

The Evolution of Resale and Recommerce in Retail

Recommerce isn't a new concept, it's as old as commerce itself. Since the early 1900s retailers have found ways to move unsold or returned goods. While the way in which these goods are managed has evolved since then, **resale has always been part of retail.**

From jobbers to off-price stores to the advent of online resale platforms, this timeline looks at how U.S. retailers have handled excess and returned inventory over the past century, and how recommerce has evolved into a booming multi-billion dollar industry.



A Century of Changing Practices

EARLY 1900s

The Era of Clearance Bins, Donations, and Jobbers

Department stores hit the scene and expand rapidly across America, creating an uptick in idle, unsold merchandise. This inventory is managed locally through markdowns, donations, and jobbers (someone who buys goods in bulk and resells them in smaller quantities).



1950s & 1960s

Return Policies Evolve

Through the 1950s most stores maintain restrictive 'all sales final' policies but growing consumer advocacy in the 1960s leads to more consumer-friendly, lenient return policies, and byway, more returns. Returns and overstock are managed through donations, clearance bins, and jobbers.

1970s & 1980s

The Rise of Outlets and Off-Price Stores

Outlets and discount chains like TJ Maxx, Nordstrom Rack, Levi's outlet, and Ross emerge and create more structured channels for managing excess inventory. The rise of these off-price stores paves the way for flexible, market-driven resale practices and establishes the secondary market as a strategic business model.



1990s & 2000s

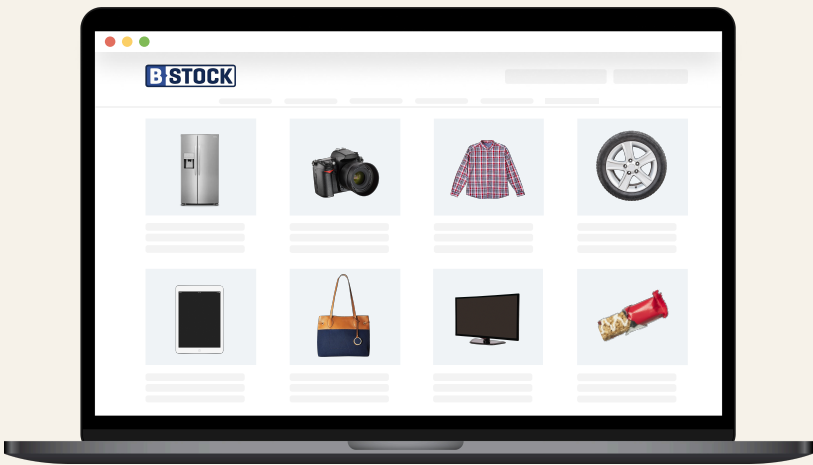
Ecommerce and the Landfill Dilemma

The rise in ecommerce (and flexible return policies become the industry standard) accelerates return rates and places enormous stress and additional costs on distribution networks that are not optimized for the reverse flow of inventory. Strategies for managing ecommerce returns include selling to third-party refurbishers, off-price stores, and liquidators. In some cases, merchandise is landfilled or destroyed.

2010

Technology Disrupts Resale

Led by eBay veterans, B-Stock launches a technology-based B2B recommerce platform with online auction marketplaces for retailers and brands to sell their returned and excess inventory directly to thousands of business buyers.



2010s & 2020s

The Shift from Resale to Recommerce

Resale evolves into the broader business model of recommerce, becoming a strategic initiative for retailers to not just drive efficiency and boost recovery, but to support the circular economy. More B2B recommerce platforms emerge to help companies sell large volumes of returned and excess merchandise via technology-driven methods.

NOW

Now and the Future of Recommerce

While the amount of returned and overstock inventory continues to grow, there is also growing pressure on retailers and consumers to adopt a more circular economy and keep products in use as long as possible. Accordingly, the need for recommerce solutions - to find products a second life - has never been greater.

B-Stock is proud to play a large part in powering the recommerce economy through our platform. With hundreds of thousands transactions completed annually, B-Stock gives buyers a simple and direct way to buy valuable products directly from retailers and offers retailers and manufacturers a technology-driven replacement for traditional resale methods, while boosting operational efficiency, recovery rates, and cycle time.

Are you ready to advance your recommerce strategy?

[Discover what B-Stock can do.](#)