



Product Data Management

An InfoBlueprint Service

Also available: Supplier Data Management, Customer Data Management, Employee Data Management, Intermediary Data Management and Party Data Management.

In the Retail industry in recent years, the desire to collaborate on initiatives such as electronic trading has grown in response to the ongoing quest for greater efficiencies across supply chains. Whilst there are many highly capable technology options available to support this, there is an often overlooked but critical element that contributes to the success, or failure, of such initiatives: *product data*.

Many organisations have now realised that successful collaboration is directly dependent on the state of the data describing traded goods: product names, categories, dimensions and packaging configurations must all be aligned and synchronised across supply chains in order to eliminate costly rework and to help minimise situations such as product unavailability. Furthermore, smart companies in this sector now know that the achievement of Internal Data Alignment (IDA) and the success of industry initiatives such as the GS1 Product Data Catalogue (PDC.za), are reliant on a foundation of *high quality and reliable product data*.

What's Needed to Improve Product Data - Permanently?

Some companies have started to investigate the implementation of "Master Data Management" (MDM) for product data and Product Information Masters (PIM), and this has placed renewed interest on the achievement - and sustainment - of reliable product information. However, it is now well understood that the success of an MDM or PIM programme is directly dependent on the quality of the data underpinning it, and so the typical first step is to initiate "database clean-up" exercises – tasks easier said than done, as many have come to realise. In order to "clean" a database, there are four critical elements necessary to support such a project. These are:

- The ability to truly understand and objectively quantify the extent of data problems, and hence the expected effort and costs involved
- Effective and productive automation of data cleansing
- Reliable reference data to validate against and use for enrichment purposes
- A structured methodology, or roadmap, to guide the execution of the data clean-up, and that helps to identify the cause and effect chain of data problems in order to prevent them from re-occurring and hence re-contamination your product data

Most organisations have none of these in place and resort to time-consuming manual methods, often based on MS Excel, MS Access or SQL coding to try to fix the data problems. Whilst these are effective tools designed for their specific purpose, they are unsuited to data cleansing exercises: these methods are error prone, unproductive and difficult to control, as most clean-ups require many iterations and a solid review process. Unfortunately, by the time such projects have finished, it's often time to start a new clean-up, with many of the repairs already out of date!

The Solution

InfoBlueprint has developed a unique Product Data Management service for South African manufacturers, suppliers and retailers to help them to rapidly achieve - and then sustain - high quality and reliable product information to support critical business drivers, such as a PDC.za implementation programme. We have addressed all four of the above elements as follows:

- Data Profiling and Data Quality Scorecards: **InfoBlueprint** has developed efficient methods to assess and present the state of product information, via meaningful Data Quality Metrics and Dashboards that can help quantify data problems, establish baseline measures, and monitor data quality levels and improvements on an ongoing basis.
- Automation: **InfoBlueprint** has partnered with leading data quality software vendors, and negotiated innovative rental schemes for tools that automate data scrubbing and facilitate a well-managed data cleansing, validation and enrichment process. Importantly, these tools also allow for the implementation of proper review processes and data quality controls.
- Reference Data: **InfoBlueprint** has access to dictionaries of common generic product data attributes, and will build a comprehensive and managed reference database of all your product specific attributes. This allows us to perform reliable validation of your data against trusted and well-managed reference sets, as well as valuable data enrichment as and where necessary.
- Methodology: **InfoBlueprint** has developed an effective and proven methodology which not only guides and assists any product data clean-up exercise, but also ensures that once the data clean-up is complete, it never has to be repeated because of the ongoing preventive measures that we help you to put into place.

The combination of these four elements of Product Data Management into a single, one-stop solution delivered by highly skilled and experienced professionals, makes for a unique and powerful data quality service designed to rapidly elevate your company's competitive advantage through permanently reliable product data.

Let **InfoBlueprint** help you to take control of your product data, through our effective Product Data Management programmes. Contact us at info@infoblueprint.co.za or on telephone number 021 551 2410.