



Optimal product data makes it easier to find them on the Internet



ETIM:

A lever for boosting sales

Online shopping has long established itself in the consumer world – and now it's growing in the B2B sector too. The key to success is high-quality product master data.

Distributors selling Siemens' products are doing more and more business in their web shops. But to get the best results, they need high-quality data. That's where ETIM comes in. The tool for transmitting product master data has been successfully launched in a number of Regional Companies, and the list is growing.

Online shopping is convenient – and more and more people are doing it. The reasons are many, from not having to fight downtown crowds to getting a better price than in brick-and-mortar shops. Growth in online shopping is even having an impact on cities. Across the United States, the effects are already showing as more and more malls close their doors. But online shopping isn't just the realm of consumer shopping: the B2B sector is feeling the impact too.

To start with, a review of how people acquire Siemens' products: While Siemens itself generally takes care of the large and complex projects – like outfitting a new factory, or supplying components for an airport – distributors are the source to fulfill day-to-day needs. For them, the step into the online world can be quite profitable: those who have web shops report double-digit growth. Naturally, when distributors sell more Siemens products, it's a win-win situation for all stakeholders. But what does it take to make or break a sale? One of the primary factors is thorough product information.

To be found and bought

The journey starts with the search engine – something we all know from our own online shopping habits. The search terms have to be formulated so that they ideally lead to a Siemens product. "That requires high-quality data and

descriptions,” comments Sales Process Manager Thomas Otto-Kosanke. Once the user clicks on the distributor’s website, the need for complete and accurate information continues. “In an ideal situation, the descriptions educate customers about our products, present applications examples and supply additional information,” continues Otto-Kosanke. That kind of information helps garner trust: in a study published by consultancy group KPMG, consumers report trusting companies more that educate their customers about their products.

Providing effective search engine terms and accurate information – sounds easy enough. But with a distributor landscape in which a number of systems for compiling shop information are in use, it has proven to be quite a task. “For that reason, systems to supply data are gaining a foothold in many markets. The one we are most excited about is ETIM,” says Otto-Kosanke.

For Europe and beyond

ETIM stands for European Technical Information Model – but despite the name, it is gaining traction in other parts of the world too. ETIM was created for manufacturers of electrotechnical products to supply their product master data to distributors. eCI@ss and IDEA are other standards that work similarly. With ETIM, all relevant product characteristics are supplied in a uniform format. The distributors then use the data to portray the products in their respective web shops – as well as in traditional printed catalogues. “Naturally, the success of ETIM depends on the adoption by as many distributors as possible,” says Otto-Kosanke. To date, the Siemens sales organizations in Austria, Belgium, Finland, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland have been using ETIM to transmit data to their distributors.

“Without a product information system like ETIM, data has to be supplied in a number of different formats. That takes a lot of time and leads to a repetition of tasks. Plus, the probability of errors is also higher,” sums up Otto-Kosanke.

A multilingual genie

The sales teams in the countries where ETIM is in use are impressed. For one, it presents uniform information in a number of languages. With it, they can also more quickly communicate product master data in the market. If changes are made, it takes just a few mouse clicks to issue updates. “That means we can get the word out about innovations more quickly,” comments Mats Radhammer from Sweden. Consistent information makes it easier for customers to find products. The data can also be used in web shops that offer a comparison function. ETIM also transmits product videos, application examples and – essential for cross-selling – information on related products.

In the Regional Companies where ETIM is in use, nobody is looking back now. Sven Schröder from Germany: “Business processes between Siemens, the distributors and the end customers have become so efficient with the introduction of ETIM. It’s hard to imagine how we managed before.”

Winners all around

ETIM is off to a good start, though its continued success depends on adoption in further countries. Preparations are now underway to introduce the tool in the Czech Republic, Denmark, Norway and the UK. The advantages of accurate and complete information are many. For starters, it means customers get what they need and have fewer reasons to return an item. Also, by selling everyday products in online shops, distributors’ staff is freed up to concentrate on more value adding aspects like consulting. For the sales organizations in the Regional Companies, ETIM is a lever for realizing sales goals.

In the end, it boils down to offering end customers the information they need to make the decision for a Siemens product. Not only does Siemens position itself to sell more products, the company also ensures that distributors stay successful – and that they don’t end up taking the same route as malls in America.

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