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Article

What Drives the B2B Platform Economy? A Qualitative Examination of Current Trends, Success Factors, and the Road Ahead

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Online-Appendix zu

„What Drives the B2B Platform Economy? A Qualitative Examination of Current Trends, Success Factors, and the Road Ahead“

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Appendix

A1: Questionnaire

1) Personal background

- Could you introduce yourself and your professional background?
- What projects/tasks are you currently working on?
- What is your motivation engaging in B2B platforms?

2) General questions about the platform

- Can you explain which problem X solves?
- What is the value proposition? And who are your users/ customers?
- Could you lead me through the process of how this works?
- How did X start? (Where did the idea come from? What or who was the initiator/ main driver?)
- Who are your stakeholders? With whom do you collaborate?
- What is the business model of X?
- Why is a platform suited for answering this problem and not any other solution?
- How is the 'relationship' between the platform unit/company from the core company?

3) Platform Design

- How would you characterize the platform type?
- What is your position towards platform openness?
- Can you tell me something with regard to network effects? How did X overcome the chicken-egg-problem? In your opinion, what drives the adoption? Are network effects as important as in B2C?
- How important is an easy implementation? Do you have tools/APIs etc. for "plug-and-play"?
- How do you monetarize the platform? (Does X process transactions/ payments?)
- What is X strategy towards data management and usage?
- What is your approach towards partners on the platform? How important do you rate partnerships for driving the adoption of X? With whom especially?
- Do you foster community building?
- In general: How would describe the major differences between B2B and B2C/ C2C platforms? How do these affect the platform design?

4) Success

- Can you tell me something about the platform's success? (How many users, transactions, revenue?)
- How would you describe the current level of X's adoption?
- Which factors are driving the successful aspects?
- What are, in your opinion, the most central/ important value adding activities of your firm as the platform operator?

- In your opinion, are there any issues related to platform strategy that you still have to solve?
- What are X's main competitors? What are you doing differently/better?

5) Drivers & challenge

- In your opinion, what are the biggest challenges you face? What are your strategies for overcoming these (also in the past)?
- How do you consider the awareness of and readiness for platforms among your users? How does this influence the adoption of X?
- What characterizes the B2B market? What is especially challenging/ where are opportunities for the platform economy?

6) Future scenario

- What is your vision/ where do you see X in 5 years?
- What are the next steps in the further development of the platform?
- Do you have an ecosystem strategy?

Closing question

- Is there anything you would like to discuss anything related which we have not talked about?

A2: Exemplary excerpt from the interview transcriptions

Interview platform 1

(...)

And why would you say is a platform business model suited for answering this problem and not any other solution or linear business?

Basically, there are two ways that you could go when it comes to digital sales. The one hand side would be a web shop logic where you would offer the portfolio of one producer, one dealer to potential customers. The other thing is the open platform, the marketplace model, and I'm personally convinced that the marketplace will in the long run always outpace any web shop offer. There's very good reasons for this, that you know from your personal b2c shopping experience. But in the chemical industry, I think especially, we will have an advantage of a web shop when it comes to supply chain security. On our marketplace you will find 10-20, in some instances 25, different suppliers of sources of one particular product available. So, you will have a significant choice as a buyer and supply chain security to find offers and on the web shop you will always be limited to just one. So, there's just one very, very significant difference and advantage that I see of an open marketplace over any web shop solution.

I will jump a little bit deeper into the platform architecture and its design. There are so many different kinds of platforms out there. How would you describe [platform 1]'s platform type?

What was clear for us, is that we would be circling around these two value propositions that I've mentioned earlier. On one side it has this transactional kind of order efficiency, order visibility or supply chain visibility kind of piece, that is very

transactional. And on the other hand side, it's a very classical thing around visibility and online marketing that you could do with the products that are listed. Those two elements, but to be honest, I don't know how to how to frame this into kind of terminology of a marketplace.

You mentioned that [platform 1] is an open marketplace. So, what were your strategic thoughts concerning platform openness?

We basically had exactly the same consideration when we drafted the business model of [platform 1]. We were more than convinced that it has to be as open as possible and as independent as possible. So, as I said, we started this out of [corporate 1] but after six weeks or so, we said, we have to do this independently because we will need to deliver this kind of openness as a core element of the marketplace. And so, it was clear that we would need to separate this out as much as possible in an own legal entity, own team, own IT infrastructure, because as soon as you are open and you are allowing any competitor or any kind of player from the chemical industry to trade on the platform, a holding company like [corporate 1] cannot have access to the transactional data because they will potentially get access to competitor relevant data. So, we entirely carved this out, we built all Chinese walls you could imagine to separate our company from [corporate 1]. It's like a financial investor to our company. They are steering us, like a venture capital company would do based on KPIs but it allows us here: number one to work entirely following agile software development principles as a software development company. But with a strong chemical expertise, so we brought in people that joined us from different chemical distributors, other chemical companies, people that studied chemistry like PhD chemists, etc. So, we have a strong competence center in understanding chemistry and understanding the chemical industry. The second pillar is online marketing capacity to promote the products on search engines like Google. And then the third pillar is our engineering and product team building the software.