

B STOCK

The State of B2B Recommerce



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Introduction



Recommerce is in full swing and continues to boom—a testament to the value businesses and end users find in the secondary market and a more circular economy. Having grown 76% since 2017, the recommerce market is currently outpacing the primary market due to a number of factors, including resale acceptance, sustainability, new buyers and sellers, and growing interest in affordable, pre-owned goods.

Described as the selling of pre-owned goods, which are then further reused, recycled, or resold, many leading retailers and brands currently have recommerce programs incorporated into their business models. B-Stock is pleased to partner with today's largest retailers, OEMs, and brands on large-scale B2B recommerce solutions, including an online auction platform, direct sales, and contract listings that provide half a million business buyers direct access to returned and overstock inventory that they can then resell. This gives us a unique perspective and a robust, unrivaled dataset on the selling and buying trends across the B2B recommerce market.

Accordingly, we've put together this State of B2B Recommerce report which provides exclusive data and an analysis of recommerce trends through the first three quarters of 2024. We hope you enjoy this report and thank you for your interest in learning how businesses—large to small—are supporting a second life for returned and excess goods.

Data and trends: B2B secondary market

The following data was compiled based on the buying and selling trends we saw across our recommerce platform from January through September of 2024.



Over 761,000 tons

of inventory given a “second life”

Over 100 million items sold



76% of all items sold

are customer returns versus overstock



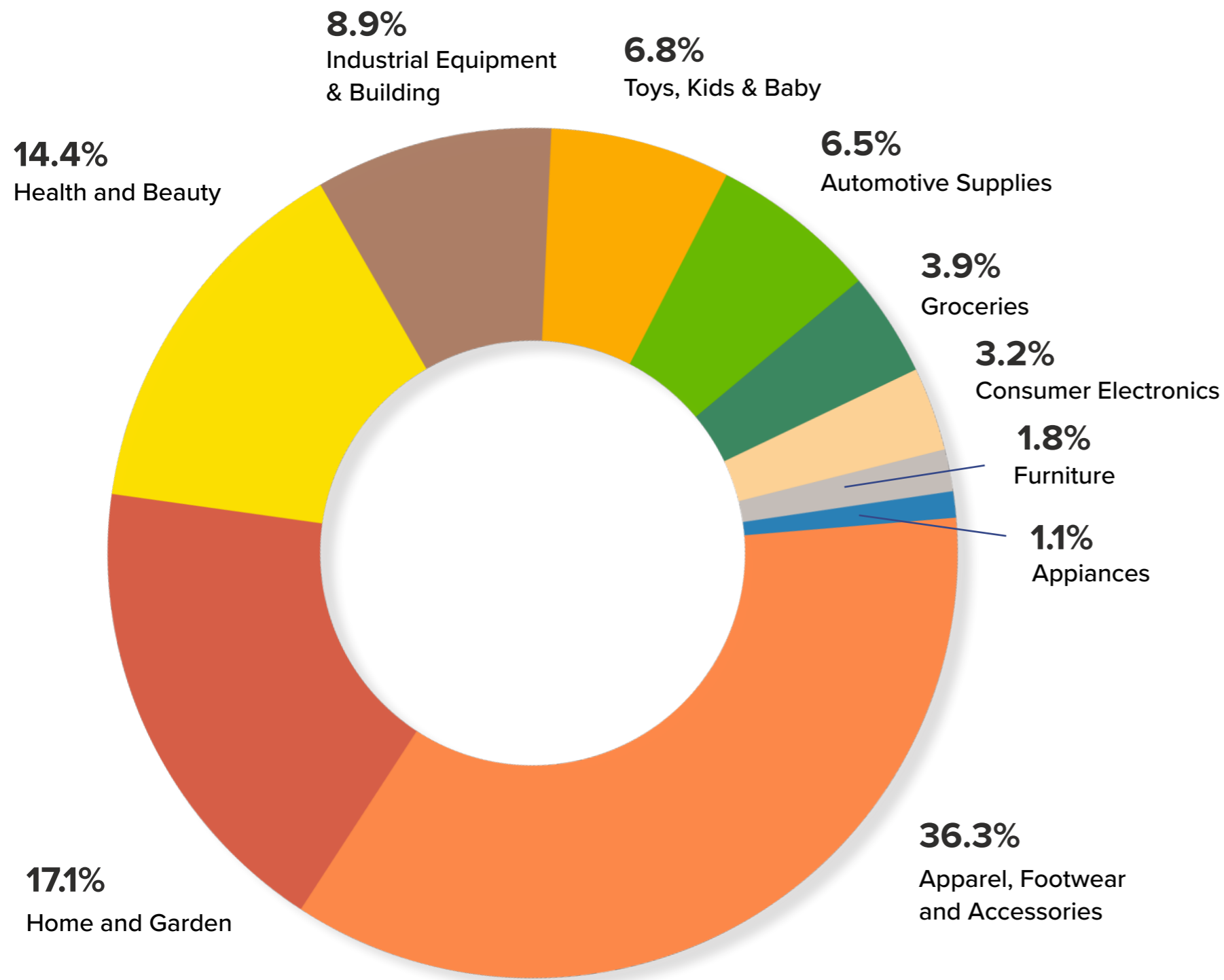
214,000+ auctions held



Over 2.85 million total bids placed



Top Categories by Units Sold (excluding Mobile category)



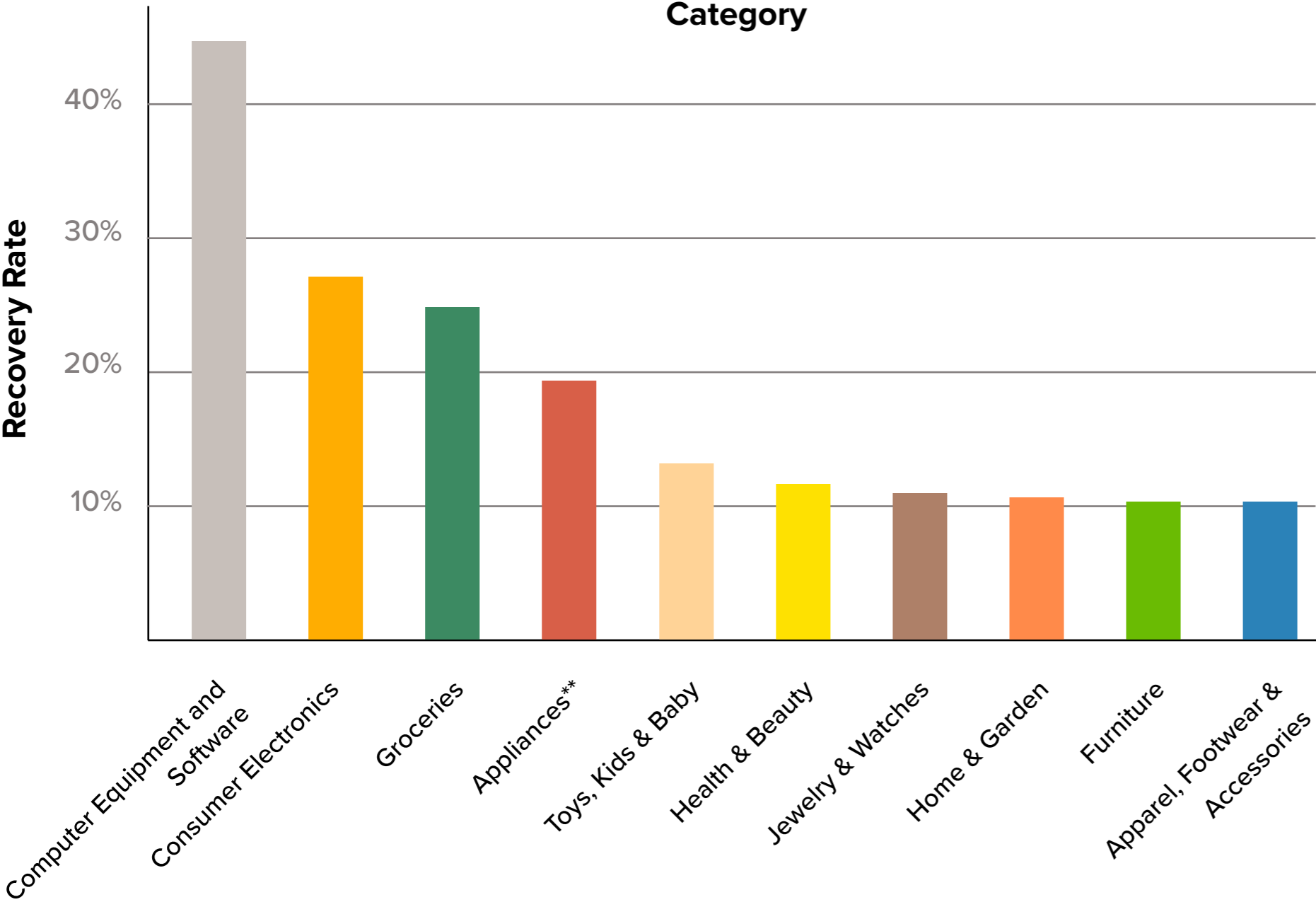
Analysis & Key Takeaways



- Apparel, Accessories & Footwear was the number one category in terms of units sold, in line with previous years. The category is also holding strong in terms of recovery rate. This trend is indicative of the growth and popularity of the apparel resale market, which is growing 15x faster than the primary market.
- Home & Garden was the number two category in terms of units sold. B-Stock has seen a spike in the number of housewares entering the secondary market lately as Home & Garden retailers are finally clearing the returned and surplus stock out of their warehouses following the pandemic-era frenzy of home improvement buying.
- 76% of items sold were customer returns (vs overstock) and the ratio of returns to overstock inventory is growing YOY. Historically, B-Stock has seen higher recovery for returns versus overstock as returns indicate an initial market demand for an item.

Top Categories by Recovery Rate* (excluding Mobile category)

*Recovery rate is the percentage of pricing recovered relative to original MSRP



Analysis & Key Takeaways

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- Computer Equipment & Software, Consumer Electronics, Groceries, and Appliances had the highest recovery rates, relative to other categories. This is in line with previous years and is primarily due to end-user demand for used/refurbished electronics and appliances as consumers look to save money.
- Recovery rates for the Jewelry and Watches category had a strong first-half performance and were up 23.3% YOY. This increase in recovery is due primarily to better-quality merchandise being listed on the marketplace; there was more new and good-condition inventory and less mixed-condition stock.
- TV recovery rates were up a whopping 117% YOY. This uptick in pricing reflects supply and demand shifts; lower supply across the marketplace drove up buyer demand and, ultimately, pricing.
- Generally speaking, our data reflects the basic principle of supply and demand; fewer units available means a higher recovery rate.

**Recovery rate percentage reflects both small and major appliances. As a standalone, major appliances achieve higher recovery.

Lot type sold

Pallets:

3,650,000



Less-than truckload (LTL):

168,000



Truckloads:

30,000

Analysis & Key Takeaways



- Truckload sales increased 17% YOY and the ratio of truckload sales relative to other lot sizes is growing.
- We saw the most significant increases in truckload purchases across the categories of Appliances, Furniture, Home & Garden, Sports & Outdoors, and Toys.
- Pallets were the most commonly purchased lot size on the B-Stock marketplace, in line with previous years.
- Home & Garden, Furniture, and Consumer Electronics have shown the biggest growth within auction-based sales

Pushing Corporate Responsibility Forward with Modern Recommerce Solutions

Originally published in the B-Stock Blog, written by the B-Stock Editorial Team

Odds are you've used many of Unilever's products over your lifetime. In fact, you've probably got several of them living in your bathroom, pantry, or fridge right now. Founded in 1929 this London-based corporation produces mostly personal care products and packaged foods—and as of 2024, it's grown into a \$116 billion business with a presence in nearly every country on Earth.

With two to three billion people using these products every day, Unilever's market penetration and profitability are unquestionable. But such enormous and consistent production can be a double-edged sword—there are social and environmental impacts operating at such a scale. This is why Unilever has committed itself to [one of the world's most ambitious corporate ERG initiatives](#). Indeed, if any organization is in a position to “make sustainable living commonplace”—their self-stated goal—it's Unilever.

While this is a massive effort involving an extensive multi-pronged strategy that depends on countless leaders, employees, partners, services, and tools, this piece will focus specifically on the problem of consumer goods waste and how Unilever is tackling this problem with B-Stock as a key partner.

Excess Inventory: A Universal Challenge

The pillars of the Unilever Compass, what they're now calling this sweeping initiative, include acting against climate change, protecting and regenerating nature, and building a waste-free world. Within that third pillar, there are two opportunities to reduce waste: (1) preventing the generation of waste and (2) ensuring the outflow of all excess inventory.

Despite high-efficiency production and top-notch demand forecasting, Unilever recognized an unfortunate reality: some portion of goods produced will always go unsold. After examining the environmental impact and business implications of these unsold goods, Unilever understood that novel and effective channels for reselling this inventory would be crucial to the overall effort.

Where Legacy Processes Fall Short

Historically, when Unilever needed to move out excess goods, it would negotiate with its many separate inventory reduction channels—a collection of liquidators, wholesalers, and brokers. While such services may have worked well enough in the past, modern global-minded enterprises should be looking for more sophisticated alternatives, especially given the handful of critical shortcomings of traditional approaches.

Firstly, these liquidation partners often offered just pennies on the dollar for unsold merchandise with little room for negotiation. And once these surplus goods are sold off to such buyers, they can change hands many times before reaching consumers, with each new owner taking a cut of the items' value—value that should be working for the original brand.

It's also tough for brands and retailers to predict where their surplus will wind up when selling to these traditional partners, so if brand reputation is at all a concern, a company would be better off selling the surplus directly to a vetted and qualified business buyer who will pass them directly on to end consumers.

Finally and most importantly come the matters of scale and efficiency. While there's no shortage of liquidators and brokers, brands should be wary of engaging with too many of them. The more resale channels a business uses, the more time and resources it must spend to manage those relationships through disparate methods including phone calls, emails, shared spreadsheets, etc. And limiting liquidation partners to a select few comes with a downside too: using fewer channels—while easier to manage—means that the whole recommerce strategy hinges on just a few points of failure. If a trusted partner moves, closes its doors, or simply cannot buy as expected, then a brand or retailer can be left scrambling to move out a mountain of excess inventory.

But how exactly does sustainability factor in?

Pessimists who consider financial success and sustainability to be at odds might ask why we should bother at all with recommerce if most methods are so inefficient. Without a scalable,

easy-to-use method for clearing out unsold inventory, leaders are disinclined to make a bonafide effort to improve sustainability, opting instead to destroy overstock. But if there existed a proven solution that could help brands and retailers achieve both goals, the cynics might change their tune.

Fortunately, Unilever found one such solution that has proven to be a superior option for both business and sustainability.

The Benefits of B-Stock for Business and Beyond

In late 2019, Unilever reached out to B-Stock Solutions, the world's largest B2B recommerce marketplace for returned and excess goods. B-Stock has spent nearly 20 years connecting the world's leading brands and retailers directly to a global network of trusted business buyers who compete to purchase high-quality unsold inventory that they rely on to stock the shelves of their own consumer goods businesses. Unilever quickly came to understand the enormous value of this approach and decided to partner with B-Stock. Instead of soliciting and comparing many offers through multiple rounds of phone calls and emails, this online marketplace centralizes recommerce efforts under a managed subscription model—and it made all the difference.

One leader at Unilever broke down the partnership's strengths into five key areas:

Cost of Goods (CoG) Recovery

Under B-Stock's list-and-bid sales model, many potential buyers compete, naturally securing the highest price. While tax writeoffs and donations brought in 0-20% CoG recovery, B-Stock secured 55-200% CoG recovery

Convenience & Efficiency

For every B-Stock held, either the buyer or a third-party shipper picks up the lot from a Unilever warehouse and delivers it, eliminating the need for Unilever to transport anything itself, saving both time and logistics resources better spent elsewhere.

Reach & Demand

Instead of relying on a few familiar liquidation partners, B-Stock's buyer network brought in hundreds of new, relevant, and qualified buyers. Further, B-Stock empowered Unilever to work with small buyers who were formerly not worth finding and managing

Speed at Scale

Holding multi-user auctions on a centralized platform enabled quicker, more efficient outflow. Between high buyer demand and expert advice, the solution scales up easily. In one week, Unilever sold 35,000+ units through 8 auctions, recovering €8,000 (although B-Stock could easily increase or decrease resale cadence as needed)

Sustainability

Selling excess inventory to business buyers helps these goods find new life in the hands of consumers rather than simply taking up space in a warehouse, or worse, piling up in landfills, leaching into waterways, and poisoning the air as incinerator fumes—a vastly preferable outcome.

B-Stock Drives Positive Outcomes

While a natural fit for Unilever's challenges, B-Stock maintains granular data for [continuous analysis and data-backed program optimization](#) over years of partnership. Sometimes, we like to let these numbers speak for themselves.

From 2019 to 2024, B-Stock has expanded Unilever's buyer base from a small handful of liquidators to nearly 1,000 unique bidders and 230+ unique buyers in over 30 nations in Europe and North America, with 80% of those auctions were won by loyal repeat customers. But while these numbers bode well for business, it's the sustainability impact of this partnership that's truly impressive.

Over the length of the program, B-Stock has hosted over 6,000 auctions for Unilever, selling nearly 47 million units, many of which would have been destroyed or buried in a landfill. If these amounts are tough to conceptualize, consider the total weight of goods sold: about 20 million pounds—roughly the weight of Paris' 984-foot wrought iron Eiffel Tower.

While Unilever's results make a strong case for B-Stock, many brands and retailers from across our network benefit from record-high interest in responsible business practices and demand for secondary market goods. The fact that forward-thinking companies are improving sustainability without sacrificing positive business outcomes points to a bright future for both our partners and the worldwide circular economy as a whole.

Recommerce Best Practices: Selling Returned & Overstock Inventory



In addition to supporting a more circular economy, a B2B recommerce program can help companies maintain a healthy inventory turnover rate and minimize holding costs by quickly converting returned and excess inventory into cash. And, with the right tools, it can even boost an organization's overall operational efficiency.

When choosing a B2B recommerce partner, be sure to look for one that provides:



Unparalleled Buyer Demand

You'll want access to a large and vetted group of business buyers interested in merchandise across all categories and conditions.



Flexible Resale Solutions

Whether your goal is to recover cash, clear warehouse space quickly, or ensure brand control, the best partners will help build a diversified resale strategy that meets your needs.



Accelerated Cycle Times

Reducing the number of days that inventory spends in warehouses is paramount. With proper advice, you can resell massive amounts of inventory quickly and predictably.



Pricing & Performance Analytics

Quality data should be leveraged to understand seasonal demand, predict buyer behavior, and forecast resale pricing.



Recommerce Program Management & Support

Look for an experienced account management team that can provide a data-backed resale strategy, merchandise listing guidance, and customer support.



B-Stock is the world's largest B2B recommerce platform. With hundreds of thousands transactions completed annually, we enable a second life for millions of goods, keeping them out of landfills. Businesses of all sizes leverage the B-Stock platform to sell and buy returned, trade-in, overstock, and other excess merchandise. Our customers range from the world's largest brands and retailers that want best-in-class excess inventory management to entrepreneurs looking to source valuable merchandise for their resale businesses.

Talk to one of our experts today

[Book a Demo](#)