

UPDATE YOUR ONLINE CATALOG ALREADY!

7 Catalog Mistakes That Are
Costing You Leads





IF YOU'RE TIRED OF LOSING INDUSTRIAL E-COMMERCE SALES TO THE COMPETITION, KEEP READING.

Everyone has their reasons for putting off catalog updates. Maybe you had to focus on your inside sales process. Maybe all your data is in PDF format. Maybe you didn't know where to start. [When sixty-eight percent of industrial buyers now purchase online](#), your catalog IS inside sales. And where you start is here.

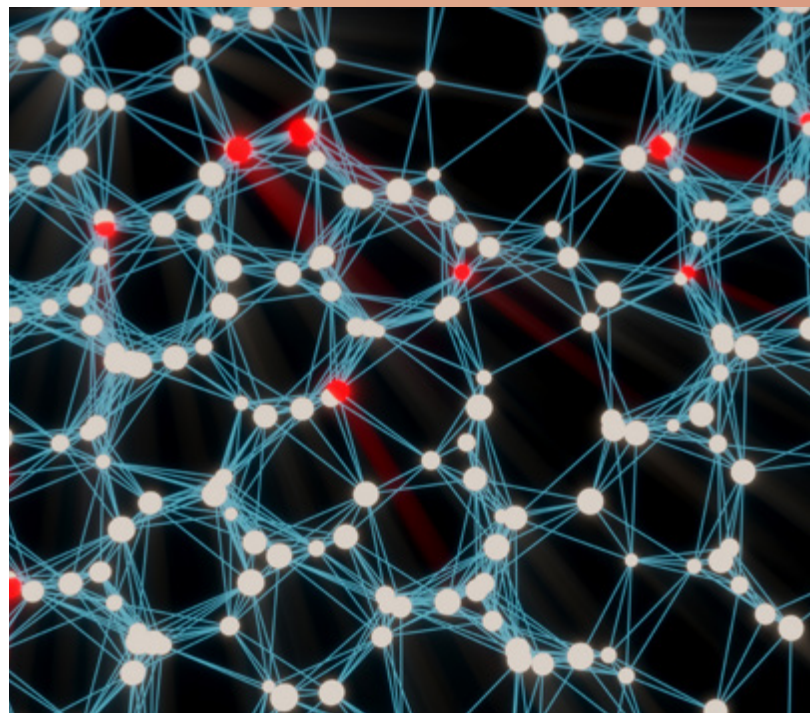
You know why companies like Grainger are so successful? They've optimized their catalog for end-users. Google rewards Grainger by showcasing its product first. Load times, data accuracy, search functionality, high-resolution photography – these all factor into how Google ranks your catalog against the competition.

Here's the bad news you already knew: you're behind. The good news is so are your competitors. All it takes is a few tweaks and you could find yourself the digital leader in your market. Here are the seven eCommerce mistakes you should correct before your competitors do.

MISTAKE #1: BAD DATA

If you think your product data is bad, you are not alone. According to a detailed [Ventana study](#), over 80% of B2B companies are not confident in their product data. In fact, our biggest hurdle when launching an eCommerce website is always the poor condition of product data.

If your online customers are looking for a solution you happen to offer but your product information doesn't exist, that's a lost sale. Buyers could be looking for anything: product names, brand names, your part numbers, your competitor part numbers, literature, CAD files, product features, attributes, shipping restrictions, high-resolution images – you just don't know. Your products should include up-to-date, complete data so that they're discoverable by search engines, filterable by your catalog, and helpful to your users.



WAYS TO IMPROVE BAD DATA

Data Cleansing (Difficulty Level ■■■)

Data cleansing is the detecting and correcting of “dirty” database information, including data that is incorrect, out-of-date, redundant, incomplete, or formatted incorrectly. A data cleanser can help you structure your data to ensure it is properly formatted, has consistent values, and has keywords tied to product attributes.

Competitor Product Cross Referencing (Difficulty Level ■■■)

For most industrial buyers, price is king. When buyers find a product online, they'll often look for equivalent, more cost-effective products from competitors. If your product data includes a functionally equivalent part match for your competitor products, you can allow users to cross reference part numbers in your catalog.

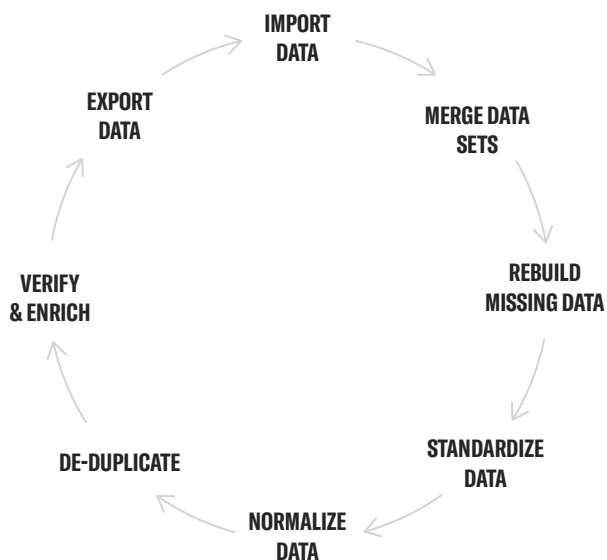


fig.1 A standard process for data cleansing services



QUICK TAKE AWAY

80% of B2B companies are not confident in their product data.

MISTAKE #2:

NO SEARCH BAR

Picture your typical engineer at a chemical plant. When he or she needs to replace a metering pump, they will go to an online catalog like Grainger.com. Non-engineering types might navigate through multiple menus, e.g., clicking “all products,” then “pumps,” followed by “chemical pumps,” and ending with “chemical metering pumps,” but not the engineer. They know what they want and they want it now. They know the search bar can produce results in as few clicks as possible and will type “chemical metering pumps” in Grainger’s search bar.

If you sell to an industrial audience, your online catalog absolutely has to have an on-site search bar. “But what if I...” Nope. Customers expect a search bar on today’s online catalogs. If your site already has a search bar, it needs to be optimized for the way users search.

WAYS YOU CAN IMPROVE YOUR SITE’S SEARCH BAR

Don’t require users to know your jargon
(Difficulty Level 🟡🟡🟡)

Don’t assume users know your clever product names or model numbers. If a user comes to your site looking for “duct tape,” they are likely to type anything ranging from “duck tape” to “heavy duty adhesives.” You never want the user to see “no results found,” especially for products you actually sell.

Account for hyphens (Difficulty Level 🟡🟡🟡)

Industrials love hyphenated product numbers. Customers do not. If you sell an UHC-2001-313 widget, your users should be able to type UHC2001313 and still find the product. This is also true for slashes, periods, spaces, or any other way a user might type your products.

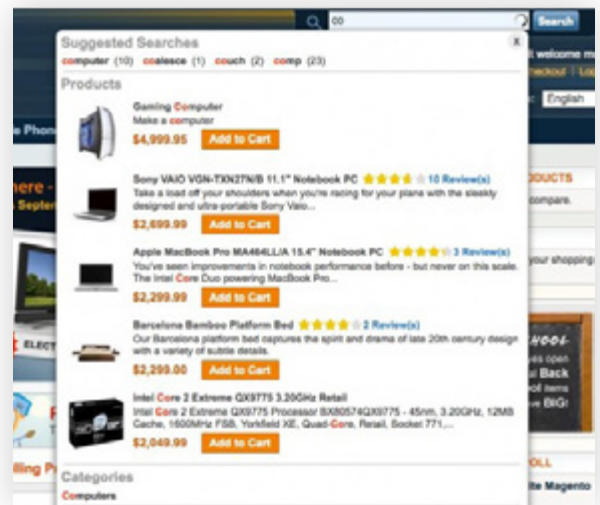


fig.2 An example autofill search typical of a Magento eCommerce Template



QUICK TAKE AWAY

Customers expect a search bar on today’s online catalogs.

MISTAKE #3:

HIDING PRICING

Everyone has reasons for not showing pricing. Maybe you don't want your competitors to know or your pricing varies by customer. We get it. But we also get that pricing is the #1 most requested piece of information from business customers. Most buyers want to discover information on their own – not be told by a sales rep. Don't assume customers will contact you for pricing. They're more likely to continue searching until they find someone not afraid to post the numbers.

Industrial products have higher costs and higher stakes so buyers are already on edge. Calm their fears and remove the difficulty from the buying experience by being the company that's transparent. Don't exclude yourself from the short-list by making customers think you're evasive and difficult to work with.

WAYS YOU CAN IMPROVE DISPLAYED PRICING

Show Sample Prices (Difficulty Level ■■■)

Sometimes displaying exact pricing is impossible – especially when prices vary by region or volume. In these cases, show a range of pricing or an estimated price the customer can expect to pay based on a typical-case scenario. If in doubt, work with your legal department to ensure you provide helpful pricing information without creating a situation where you're forced to honor an unrealistic advertised price.

Work With Your Suppliers (Difficulty Level ■■■)

Certain suppliers absolutely refuse to allow you to publish their selling price online if you sell below their MSRP. In many cases, you can come to an agreement with the supplier to allow displayed pricing after the product has been added to the cart. Suppliers may also agree to display pricing for logged-in users. Remind suppliers that pricing is in their best interest.

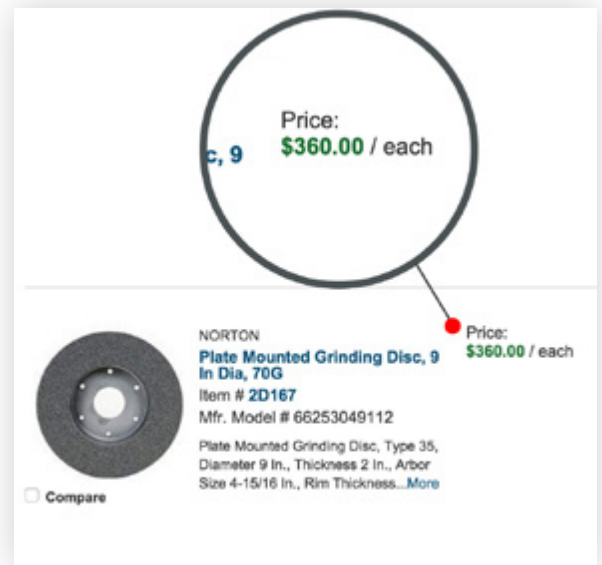


fig.3 Grainger shows pricing for each of their products



QUICK TAKE AWAY

Don't assume customers will contact you for pricing.

MISTAKE #4: POOR PHOTOGRAPHY

We're not one to stereotype, but we'd wager that your catalog is populated with small, poorly lit product shots; it's practically an unwritten rule for industrial catalogs. It shouldn't be. Big, high quality photographs will not only improve how your site looks, they will also increase conversions.

Need proof? In [three different tests](#), marketers found that increasing image size increased conversions in every scenario. Big pictures of your products provide more useful information and increase buying confidence. Customers want to see the quality of your weld and feel the craftsmanship of your powder coating process. They can't do that with a grainy, compressed JPEG.

WAYS YOU CAN IMPROVE YOUR PHOTOGRAPHY

Photoshoot (Difficulty Level ■■■)

If enlarging your photos will only make them grainier, it may be time for a photoshoot. We recommend hiring a local photographer that has experience with product photography. They can make sure your products have consistent lighting and framing. This is money well spent as you'll be able to repurpose these photos for advertising, brochures, sell sheets, etc.

Avoid Stock Photography (Difficulty Level ■■■)

In a study by the Nielsen Norman Group, they discovered that users largely ignore stock photography. Users want images that carry relevant information to the task at hand. While we all love that stock photo of the girl with the headset, self-produced product images or images showing your product in-use will carry more weight and lead to more conversions.



fig.4 Basic set-up for good product photography



QUICK TAKE AWAY

Large, high-quality photos will help increase conversions.

MISTAKE #5:

NO PRODUCT FILTERS

We had a client with a product category called “spare parts.” No other descriptors; simply the phrase “spare parts.” There were over 9,000 products in this category. We begged them to provide some filterable data attributes for this category, e.g., allowing the user to filter by material, application, price, size, etc. Instead, users were forced to click through hundreds of pages of nondescript spare parts. As you can guess, they didn’t sell many spare parts that year.

While that sounds like an extreme scenario, it’s often the norm for industrial catalogs. Many users are going to come to your website with only a vague idea of what they need; it’s your catalog’s job to provide filters to help users confidently make a buying decision.

WAYS YOU CAN IMPROVE YOUR FILTERS

Simultaneous Filters (Difficulty Level ■■■)

Customers may want to filter by more than one option in a category. For example, if you sell multiple brands of AC motors, a user may want to see all your Baldor and Dayton motors but is not interested in WEG or Leeson. In your catalog filter options, you should let the user select both Baldor and Dayton, filtering out all other brands.

Refresh Speed (Difficulty Level ■■■)

Nobody likes to wait for a page to load. When you allow the user to apply filters, your site needs time to refresh the results. The longer this refresh takes, the greater the chance of losing the customer. Just a one second delay in page-load can drop conversions by 7%. If your site is running on a slower, older server, the money you’re losing could buy dozens of servers.

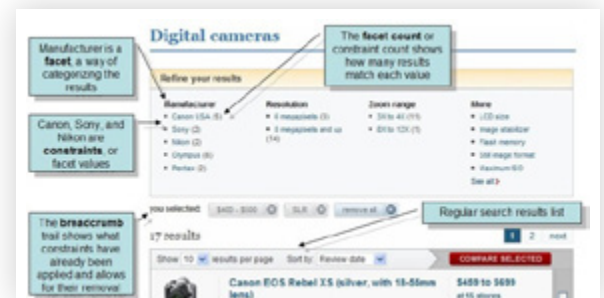


fig.5 Some options to consider in filterable attributes



QUICK TAKE AWAY

Product filters help customers make efficient and informed purchases.

MISTAKE #6:

DUPLICATE CONTENT

If you have an online catalog, you may have heard about the mythical dangers of duplicate content. A few years ago, many eCommerce sites saw their rankings plummet when Google released its dreaded Panda algorithm. Panda sought out webpages that had the same text as other pages and penalized them for using duplicate content. The idea was to reduce the clutter of duplicate pages by eliminating copycats in Google's search results.

Google has since realized this penalty was a bit harsh as many eCommerce sites use the same content because that's the content supplied by the manufacturer. Nowadays Google won't punish you for having duplicate content, but they won't reward you either. If you have a storefront with 100 products with overlapping content, Google may decide to show just one of those product pages in its search results. Creating unique, useful content for every product page will provide more opportunities for you to rank in search engines.

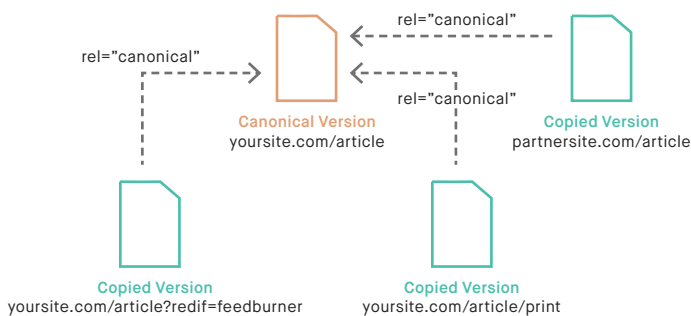


fig.6 Canonical URLs are a technical way of avoiding duplicate content



WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR CONTENT

Write Unique Content (Difficulty Level ■■■)

Just because the manufacturer gave you pre-written product descriptions doesn't mean you have to use them. You should rewrite product descriptions to include unique or hard-to-find information no one else has. This could include product reviews, custom photos, tips and tricks – anything that helps you stand out. It's daunting to do this for thousands of SKUs, but you can easily start by creating unique content for your top sellers and adding more content over time.

Canonical URLs (Difficulty Level ■■■)

Sometimes duplicate content is unavoidable. For example, if your site creates new URLs for printer-friendly product pages, that content is duplicated on your normal product pages, only on a different URL. You have to tell Google which one is the "real" page, otherwise those pages will compete for ranking in the search results. Canonical URLs are a bit more technical than we want to cover in this guide, but it's basically a way to assign one URL as the "real" page. In the example shown, we'd assign the normal product page as the canonical URL so Google knows which one to display in search results.



QUICK TAKE AWAY

Unique content produces better search rankings.

MISTAKE #7:

NOT REMARKETING

More than half the people that use your site won't check out. If you combine the results of these [22 different studies](#), you'll find that the average shopping cart abandonment rate is 67.5%. Maybe they're not ready to buy because they're still price shopping. Maybe they were turned off by product availability. Maybe your website is slow. Whatever the reason, you should not write them off as a lost customer; you should keep trying until they're ready to buy. You should remarket.

WAYS TO START REMARKETING

Text and Display Ads (Difficulty Level 🟡🟡🟡)

When a user abandons your cart, even if they didn't provide an email address, you're still connected to that customer by what is called a cookie. A cookie is a digital fingerprint that follows the customer wherever they go online. Using this cookie, you can continue to send ads to this user across Google's large display and text advertising network. When this user is on Facebook reading an industry publication, or watching videos, you can display your ads and entice the user to come back to your site.

Email Marketing (Difficulty Level 🟡🟡🟡)

If you do get a customer's email before they abandon the cart, you can trigger follow-up emails. A good strategy is sending an email immediately after the user abandons the cart to provide additional product information, then another 24 hours later reminding them how to contact customer service, and ultimately sending another email a week later offering discounts or some other incentive.



fig.7 Display ads can entice users to return to your website



QUICK TAKE AWAY

Lost customers can be recaptured with remarketing.

HOW TO CORRECT YOUR MISTAKES

Now that you know what to fix, you need to know how to fix them. Hiring a reputable data cleansing company can solve many catalog problems. We're happy to share a list of data companies we recommend, but we also encourage you to take advantage of the power of search and Google keywords like "data cleansing" or "data scrubbing" to source other options. Expect to spend anywhere between \$1 to \$3 per product.

For photography, we recommend hiring a photographer that has experience with product shots. Depending on the amount of products you have, you're looking at prices ranging between \$5k and \$25k for well-lit, professional photography that can be reused well beyond your catalog.

For things like search bar optimization and improving refresh rates, check with your IT department's capabilities. If you suspect your catalog is ready for a full overhaul, consider consulting with a company with extensive catalog experience. A fully optimized catalog typically ranges between \$30k and \$150k.

SOUNDS GOOD, BUT NOW WHAT?

If you're ready to make a change and need some support in the process, please get in touch. At INDUSTRIAL, it's our job to help you get fantastic results.



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