

Univar Solutions is staking a bold claim in the chemical distribution marketplace



The chemical and ingredient giant made steep investments in digital to innovate and grow from the inside out. Today, with a full suite of shopping channels and impressive capabilities that reach more customers with a tailored buying experience, those moves are paying off.

A Giant Leap Forward for the Chemical Industry

It's no secret the chemical industry in general and chemical distribution in particular have lagged the times when it comes to digitization. Consumers can point and click at home to buy the tens of millions of products made with the chemicals we distribute and watch them arrive in record time. But for manufacturers and producers looking to buy the ingredients to make those parts and consumer goods, the purchasing experience is markedly different. Customer reps must be assigned, emails must be created, pricing and estimates have to be produced, and for the most part, all of this has to happen during business hours.

Even for distributors investing heavily in digital, the focus has been on reducing paper and allowing buyers to find product, while the customer experience remained disconnected and incomplete. Customers were eager to narrow the gap between the Amazon experience they loved at home and the decidedly less-than-Amazon experience they tolerated at work.

Univar Solutions listened, and began embarking on a bold, intentional plan to put digital at the center of its mission. Top down and bottom up, across the entire organization, Univar Solutions committed resources to digital, investing impressively in tools and minds to make it happen. The company's digital transformation was under way.

And then COVID-19 happened, bringing into sharper focus the need for virtual tools at every point in the business cycle.

"In some ways we were in the right place at the right time," says Univar Solutions vice president of digital and iSales, James Molica. "We were able to champion a new and better way for the industry to do business at an unprecedented time in history where businesses are moving key personnel to home offices, reducing face-to-face contact, and valuing safety and security more than ever before. We already knew customers and suppliers wanted better ways to do business virtually—and we had our heads down to provide them—but now companies needed better ways to go virtual."

A Complete Customer Experience Front to Back

Univar Solutions focused on three essential areas of the customer experience to allow for a completely digital experience from the front to the back of the enterprise: Using the power of data to understand customer and supplier needs and behaviors (digital demand), optimizing interactions and relationships with them (e-commerce), and then creating compelling, connected operations that deliver transformational value and service excellence (back-office capabilities).

Univar Solutions is the only chemical distributor delivering on all three.

Digital Demand

Rob Whitney, vice president of global marketing, leads teams focused on how to find and attract customers using the latest artificial intelligence (AI), behavioral marketing and analytics techniques.

By using AI to identify potential customers for product lines, adding rich, integrated content, and leveraging search engine optimization to expand the company's presence on Google, Whitney's digital demand efforts add a valuable layer of capability that distinguishes Univar Solutions in the industry.



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—Rob Whitney

The goal, he said, is to create larger markets but also “better,” more engaged customers when Univar Solutions or a supplier reaches them. The innovative metrics put the focus squarely on the customer's perspective, positioning the company to develop more compelling channels, campaigns and tools that drive operational value across the business lifecycle.

“We're really seeking to reimagine not only the way the industry does business, but how we think about our business,” Whitney says. “Using our powerful centralized business systems and the latest in artificial intelligence and marketing analytics allows us to shift our entire business model to a more customer-focused experience. We're understanding how and why people buy chemicals and ingredients and using that information to customize and enhance the customer experience. Offering them what they want, when they want it—and maybe even before they know they want it.”

For customers, that means faster, more efficient and better product development. For suppliers, it means Univar Solutions can leverage vast amounts of data and artificial intelligence to better reach ideal customers and engage new ones through sophisticated digital and trend marketing campaigns.

And, inside the walls of Univar Solutions, these robust analytical tools are the very foundation for improving new digital offerings and capabilities, with customer behaviors and preferences driving new strategies and informing product development direction.

“The entire experience becomes even more powerful when we bring together our analytical tools with our unique global approach to key specialty markets. Add-in our industry-leading Solution

“Today, we offer customers what I call an Amazon-plus experience, because not even Amazon offers the order details and related product information the way we do.”

—AJ Wijesinghe



Centers focused on the latest formulation trends, and you have a powerful tool to deliver robust and timely content that will have a meaningful impact on our customers' and suppliers' business,” explains Whitney.

Molica agrees and says understanding customer behaviors and patterns is fundamental to accomplishing the company's digital vision, providing a strong foundation for the company's e-commerce and back-office teams. “Our vision is to redefine distribution using digital. Building stronger links and connections with our customers and suppliers hinges on understanding the customer perspective.”

E-Commerce

James Molica and Steve Martinez, senior director of digital solutions, lead e-commerce teams focused on providing more and better ways to shop, opening more doors to the Univar Solutions 24/7/365 customer experience. Perhaps the most visible of the three digitization areas, the e-commerce teams recently launched new channels and websites, such as Shop.UnivarSolutions.com and ChemCentral.com, with capabilities to take users to new levels of convenience, ease of use, and transparency, for an always-open, tailored and secure buying experience (see sidebar).

Martinez says it's all about convenience. “Univar Solutions has really rallied behind our digital channels to create solutions for customers when and where they need them,” Martinez says. “We've added more doors to enter our ‘virtual mall’ with new and expanded e-commerce sites, and faster, easier, more valuable, and more secure ways to do business once you're there.”



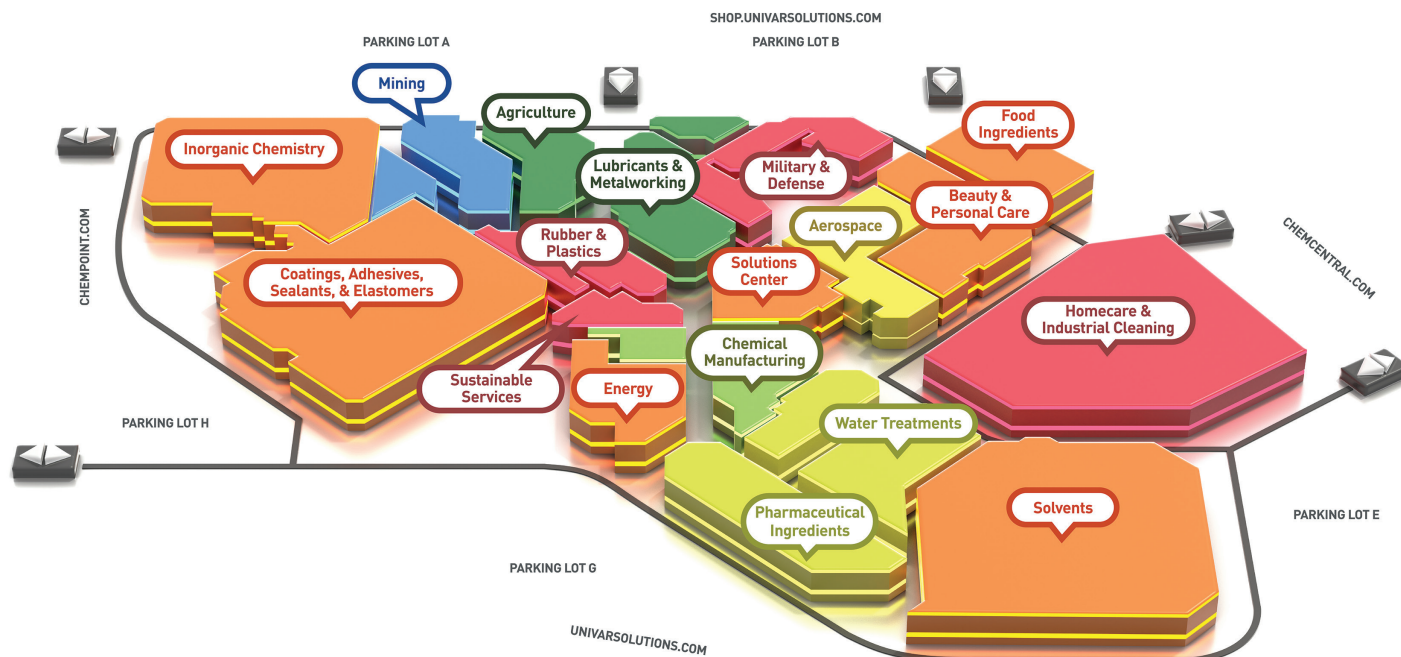
“There's excitement in the air at Univar Solutions, and we can't wait for our customers, our suppliers and the industry to share in it!”

—James Molica

Multiple channels and rich capabilities appeal to shoppers across the spectrum, allowing users to control and tailor their own buying experience. A secure, password-protected account gives customers using Shop.UnivarSolutions.com the ability to self-serve a product catalog of more than 17,000 chemicals and ingredients, with easy access to supporting safety and compliance documentation, complete order history, invoicing, and request-a-quote functionality.

Even without registering, ChemCentral allows shoppers to browse and purchase any time from any device, with a growing catalog of curated products. This streamlined, self-serve, transactional site provides access to everything a new customer needs to search, procure,

Solutions for a Wide Range of **Markets and Industries**



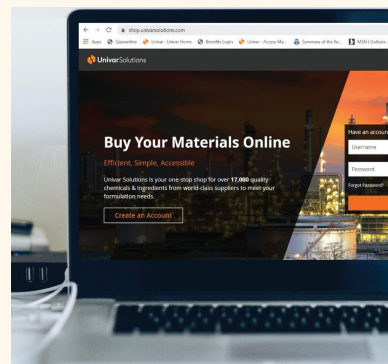
Robust, Industry-Leading Digital Tools to Make Your Job Faster and Easier

With the new digital solutions unveiled by Univar Solutions, you can search, source, and self-serve on the ingredients and products you need, when it's convenient for you, when and where it's convenient for you. Now "open" 24 hours a day, seven days a week, these tailored digital offerings allow you to do business with us on any device, and at your convenience.

- **UnivarSolutions.com** – For customers, relevant digital tools, including a product and formulation finder, help accelerate the product development process and industry focused content show ways to help reduce the total cost of operations or meet the latest regulatory requirements. For suppliers, the site offers valuable market reach that can help accelerate sales growth through industry-leading demand generation programs. All of this is available on a global platform that leverages regionally curated content and local language support.
- **ChemCentral.com** - For customers who want a simple, no frills buying option and transparent, all-digital experience, ChemCentral.com provides fast, easy, and direct access to a portfolio of chemical and ingredient products from a proven and trusted source. With detailed product information and simplified pricing, ChemCentral.com is an easy to use option for those customers with simple needs.
- **Shop.UnivarSolutions.com (Shop)** - Shop provides access to the

Univar Solutions full 17,000+ product catalog through an innovative e-commerce experience that includes complete order status, invoicing, transaction history, safety and regulatory documentation, as well as a new "where's my order" functionality that allows customers to know the real-time status of orders.

- **ChemPoint.com** – For suppliers, ChemPoint.com helps find, engage, retain, and nurture customers on a large scale through a unique business model focused on demand creation. Additionally, ChemPoint's MarketConnect offers marketing as a service, with dedicated market specialists helping to create multi-channel digital marketing campaigns for a wide range of chemical and ingredient products.



**At Your Fingertips,
At Your Service**

Real-World Solutions. In Real Time.

Univar Solutions is raising the bar on digital for one reason: To improve the customer experience

Whether you're a longtime customer, a supplier just beginning to work with us, have strong relationships with our technical experts, or simply need drums of ethylene glycol—with our digital tools, the customer experience is faster, more secure, and more transparent than ever.

- With the clean beauty movement growing, our innovative supplier partner Dow moved quickly, developing a corn-derived hair fixative called MaizeCare™ Style Polymer. Designed to help formulators create naturally derived hair care products with exceptional performance, the product allowed Dow to reach customers with a data-driven marketing campaign, proving MaizeCare™ Style's performance in clean, bio-based formulations. Collaborating with Dow, Univar Solutions product management specialists and lab formulators at our Solutions Center in Houston, created four prototypes using MaizeCare™ Style Polymer, testing each for performance. Then, using our digital prototype platform, supported by our advanced digital demand analytics, our marketing experts successfully launched a targeted, demand-generation campaign.



With our digital tools, we're bringing real-world solutions to customers even faster

- Like many small and regional facilities, a beverage manufacturer has been keeping track of regulatory information for a large quantity of ingredients. The plant's tedious and labor-intensive system meant documents for each ingredient were manually copied, filed and accessible only at the plant site. Now, after switching to Univar Solutions, the facility downloads certificates of analysis (CoA) and safety data sheets for citric acid and other ingredients and ties them back to batch history going back 18 months.
- An automotive OEM facility manager has a large solvent shipment coming at a crucial time to meet a critical deadline, but the truck may very well arrive after hours, so the manager needs to coordinate with the loading dock, key operations staff, and security. With our new Where's My Order capability, he can track the shipment at every point along its destination with a few clicks, and then coordinate manpower accordingly.
- A regional lithographic printing company needs drums of isopropyl alcohol. The owner searches online for "isopropyl drums in Atlanta" and clicks on ChemCentral.com where she can quickly browse and buy what she wants in a matter of minutes, paying with her credit card. No need to register or talk to an agent, and she still receives all the benefits of Univar Solutions trusted reputation, product catalog and supply chain.

and manage its chemical and ingredient needs. The open channel appeals to buyers who want to transact and check out quickly and conveniently, giving a no-frills buying experience.

"No matter which digital door customers enter to shop with us, our e-commerce tools are easy to understand, easy to use and easy to get what you need, whenever you need it," Martinez says. "And once you hit the order button, you can track and monitor your delivery right to your door."

Back-Office Digitalization

AJ Wijesinghe, vice president of shared services, leads the charge on developing those service capabilities. From executing the multiple shopping channels to turning out industry-leading back-office capabilities, his cross-functional teams are rolling out innovative, easy-to-use tools and functions that enable a superior customer experience.

Recent months have seen the launch of new channels to reach customers where they are, new tools to give them what they want, and new, inviting interfaces and connections to tie it all together (see sidebar).

"What we're doing here at Univar Solutions is really quite extraordinary, and groundbreaking in our industry," says Wijesinghe. "Not long ago, the industry was clamoring to execute on digital and give customers discrete slices of the Amazon experience, trying to eliminate paper and optimize our email boxes. Today, we offer customers what I call an Amazon-plus experience, because not even Amazon offers the order details and related product information the way we do."

That means customers have real-time access to detailed order history, delivery and shipping details, and instant access to complete regulatory and safety documents, all customizable and downloadable with a few easy clicks. One of the most highly anticipated tools, a

new Where's My Order portal, allows customers instant updates on orders and shipments, wherever they are in the supply chain.

New Features in the Pipeline

Univar Solutions isn't taking its foot off the gas when it comes to product development. Wijesinghe says new features and capabilities are rolling out to further improve the customer experience. Customers and suppliers will soon be able to chat online with a live agent, for greater levels of convenience and customer service, and faster access to the wealth of leading technical, industry and regulatory experts at Univar Solutions.

Against the backdrop of COVID, developers are moving forward with robotics technology to streamline order processing and fulfillment, ultimately moving toward a touchless experience.

There's Excitement in the Air

Molica says being able to address all three areas with cutting-edge tools and channels—digital demand, e-commerce and back-office operations—and close the loop with impactful value for customers and supplier partners is a "step-function" change in chemical distribution.

"Digital gives us unlimited opportunities to deliver on our mission to streamline, innovate, and grow," he says. "What we're doing here with digital is extremely innovative in the industry, and it's just the beginning as we explore the digital frontier to become more nimble, more efficient and more streamlined."

"There's excitement in the air at Univar Solutions, and we can't wait for our customers, our suppliers, and the industry to share in it!" Molica says.