increasingly demand that technology is easy to use and information is readily available and we therefore must be committed to offering them products and services with these qualities embedded in them. Buying a car can be complicated, time consuming and full of risk. Historically, it has

involved consumers doing hours of research reading magazines and papers combined with visiting several car dealerships. This has changed dramatically with consumers now researching mainly online. Our technology aims to make this process as easy as possible by giving people access to the information they need and easily accessible at their convenience.

How do you keep track of what the consumer expects?

One of the biggest advantages of trading online is that you can track the behaviour of your customers. Digital analytics play a key strategic role in most businesses today and, as the market leader, eCG Denmark is investing heavily in big data analytics to turn the large amounts of complex data it collects into powerful insights. Firstly, we utilise data to create a hypothesis before quickly testing our hypothesis in the real world on sample groups of customers across our different platforms. This provides us with more 'granular' data, which in turn informs product development. Our market leading mobile app was conceived after taking on board customer information gained from digital analytics. Tools like this help to empower our customers, by providing them with powerful and easily accessible information to aid their purchase journey. Consumer satisfaction is obviously a key metric for eCG Denmark, and eBay in general, and the whole worldwide business relies on several KPIs, one of the most important being the Net Promoter Score (NPS), to track how satisfied customers are with its products and services.

How has eCG Denmark maintained its position as a market leader?

Focusing on understanding the needs and behaviours of all types of active, as well as potential, customers has been central to our success. This approach enables us to offer a very personalised service by providing targeted communication and solutions



which meet the needs of today's consumer. Admittedly, being part of eBay gives us a unique advantage, because we also gain a real insight into developments and trends in other markets, allowing us to build solutions for tomorrow. For example, the global SEO team helps my local team understand changes in best practice and how we can apply them locally. The fact is, though, that as market leader, customers depend on us to be a trend setter. Innovation, therefore, is a vital component of our organisation. We also invest a lot of time on thought leadership activities to help the industry understand the trends. For example, we hosted a digital dealership conference in the autumn where we brought together key people from the industry to reflect and discuss how the sector needs to adapt to a digital world. My role is to build a business focused on bringing together world class expertise, but with an operating model that is flexible enough to adapt to rapid change.

What technologies do you anticipate being the most 'disruptive' to current business practices over the next few years?

Mobile devices and social media are two technologies that are having the most significant impact on consumer behaviour. Mobile devices (e.g. watches, phones, tablets etc.) are creating a world which is always 'switched on'. People now expect to be able to access information about products and services and interact with businesses anyplace, anytime and anywhere. This, combined with the rapid

growth of social media, has radically changed the consumer journey. The traditional 'sales funnel' concept is effectively obsolete today as consumers now have a far more complex purchase journey, much of which is online. At eCG Denmark, we are therefore committed to developing omni-channel solutions, where our customers can use our products to start their purchase journey on their mobile phone, continue it on a desktop computer, and complete it on a tablet. Adapting early to disruptive technology can create significant business advantage. Our early investment in mobile apps a few years ago helped leverage our position as market leader. We want to empower our customers by giving them the ability to make informed, timely decisions with products that can be used anywhere, at any time. This requires a recognition that not all customers are the same.

Many businesses want to emulate eBay in terms of its platform and world class logistics capability, among other factors. Does eBay look to any other businesses and business models for inspiration?

Absolutely, eBay has maintained its global market position by continually innovating and we are always on the look-out for good ideas and trends. A recent example of this is our partnership with local Danish CRM system provider, Easi'r. eCG Denmark needed to upgrade its existing Lead Management

"...consumers increasingly demand that technology is easy to use and information is readily available and we therefore must be committed to offering them products and services with these qualities embedded in them."

and CRM system for car dealers. Lead Management and CRM systems are not an area where we profess to have specialist knowledge or expertise, therefore we sought an external partner. Easi'r is based in Aarhus and has spent years developing ground breaking Lead Management and CRM solutions, incorporating social media and gaming techniques into its software to make it more engaging for users. eCG Denmark, as well as other businesses internationally, are now using Easi'r products. My philosophy is that businesses must continually look outwards if they want to survive and grow. Change should be embraced and partnerships can often deliver better and faster customer value.

Are your customers ever reluctant to share their data?

Naturally, some customers worry about how we plan to use their data and people should always pay attention to our terms and conditions before agreeing to give permission to access their personal information. Data protection is an area of the law that eBay takes very seriously and as part of the global business, eCG Denmark has access to a lot of

"Mobile devices and social media are two technologies that are having the most significant impact on consumer behaviour."

professional advice to ensure we provide the best and safest experience for our customers. On the whole, though, consumers understand that in order to receive a truly personalised digital service, they have to give up certain information. We must ensure that the customer is in complete control of that transaction and can decide how close they want you to get, while explaining to customers what's in it for them. As consumers get more and more used to personalised digital solutions, eventually they will get frustrated by tools that don't use their data to offer them increased relevance.

What can the user expect from digital solutions in the future as well as from eCG Denmark in particular?

Digital solutions will continue to become more personalised, simpler to use, further optimised to the technology platform (e.g. watch, phone, TV, etc.) and more integrated across different platforms to create a truly seamless experience for consumers. Solutions that use data to prompt and guide users via notifications, alerts and recommendations will also be prevalent as the boundaries between social interaction and commerce become more and more blurred. Within the motors business at eCG Denmark we have defined four strategic areas to inform our future product innovation. The first is to provide 'inclusive' solutions that are personalised and adapt to their user; secondly we want to embed 'data love', using data to constantly seek out ways to improve customer experience and share data to empower our customers; equally we want to be 'proactive', leveraging systems to guide and prompt customers which will help speed up the purchase process and finally eCG Denmark must be 'trend driven', with the ability to differentiate between fad and trend and help customers take advantage of new trends.

What is the outlook for businesses seeking to hire, retain and develop digital talent?

Business is about people and finding people with the right skills, experience and attitude; these are the key to success. The best people, therefore, will always be in high demand. In order to attract the best, it's important to have a clear mission and a vision that people can be inspired by; the business must then communicate how people can be part of that story. This is obviously something that eBay invests a lot into and that filters down to eCG

Denmark; we spend a lot of time training and developing skills and communicating to the market about the rewarding careers we offer.

How does Denmark, and the Nordics in general, compare to the rest of the world in terms of ecommerce capability and adoption of technology?

The Nordic countries are all extremely 'tech savvy'. The governments have invested heavily in building integrated online services which have led to the creation of a pervasive online

culture. People here in Denmark, as well as Sweden, Norway and Finland expect to find a wide range of information and services online, and this obviously creates demand for high quality solutions. Combined with what I would describe as an innate 'entrepreneurial spirit' in this region of the world, it is no surprise that some of the best digital solutions have come from the Nordic countries: Companies such as Mobile Pay, Skype and Just Eat, to name a few. If the Nordic states can continue to develop legislation and policies to attract investment, as well as the best digital talent from around the world, then it will continue to be a fantastic region in which to build online businesses.

FACT BOX

Facts about BilBasen

- BilBasen is the leading online trading platform for buying and selling used cars, with more than 620,000 unique monthly users
- The 620,000 unique users make over 3.4 million visits to the site each month
- Since the launch of BilBasen's app in July 2011 there have been around 700,000 recorded downloads for both mobile and tablet devices
- BilBasen's app has around 145,000 unique users, who access the app around 1.1 million times per month
- BilBasen became a pioneer of online trading when it was first launched in 1996
- There are usually approximately 54,000 cars for sale on BilBasen at any one time

Further information about BilBasen:

- BilBasen: www.bilbasen.dk
- BilBasen Facebook page: www.facebook.com/bilbasen.dk?fref=ts
- BilBasen Blog: blog.bilbasen.dk

Facts about eBay Classifieds Group

- eBay Classifieds Group is part of eBay, the world's largest online trading platform with 157 million active users
- eBay was founded in 1995 by Pierre Omidyar with HQ in San Jose, California



- eBay Classifieds' local brands permit trade in everything from smartphones and design furniture to children's clothing and cars or even the perfect housing co-operative
- The Danish eBay brands consist of:
 - DBA, the largest online trading platform with 1.7 million monthly users
 - BilBasen, the leading online trading platform for buying and selling used cars
 - Bilinfo, the Danish car dealer preferred tool for administration, advertising and sale of cars
- DBA, BilBasen and Bilinfo are all based locally in Denmark and known and respected by eBay for their innovative approach to ecommerce
- In Denmark, the three Danish eBay Classifieds brands employ 160 people to ensure that consumers are always the top priority and that the brands deliver the best user experience

Further information:

- eBay Classifieds Group: www.ebayclassifiedsgroup.com
- DBA: www.dba.dk
- BilBasen: www.bilbasen.dk
- Bilinfo: www.bilinfo.dk