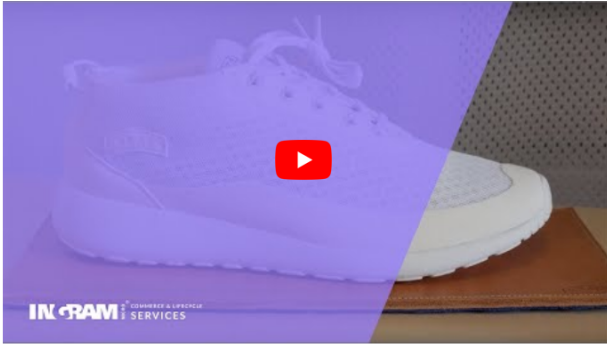


## CASE STUDY

# GREATS Footwear

GREATS delivers sneakers via a luxury direct-to-consumer ecommerce experience enabled by Ingram Micro Commerce & Lifecycle Services



GREATS was founded in 2013 by Ryan Babenzien and Jon Buscemi, footwear industry veterans with over 20 years of combined experience directing marketing and brand strategy for the likes of K Swiss, Puma and Gourmet footwear.

After facilitating the growth of major brands, Babenzien and Buscemi were ready for a new challenge: launching their own Brooklyn-based sneaker brand, GREATS.

## Disrupting the direct-to-consumer footwear industry

The pair saw a gap in the footwear industry — there wasn't a single brand focused on delivering quality men's shoes through a direct-to-consumer model, so in 2013, they launched GREATS to fill that gap. Talking about their business model, Babenzien said, "We're all about quality, but quality doesn't need to come with astronomical prices — it's third party retailers that drive up prices."

Market trends played a big role in guiding the company's business strategy. With the ecommerce industry growing year-over-year, more consumers spending more money buying shoes online and having observed the cost increases and margin decreases that stem from relationships with third party retailers, the team saw significant opportunity in selling right to consumers.

While GREATS relies primarily on its online direct-to-consumer model, it also maintains an independent retail store in New York. This enables the company to deliver a quality product at an affordable price, but there are still challenges. Building a brand without much of a physical presence and growing competitively without increasing costs requires the company to spend strategically, including on its operations.

## The value of the online shopping experience

Babenzien is often asked how he built and cultivated trust with a strong customer base before having a physical store; he says it's all about careful branding.

Through branding, GREATS positioned itself to appeal to its target market: millennial men (the company also launched a women's line in Summer 2016). "These guys, they live online. They're comfortable shopping this way," said Babenzien. Clothing, accessories and shoes have a high browse-to-buy correlation when considering online goods. "We already knew people were comfortable buying shoes online. We just made sure our site spoke to them. We made their online shopping experience a priority. So far, it's worked," he said.

Shipping plays a major role in a customer's overall online shopping experience and for that, GREATS turned to Ingram Micro Services. Maintaining a strong, consistent impression of the brand the whole way through — from discovering GREATS online to receiving an order — is important. Personalized shipping options made Ingram Micro Services the top choice, but that wasn't all.

## Growing share of wallet without sacrificing quality or price

To disrupt the footwear industry, GREATS needed to grow, which required a partner that could scale without and maintain the company's brand integrity. Having seen Ingram Micro Services successfully support other leading brands, GREATS was confident entering into a partnership.

The company has already won over customers in Canada, the UK, Europe, China and Australia, even though, according to Babenzien, the brand has mostly been focused on its domestic market. "We have big plans to expand, though, and Ingram Micro Services' global fulfillment centers, powered by the Shipwire platform, are very attractive," he said. "The technology aspect is key. It helps us forecast demand in a way that wasn't possible before, which helps us prepare and grow."

By making smart, calculated business decisions, GREATS has accomplished more success than many brands of a similar age. With rapid domestic growth and their sights set on global expansion, the company continues to blaze a new path in the footwear industry.



- Launched the first premium online direct-to-consumer sneaker brand
- Continues exponential growth in U.S. market, with sights set on international expansion
- Grew a successful consumer brand online with very limited retail presence