

Bidorbuy and uAfrica merge to form 'everything e-commerce' firm Bob Group

Popular South African online shopping and auction marketplace Bidorbuy has merged with logistics provider uAfrica to form a new company called Bob Group.



uAfrica cofounder Andy Higgins and Bidorbuy CEO Craig Lubbe. Source: Supplied

According to a joint statement released by the companies, Bob Group will offer "everything e-commerce" to South African consumers and companies operating online, whether they are looking to sell, buy or do both.

Building on Bidorbuy's success, the merger will allow merchants access to a complete set of e-commerce services, including payments, logistics and a marketplace.

uAfrica cofounder Andy Higgins is managing director of the new group, while Bidorbuy CEO Craig Lubbe is head of marketplace.



Bob Group branding. Source: Supplied

Decentralised logistics

While others in the local e-commerce environment have embraced a centralised logistics model, Bob Group has gone for a decentralised approach, allowing it to price services "much more competitively", it says.

Higgins is no stranger to Bidorbuy, having launched the company in 1999. He was also instrumental in starting PayFast in South Africa.

Through the development and growth of uAfrica, a logistics e-commerce tool that streamlines order fulfillment and shipping processes – from getting quotes from courier companies to automated shipping labels and tracking notifications for customers – he has witnessed first-hand how online businesses, especially SMEs, can thrive.

“Our vision at Bob Group is to connect, empower and support people as they transform their lives through e-commerce,” Higgins explains. “We are more seller-friendly than our competitors, while at the same time we aren’t compromising on the excellent service buyers have come to expect from bidorbuy.

“Sellers can expect a more cost-effective offering based on intuitive, easy-to-use selling and fulfillment tools. Where previously we’ve focused exclusively on the marketplace, this amalgamation will allow us to provide merchant-empowering tools across all the sales channels they are active on, including their own websites and third-party channels.”

Service offering

A number of services will be available under the Bob Group offering. These include:

- A tool that allows merchants to sync products from their online store to bidorbuy easily, and a real-time solution for updates to products and inventory;
- Shipping and tracking solutions;
- A payment facilitator that provides merchants with the opportunity to have buyers pay with their preferred payment option; and
- A software-as-a-service solution providing technology for courier companies to run their entire business. It includes a driver app, customer and administration portals as well as all billing solutions.

Furthermore, by offering standardised payment and shipping options for all transactions, Bob Group states that it can provide buyers with a far more "consistent experience". It also continues Bidorbuy’s ethos of being a facilitator, not a seller.

The merged entity states that its cloud-based services technology, enabled by AWS, ensures reliable, scalable and secure e-commerce services, and by geocoding addresses, Bob Group is facilitating more accurate and streamlined shipping.



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Catering to businesses of any size

Bidorbuy CEO Craig Lubbe believes the merger between the two companies means that powerful e-commerce tools and services can now be offered to South African businesses of any size.

“For merchants, this will mean spending less time on pulling together all the strands of an online business, and more time focused on offering exceptional customer service. This will also mean better shopping experiences for buyers at every stage of the process, from search to payment to delivery,” Lubbe says.

Bob Group is particularly aware of its ability to service SMEs, as its tools allow smaller businesses to trade online on their own terms.

“We believe that SMEs drive the economy and e-commerce in South Africa represents a significant growth opportunity, as evidenced by the current amount of investment activity locally and from abroad. As such, we are committed to empowering businesses to unlock new revenue opportunities by offering more efficient services and tools,” Lubbe says.

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