

THE EXPERT'S GUIDE TO B2B PRODUCT CONTENT

ALTIUS
PRODUCT CONTENT SOLUTIONS

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We've all read the reports: B2B e-commerce is exploding, with sales surpassing \$12 trillion globally by 2020 according to Frost & Sullivan.* The scramble is on to seize as much of this emerging market as possible.

Investing in customer-focused, optimized product content is one of the most significant strategies that B2B e-commerce stores can implement to stake their claim in this emerging market. It's much easier to sell technical products online to detail-oriented customers when they can browse by category, inspect images, filter attributes, review specs, preview installation-usage guides, and consult safety data sheets. In addition, great product content complements many of the other services that strategic marketing and technology partners provide to create exceptional e-commerce experiences and generate ROI.

Consider how much better SEO, SEM, and onsite search perform when supported by enriched product content — and the improved shopping experience made possible by properly categorized and attributed product data. The fact is, a deeper understanding of product content can help all e-commerce professionals provide more value to their customers, whether they are building new online stores, managing migrations, or making sites more customer friendly.

With that goal in mind, this guide provides an expert's perspective on product content and outlines its many benefits. The guide also provides B2B e-commerce innovators the language and statistics they need to explain the value of product content to non-experts — and secure the support they need to build the infrastructure that will capture the emerging \$12 trillion B2B e-commerce market.

* Demery, Paul, "B2B and Retail E-Commerce Tops a List of Emerging Industries,"
<https://www.internetretailer.com/2014/12/08/b2b-e-commerce-tops-list-emerging-industries>

WHAT IS PRODUCT CONTENT?

Product information that helps customers find products
and make confident purchases

**Types of
Product Content****Title**

The name of the product, intended to show up in search results

Specifications

Attributes of the product such as dimensions, warranty duration

Description

Marketing copy that describes uses and incites interest

Price

How much the product costs (MSRP as well as site-specific price)

Reviews

Scaled ratings and written assessments

Photos & Graphics

From the manufacturer or created by the site

Videos

Product overview, how-to, and customer review videos

Other Media

Instruction manuals, MSDS sheets, CAD drawings, etc.

Shipping Information

Shipping size and weight, container sizes, and quantities

Product content is meant for customers. It's all the information they need to make confident buying decisions, plus a structure that makes it easy for them to find what they are looking for.

Product content that meets these customer requirements has two sides. One side is all the rich information that is associated with a product, such as its name, pictures, description, features, reviews, videos, safety and spec sheets, and instruction manuals. The list goes on, with the most innovative online stores providing dozens of data points associated with each product listed on a site.

The other side of product content is the structure used to organize all this data — a framework that ultimately makes the raw information useful. Without fundamental principles of organization, the pictures, descriptions, PDFs, and videos would be unusable — a frustrating mix of “too much information” that wouldn't help anyone.

Structuring product information is an extremely important function that makes the content readily available and useful across an organization and, above all, to customers. Rich and well-organized information will increase customer engagement and value by enhancing search functions, facilitating omnichannel selling, and supporting cross-selling and upselling opportunities.

The structural dimension of product content includes three main areas: taxonomy, attributes, and collateral information.

A taxonomy is the hierarchy of categories into which all products are assigned. A good taxonomy groups products into clear and logically labeled segments that make it easy for users to find the products they need.

Effective taxonomies:

1. Include a hierarchy of categories or “nodes.” For example, a circular saw is primarily in the “saw” category, which also includes secondary categories such as band saws, circular saws, miter saws, reciprocating saws, etc.
2. Are succinct, with a limited number of nodes into which products can be categorized. If there are too many, the structure will lose its utility.

Knowing the Language

You definitely have to have deep product knowledge when dealing with B2B e-commerce product content — it's essential for creating useful taxonomies and structures.

—
Angela Baraks,
DATAgility

3. Have the minimum hierarchy levels necessary for customers to click and navigate quickly to a product.
4. Use the same professional and localized terms that customers do to refer to and organize the products, otherwise users will have a more difficult time finding what they need.

Every product also has “attributes” — the standardized pieces of information associated with products in a specific category. For example, all circular saws have an amperage rating and a max RPM speed. Attributes, unlike keywords in a description field, are highly structured and can be used to filter and compare products. Based on attributes, a store can also recommend alternative products that meet the same customer requirements, offer functional advantages, deliver higher margins, or match a competitor's product number.

While some product attributes will apply to all products listed on a site — e.g., physical dimensions — there will also be attributes specific to each category or sub-category in a taxonomy (e.g., RPM for circular saws). It's important to determine which attributes matter most to customers so that information can be included in search filters and presented more prominently on product detail pages.

Collateral information is anything that helps a shopper learn more about a product. This includes enriched and unique descriptions, images, videos, instructions, warranties, safety sheets, installation-maintenance-repair manuals, and more. Think of any information a shopper needs to decide if they want to buy a product. If customers can't find the answers they need to make a buying decision, they will go elsewhere.

Many times, this deep connection between online customer satisfaction and product content is the hardest concept for B2B store owners to grasp. According to Accenture Interactive, “only 37 percent of B2B buyers who conduct research on a supplier's website said it was the most helpful channel for this purpose,”* This means that product information is sorely deficient on most B2B websites. The best competitors allow customers to research and compare products easily so they never have to leave the site for information.

* ads Accenture Interactive, “2014 State of B2B Procurement Study: Uncovering the Shifting Landscape in B2B Commerce,”
https://www.accenture.com/t20150624T211502__w__/us-en/_acnmedia/Accenture/Conversion-Assets/DotCom/Documents/Global/PDF/Industries_15/Accenture-B2B-Procurement-Study.pdf

Conceivably, this deficiency is a major opportunity for sellers. A B2B e-commerce store that invests in creating exceptional product information can gain a major strategic advantage over competitors and dominate their market.

So why don't more B2B store owners seize this opportunity? Often, it's because they think that minimal and inconsistent OEM manufacturer or distributor data feeds are sufficient. The fact is, this product data is frequently limited to model numbers, minimal descriptions, prices, and shipping information. The content is usually organized and abbreviated for accounting, ERP, or logistics purposes. Also, the data is duplicate content for every competitor selling the same product.

What the OEMs think of as "product content" and what customers expect are vastly different. Getting all stakeholders to see their information from the customers' perspective is often the biggest challenge to any successful B2B product enrichment project.

Fortunately, product content doesn't just benefit customers. Good content that responds to customers' needs can also enhance the performance of stakeholders throughout a company. For example, rich media can help inside sales staff demo products and follow up with prospects. And good product information management can help eliminate inaccurate, redundant, or outdated data and SKUs — a benefit that inventory management, logistics, and accounting departments will appreciate. Once you identify these benefits, it's a lot easier to secure organizational buy-in for a product content project.

WHY DOES PRODUCT CONTENT MATTER?

It boosts e-commerce website metrics,
bottom-line results, and ROI

The Measurable Results of Good Product Content

Higher Search Rankings

Providing rich content that helps searchers find what they need is the most fundamental way to improve rankings

Optimized SEM

Better content equals higher quality scores and lower costs per click (CPC) for search ad campaigns

Better Conversion Rates

Armed with the information they need, customers will be more likely to buy

Reduce “clicks” to find a product

With structured and filtered navigation, customer find products with a minimum number of clicks

Higher Revenue

With more buying across a site, an online store will generate higher average order value (AOV) and revenue per visit (RPV)

Great Lifetime Customer Value (LCV)

Customers are satisfied and loyal when a site offers rich information

Reduced Customer Acquisition Cost

Greater sales and LCV reduce the average cost to acquire new customers

Bigger Margins

Less sales consultation per conversion means bigger margins

Reduced Costs

Fewer returns and customer service inquiries eliminate support costs

Good product data really stems from a commitment to think like customers. Customer-focused studies, such as those conducted by product content clearing house Shotfarm, back this up with surveys indicating that as many as “seventy-eight percent of consumers say the quality of product content is very important when making purchase decisions.”*

But beyond pleasing customers, what are the bottom-line effects of making this product content commitment? As is often asked, “What is the ROI for product content enrichment?”

KPIs Affected by Product Content

To answer this question, let’s take a quick look at the effects good product content can have on many of the web metrics used as key performance indicators (KPIs) by today’s e-commerce stores and then see how they yield bottom-line results.

According to an Earley Information Science study “B2B: World-class Product Customer Experience Requires World-class Product Data,” taking product content seriously can improve e-commerce website performance significantly.†

In its study, Earley estimates that investing in all the key features of product content discussed above — such as taxonomies, attributes, and rich product data — can affect two areas that matter to all e-commerce sites: SEO and onsite conversions.

Earley projects greater than 20% increases in organic traffic with enhanced product information. This includes a 20% increase in inbound visits to product detail pages — a goldmine for product-specific long-tail- keyword strategies.

In addition, once visitors get to a site with improved content, they are more likely to convert. Onsite search click-through rates (CTRs) can increase by more than 40%, as can product detail page conversions. This combination of increased organic visitors and better conversion rates has a powerful — and compelling — result on real monetary returns.

* Shotfarm, “2015/2016 The Shotfarm Product Information Report,” <http://www.shotfarm.com/product-information-report/>

† Earley Information Science, “B2B: World-class Product Customer Experience Requires World-class Product Data,” <http://info.earley.com/b2b-world-class-customer-experience-needs-world-class-product-data>

Knowing the Language

You can't do all the things you are used to as an e-commerce customer without good product content.

—
Brent Lathrop,
Industrial Strength
Marketing

The ROI of Product Content

How much do these improved web metrics affect sales? According to a study by FitForCommerce, “online revenue increases between 5 percent and 15 percent when . . . detailed product attributes [are added] to products that were already available online.”[‡]

Furthermore, the study states, good product information that conforms to customer expectations and is rich in attributes and images can support e-commerce strategies such as automated online merchandizing, resulting in 35 percent more conversions with margins that are 44 percent better.[§]

Finally, good product content can foster greater customer satisfaction, which leads to more repeat customers and greater lifetime customer value. Per Shotfarm’s study, “87 percent of consumers say they would be unlikely to consider a retailer again if they provided incorrect information for a purchased product.”[¶] Considering the cost to acquire new customers can be over \$100,** depending on your market and competition, any strategy that retains customers in an important investment.

Good product content can also produce gains in operational efficiencies, reducing costs associated with managing an online store and increasing margins. Two primary areas are service calls and returns.

Most inbound calls to online stores are motivated by customers’ questions about products. Enriched product information can answer many of these questions “in advance,” eliminating the need for many calls and reducing the overall burden on the call center.

Shotfarm also writes that, “42 percent of consumers have returned an online purchase in the past year specifically because of poor product content.”^{††} A straightforward solution to this issue is to provide enriched information that accurately represents products and how they are used,

[‡] FitForCommerce, “Product Information Management for Today’s eCommerce Initiatives: PIM Considerations for eCommerce Re-Platforming,” https://www.informatica.com/content/dam/informatica-com/global/amer/us/collateral/white-paper/pim-for-todays-ecommerce-initiatives_white-paper_2532.pdf

[§] Ibid.

[¶] Ibid.

^{**} MarketingSherpa, “Ecommerce Research Chart: Acquisition Cost per Customer,” <https://www.marketingsherpa.com/article/chart/ecommerce-acquisition-cost-per-customer>

^{††} Shotfarm, “2015/2016 The Shotfarm Product Information Report,” <http://www.shotfarm.com/product-information-report/>

Rapid ROI

“We enhanced our product content for a high-margin product line in our store. Within 45 days, sales had increased by over 100 percent and we recovered the complete cost of our data improvement in just three months.”

—
Mandy Dunlow,
MRO Stop

thereby reducing returns due to misunderstandings. This is especially important to meet competition and customer expectations of free-return policies.

The studies cited above are just some of the most compelling entries in a growing body of e-commerce literature that shows how good product data positively affects website performance metrics and increases online orders.

WHAT PROJECTS BENEFIT FROM GOOD PRODUCT CONTENT?

Any digital transformation that aims to increase sales,
efficiency, and customer satisfaction

A focus on product content is especially critical when undertaking transformative digital projects, such as migrating e-commerce platforms, onboarding new product lines or vendors, improving onsite and/or offsite search performance, upgrading to technologies like a product information management (PIM) system, or starting to sell through online marketplaces. The success of these strategic initiatives depends on a solid product database foundation.

Backed by good content, the following types of projects can promise real bottom-line improvements, rather than just deliverables:

1. New e-commerce website build
2. Platform migration
3. PIM, MDM, or new technology implementations
4. New products onboarding
5. Site search optimization
6. Marketplace data feed setup

PROJECT OVERVIEW #1

New E-Commerce Website Build

Too often, when a company decides to launch or relaunch an e-commerce site, they relegate product content considerations to a future date. This is a mistake.

Product content is more than just the “raw material” that goes onto a product detail page. Successful content management requires important decisions about what information is most valuable to customers and service departments, and how it will be organized into an appropriate product information structure. Moreover, a site that treats product data as an afterthought will suffer post-launch when it comes to SEO and onsite search.

On the back end, any e-commerce site with products from multiple suppliers, but without a product content strategy, will inevitably encounter major problems. Imagine extracting information from all the various sources that B2B suppliers use to store product data — e.g., combing through various Excel tables, deciphering abbreviations in ERP systems, and extracting information from catalog PDFs designed for

Quote

A human element will always guarantee higher quality product content. If you find the right partner, you can trust them, consult with them, and benefit from their domain expertise.

—
Vik Gundoju,
StrikeTru

Where B2B Product Content Typically Lives

- Excel spreadsheets
- CSVs
- Microsoft Access databases
- PDF catalogs, datasheets, and sell sheets
- ERP systems
- Subscription data feeds
- Supplier or Manufacturer EDI
- Department-level databases and systems

printing. These content sources have inconsistent data formatting, lots of source-specific terminology, and multiple instances of missing content. A proactive plan for resolving these issues is required, rather than discovering problems during an active site build with a looming deadline.

PROJECT OVERVIEW #2**New Products Onboarding**

Once an online store has established a taxonomy and has attributes that reflect how its customers search and shop, the next big challenge is to manage incoming product information.

Rich product data may be available from manufacturers and other sources. However, these sources rarely provide all the required data for every designated attribute, image, and information requirement. Transforming the content and filling information gaps to meet the organizing principles that govern a site's product content is an ongoing task.

Being able to organize the incoming content per a site's approved structure and track down any missing but critical information — while also making accurate taxonomy classifications — requires product - and industry-level understanding. With the right expertise and technology, this process can be expedited, greatly reducing the time it takes to onboard rising volumes of new SKUs accurately. The faster products make it onto a site, the sooner they will be indexed by search engines, found by customers — and generate revenue.

PROJECT OVERVIEW #3**SEO and Onsite Search Optimization**

Good product content is the backbone of any site search optimization initiative — both for offsite search engines like Google and Bing and for onsite search tools such as filters and search bars.

First is the obvious benefit of having product detail pages that are optimized for the product names and keywords customers use to find those products. Second, organizing products into a taxonomy that meets customer expectations will help users quickly find what they need, producing higher engagement metrics, which will register positively with search engines as “second order influences,” according to SEO authority Moz.*

* Moz, “How Usability, User Experience, and Content Affect Search Engine Rankings,”

<https://moz.com/beginners-guide-to-seo/how-usability-experience-and-content-affect-search-engine-rankings>

Quote

Many prospects for our site search engine can't move forward or get the best results due to poor product data.

—
Kyle Wilson,
SearchSpring

Finally, having robust product information that is specific to a site and organized to avoid redundancy will avoid offsite and onsite duplicate content — two missteps that often diminish B2B e-commerce site rankings with search engines, which have been “getting better and better at kicking websites down the rankings because of duplicate content,” according to Kissmetrics.[†] Offsite duplicate content is usually the result of using the same content manufacturers provide to all distributors and resellers. Onsite duplicate content, on the other hand, is a byproduct of poor product content governance and “makes it difficult for Google to decide which pages should rank for a particular keyword.”[‡]

For onsite search, robust product data is required to support the two tools that customers most frequently use to locate products: filters and search bars. Filters are the direct outgrowth of a rich, hierarchical product taxonomy and attribute system. And with good content, onsite search can be engineered to respond to varying terms customers may use (e.g., “bin” vs. “tote”) to facilitate cross-selling or to cross-reference products with multiple manufacturer model numbers, UPCs, or form-fit-function criteria.

PROJECT OVERVIEW #4**Marketplace Data Feed Setup**

The number of e-commerce marketplaces for selling B2B products is expanding rapidly, with B2BecNews reporting on the emergence of over 20 in 2014 and 2015 alone.[§] Store owners who want to sell their products via Amazon Seller Central, eBay Stores, or retailers like Walmart or Home Depot, must tackle three main issues when it comes to product content:

1. Organize content to conform to destination marketplace rules
2. Technical integration
3. Enrich content to outclass competitive sellers

[†] Work, Sean. “7 Critical SEO Errors of E-commerce Websites,” <https://blog.kissmetrics.com/seo-errors-ecommerce-websites/>

[‡] Encarnacion, Rafael. “How to Fix Onsite E-Commerce Duplicate Content,” <http://www.industrialmarketer.com/how-to-fix-onsite-e-commerce-duplicate-content/>

[§] Tepper, Nona, “Catch the Rising Wave of Industry-Specific B2B Marketplaces,” <https://www.digitalcommerce360.com/2016/01/18/catch-rising-wave-industry-specific-b2b-marketplaces/>

Marketplace Minimum Requirements for Product Content**SKU**

Or the store's internal product ID

UPC, EAN, or ASIN**Product Name****Product Description**

Up to a few hundred characters

Product URL

The link to the product on the seller's site

Image URL

The link to the product image on the seller's site

Price**Category**

The breadcrumb to the category on the seller's site, such as "Welding > TIG > TIG Torches"

Each marketplace will require a minimum dataset. If a seller doesn't have these entries included in its product datafeed, its products won't be listed. Updating the source content to include these fields solves this problem.

Transmitting product data to a destination marketplace inevitably requires changing or adding site database field labels to match the required data formats. It might also require altering the content itself so that the data in each field conforms to marketplace rules (e.g., making UPCs 10 or 12 digits long, or adding a "\$" in the price field).

This sort of transformation of a site's product content can be addressed with a script — a one-time programming task. But this script will require periodic updates as marketplaces change rules, expand fields, and add information components to their product database structures.

Adding content above and beyond the mandatory minimums is definitely recommended. By incorporating more original information that enhances product listings and conforms to customer expectations, a store owner will establish an advantage over competitors in a marketplace — as well as on their company site.

PROJECT OVERVIEW #5**Platform Migration**

Historically, many B2B e-commerce stores have operated with custom-coded solutions. But with the rise of enterprise-level, out-of-the-box e-commerce platforms and technology add-ons, many are looking to migrate to gain access to state-of-the-art features and efficiencies.

A migration project is a great opportunity to reevaluate all the information that will be moved from an old site to a new one. Moreover, organizing, consolidating, and enriching the to-be-migrated product files will inevitably support the success of a new site.

Increasingly, migration projects don't just involve e-commerce functionality; they also encompass integrating with an ERP, ordering, or inventory database that use their own set of abbreviated codes to govern product data for logistics and accounting. Determining how best to translate product content between these systems is a major undertaking.

Some of the most progressive B2B companies overcome these integration issues by adopting an enterprise-wide Product Information

Quote

If you're migrating to a new site or platform, take the time to update your product content, because if you are an e-commerce store, data is everything.

—
Ben Krav,
Décor Island

Multichannel B2B Product Content Use Cases

- Central e-commerce site
- Resellers sites
- Marketplaces
- PDF catalogs
- Print catalogs
- Brochures
- Datasheets
- ERP
- Packaging
- Translation agency for localization

Management (PIM) platform. In these scenarios, accurate and up-to-date content is recognized as a primary company asset, and e-commerce becomes just one channel through which information is distributed and products are sold.

PROJECT OVERVIEW #6**PIM and MDM Implementation**

For B2B companies that are transforming their businesses by embracing digital efficiencies, rich and tightly governed product content is crucial. A “single source of truth” for product information — typically housed in a production information management (PIM) or master data management (MDM) system — can format and distribute content to meet many needs.

A central depository assures the entire organization can access accurate and timely data for use across all sales channels, distributing data to online marketplaces, sharing content between print and online catalogs, and communicating with vendors and partners.

Central information systems also support customer sales and service efforts, implementing advanced system features such as personalization, purchase quote and configuration, and fast new product onboarding.

Great product content is an important asset for envisioning what's next. Housed in a centralized PIM or MDM system, this asset makes company-wide digital innovation possible.

HOW DO YOU MAKE GREAT PRODUCT CONTENT?

Strategic thinking and deliberate process

Great product content is backed by a well-thought-out strategy that resonates with a company's customers, personnel, and goals. And, like most strategic engagements, it requires a deliberate process. Here's an overview of how the process for developing great product content works.

Build a Team & Clarify Goals

B2B e-commerce projects often involve multiple participants from many different departments, including product, sales, customer service, marketing, IT, and logistics. Many of these stakeholders don't have a clear idea of how enhanced content can be useful to them, much less a strategy for how to approach it.

The first step, then, is to help store owners and other decision makers develop a solid understanding about how product content will benefit the business and each division — e.g., as an asset that boosts sales, as a customer bridge to brick-and-mortar stores, or as an aid for the inside sales, service reps, or accounting departments. Specific goals for a product or group might include: improving organic search rankings, reducing returns, or increasing repeat sales. Too often, lack of internal team support for the transformation to digital services and selling is the biggest barrier to success.

This process requires technology and implementation partners who are not only capable of explaining the uses and importance of product content, but that also know the products a store sells, how it sells, and who it sells to. With many B2B e-commerce sites, this often involves highly specialized products, long buying cycles with multiple stakeholders, and technically minded customers.

Propose Solutions

Once objectives have been established, a site's existing product information should be evaluated to determine which changes are needed to reach those targets. Broadly, these recommendations can include three types of projects:

TAXONOMY DEVELOPMENT

Taxonomy creation is basically the process of determining how products will be categorized and organized. To develop a taxonomy, a product content solutions provider will:

- Audit the current site
- Look at incoming manufacturer product data classifications

- Review competitor, marketplace, and industry taxonomies
- Analyze how customers search for products onsite and offsite (keywords and click paths)
- Understand the keywords and context used in product searches

ATTRIBUTE & CONTENT MODELING

Next, develop an attribute and product information schema for each category with input and feedback from the various stakeholders at a company. This is a very important step in the process and often one of the most difficult to accomplish, depending on how many people and departments are involved. But the result is a comprehensive understanding of customer viewpoints and team support for the enterprise-wide digital initiative.

Also, solicit team input to categorize all products according to an approved structure, including mapping website categories to requirements for marketplaces, buy-side and industry data systems, and national or international trade codes such as EAN, GS1, and UNSPSC.

PRODUCT CONTENT NORMALIZATION & CLEANSING

The next step is to create lists of valid data values for each attribute, including abbreviations, symbols, fonts, and image and file naming conventions. All attributes associated with individual products will then be formatted (or “normalized”) to conform to these values. Guidelines are also needed for naming product page URLs and digital files that are shown on product pages or made available for download. The names should include keywords or description elements that will further boost SEO.

Normalizing data assures accuracy and supports basic online store functions such as filters and onsite search, as well as more advanced features such as suggested products and visual search.

The product content normalization process can include:

- Merging data from various sources
- Eliminating duplicate products listings
- Removing discontinued products

- Building product attributes
- “Cleansing” all the content so it is formatted consistently (e.g., changing “&” to “and”)
- Identifying missing collateral information
- Validating data for shared uses

The normalization and validation process usually reveals gaps in product content, which can then be tackled with a product content enrichment project.

PRODUCT CONTENT ENRICHMENT

If an online store is missing crucial pieces of product information — such as images, MSDS sheets, or user information — the store owners may want to undertake a content enrichment project to improve the quality of the product detail pages.

Whereas taxonomy development and product data normalization involve making strategic decisions about how to group and arrange products among internal stakeholders, product content enrichment projects primarily comprise outbound detective work like:

- Going to manufacturers’ sites or other published sources of product information (e.g., PDF catalogs, spec sheets) to collect technical information about the products
- Accessing other sources —such as industry databases—to secure any additional available assets
- Creating enriched product titles and descriptions
- Image sizing, cropping, and improvement
- Video and graphic editing and enhancement
- Renaming digital files with keywords for SEO
- Adding product reviews and evaluations

Run Tests

Once a recommended course of action has been agreed to by all stakeholders, the next step is to select a set of SKUs for a pilot project to determine technical requirements and demonstrate proof of concept.

For an e-commerce site selling less than a few thousand SKUs, 100–500 will be sufficient to ensure that the recommendations work as anticipated in the targeted system. Larger sites with many thousands or hundreds of thousands of SKUs will require much larger sample sets in multiple categories for testing.

Once the technical issues have been tackled and products have been successfully onboarded, a proof of concept pilot can be undertaken. This second test measures the performance of optimized product content over time, allowing stakeholders to evaluate the effects of the recommended enhancements and decide on next steps. This type of study is almost always required in cases where stakeholders need to be convinced of the ROI of content enhancement. Moreover, it is a great way to establish effective communication for the full project.

Define Roadmap

Once the potential of product content enhancement is established, available personnel, technical resources, and budgets must be balanced against the goals and timeline. As with all projects, there are a variety of strategies to scale projects to meet budget requirements while maximizing effectiveness.

Some store owners start with the products in the highest-margin categories or products for a new service line, rather than tackling their entire product database. Others prefer to focus on the highest-cost or the most technical items, where customers typically do a lot of research prior to purchase and require key information to make buying decisions.

If the focus is on one product category, all products in the group must have the same taxonomy classification and set of attributes. Otherwise, products will not register in filters, search, or comparisons, making it difficult for customers to find products and to report on results.

Another way to be effective is to add new content in stages — for example, starting with better images for all products, which can increase conversions by as much as 9 percent, according to VWO.*

* VWO, "Ecommerce A/B testing: Larger product images increase sales by 9%," <https://vwo.com/blog/larger-product-images-increase-conversion-rate/>

Good Product Content Is Good Business

Motivated by the off-the-charts projections for the growth of B2B e-commerce, many companies are looking for ways to launch, integrate, and optimize e-commerce experiences for their customers. And these projects won't just be a matter of capitalizing on a new market; the survival of some businesses may very well depend on a strong e-commerce presence as more and more B2B buying migrates online, taking up as much as 12 percent of the overall U.S. B2B market by 2020, according to Forrester.*

To succeed in this environment, B2B store owners need to develop new ways to connect with customers, help them find what they need, and demonstrate ongoing value. Key to these new forms of customer contact is product content that is informative, thorough, and geared toward customers' perspectives.

Better yet, enriched information is a foundational asset that enhances and enables all sorts of other winning e-commerce strategies, as well as larger enterprise-level digital transformations.

The bottom line is: Good product content is good business.

* Forrester, "U.S. Ecommerce Sales to Top \$1 Trillion by 2020",
<https://www.forrester.com/US+B2B+eCommerce+Sales+To+Top+1+Trillion+By+2020/-/E-PRE7724>

Altius is a 15-year-old technical consultancy that specializes in product content acquisition and optimization for B2B technical products. Altius has worked on more than 20 million SKUs in that time. With over 250 analysts, including dozens of experienced engineers, Altius has the capacity to rapidly onboard thousands of SKUs for industrial e-commerce sites and product information management (PIM) systems, working either directly with distributors and manufacturers or as a subcontractor for consultants and service providers.

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please contact your Altius sales consultant.
Email vsales@altius-ecom.com or visit
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