

# How America Today puts the customer centre stage with smart data

**An interview with Martin Bless, Product Owner E-commerce at America Today & CoolCat**

Many retailers are witnessing a shift from offline to online retail during this coronavirus period, a situation that is leading to many creative and especially smart solutions in the sector. This applies also to America Today and their recently acquired brand CoolCat.

The clothing colossus capitalizes on a well-organized IT landscape to collect smart data from various angles. The insights gained in the process are now being put to good use by the company for a versatile approach that should lead to the ideal customer experience. We talked to Martin Bless, Product Owner E-commerce of America Today and CoolCat, who deals with the technology behind e-commerce.

## Successful cooperation between physical and online retail

As was the case for many retailers, 2020 was a difficult year for America Today, which had to shift its undivided attention to the online channel due to the temporary closure of the physical shops. That in turn brought new opportunities, Martin realized. "We noticed that consumers, who normally come to the shops, now make their purchases online. We have really seen a spike in online growth, so we are thinking over the chances and opportunities for



next year." One of the most important spearheads of the new strategy is "the cooperation between physical and online retail, and the mutual support for each other. Physical and online retail are helping each other by interacting together," Martin explains. "Does a shop have too much stock of a product? Then we can have it delivered promptly to your home from that shop. Conversely, if a shop does not have a particular product in stock, the web shop will come into play." In this way, the physical and online shop are increasingly becoming one and the same for the customer.

## Smart data as a basis

An important basis for the future plans of America Today comes from smart data, Martin explains. "We put together a team this year geared entirely to data. Everything is well connected in our operations, so we get data from everywhere: from the cash register system on the shop floor to the number of visitors in the web shop. This gives us insight into where we can improve."



**"Trust is everything with ordering online and the address validation helps a lot"**

**Martin Bless, Product Owner E-commerce at America Today & CoolCat**

Martin Bless stresses that the aim is not only to achieve more conversion, but also the best customer experience. “With data, we can interconnect the physical shops and the online shop seamlessly, and thus ensure that the shopping process feels smooth for the customer also.” That is why America Today switched to a cooperation arrangement with PostNL this year. “With the address validation we can show our customers immediately that their address is recognized. I think that is really indispensable nowadays.

Trust is everything when it comes to ordering online, and the address validation helps a lot on that front.” It also saves a lot of work on the back end, Martin points out. “It is moreover indispensable for us as a web shop. We now have far fewer wrong addresses in our system, which means we do not have to correct as many. And we are now looking into whether we can use this procedure with international addresses as well, with the international address validation of PostNL.”



### International ambitions

In the midst of these hectic times, America Today is also expanding its ambitions beyond the borders as well. “We have locations in the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg,” Martin says. “And we recently opened a shop in Germany. From there we are exploring how we can approach Germany in optimal fashion. Where should we open shops? Or should we concentrate on online shopping?” The first step is to win the trust of local consumers, in Martin’s view. “In the Netherlands, trust in online shopping is quite high. In Belgium and Germany, you notice that people are still hesitant about shopping online. We therefore do not want to make a translated copy of our Dutch shop, but are taking steps to approach foreign customers differently.”

### Successful entrepreneurship with smart data also?

The key to collecting valuable data is cooperating with the right partners. That is another reason why America Today has opted for PostNL. As the largest logistics service provider in the Benelux, PostNL operates on every street and knows their customers like no other. This knowledge leads to practical insights that help entrepreneurs grow -- not just by checking and confirming addresses, but also by drawing up clear customer profiles. PostNL thus combines the familiar face on the street with data that you as an entrepreneur can rely on.

### For more information on address validation

Contact PostNL by dialling +31 088 868 37 47 (option 1) or visit our website [postnl.nl/en](https://postnl.nl/en).