

"Showrooming" startup helps companies connect with customers

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Nest vets eye 'showrooming' with startup

It's the bane of modern retailers' existence: Customers who come into a store to check out a product — be it a smartphone or a toy or a book — and then turn around and order it online, maybe even from their mobile device right while they're still standing in the aisle.

That doesn't bother the founders of b8ta, a software-powered retail concept from four alumni of Nest. Their store doesn't make money from sales but by offering space in their showroom to technology manufacturers to demo their products for customers.

The Silicon Valley startup also provides its partners with real-time insight into conversion metrics and cuts out the middleman so that products can be on the shelf within days, not months.

[B8ta](#) opened its [first brick-and-mortar](#) in Palo Alto in December 2015 and now works with more than 100 partners including Boosted Board, eero Home WiFi System, Teforia Tea Infuser, Osmo Educational Games and Avegant Glyph.

And with a \$7 million Series A announced today, the company plans to expand the concept to Santa Monica, California, and Seattle.

"At b8ta, we've built a new type of retailer based on the principles of the internet: open, accessible, and data- and technology-driven," said CEO Vibhu Norby in a statement. "b8ta's software and the experience it enables is the future of physical retail, and we are using our technology to put innovative products in stores that most retailers have ignored or mistreated."

TriplePoint Ventures led the round, with participation from lead seed investor Khosla Ventures and existing investors Fifth Wall Ventures, Eniac Ventures and Graphene Ventures, as well as Macerich, a mall owner and operator based in Santa Monica.

B8ta's new Southern California location will go in at Macerich's Santa Monica Place near

Silicon Beach with a variety of cutting-edge tech products curated based on the location and consumer interest.

“B8ta connects manufacturers of the latest IoT technology with consumers who want hands-on experience with these cutting-edge products,” added Eric Salo, executive vice president and chief strategy officer of Macerich. “The level of product and brand engagement generated by b8ta is a view into the future of retail.”

B8ta has raised \$11.5 million total, plus \$8 million in venture debt.

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