A CMO's guide to e-commerce success with PIM

How to create better purchasing experiences for your customers – much faster

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Meet Lisa. She's the CMO in a medium-sized wholesaler, which we will call Acme Inc. Acme Inc. is growing – both its production range and its global presence. Today, the company sells products in four countries and new markets are being added on an ongoing basis.

All of this means that Lisa is busy. She already had more than enough tasks to carry out during her working day, and now the pressure has increased, because Acme Inc. has recently – after a long period of preparatory work – introduced a new sales channel in the form of an online store.

Now Lisa has one more channel to manage, and she has a feeling that she could spend her entire day on just e-com merce and still not achieve her goal.

She needs a system that can provide her with full con trol of all of the product information that she needs to be able to provide the customer with the correct purcha sing experience – and to meet her boss's requirements on quickly getting the new products to market and adapting the existing products.

This is why in this guide, we will show how Lisa can carry out her work faster, better and with greater satisfaction for herself and her boss by using a Product Information Management system* (PIM system), which is closely inte grated with the company's e-commerce platform.

In this context, close integration means that Lisa will be able to publish all of the product information, which is managed via the PIM system, directly on the online store – and on all of the other sales channels at the same time. Using PIM, she can maintain all kinds of product informa tion from a single location.

*The specific PIM system functions that this guide refers to, come from Perfion PIM. This means that it is not certain that the stated benefits will be achieved using other PIM systems.

Faster to market

Faster to market

In recent years, there has been one factor in particular, which has affected Lisa's daily work. Everything must be faster. The products must move faster, from conception to introduction to the market, and Lisa and her colleagues must be able to support this with the necessary marketing efforts at a faster speed. For example, previously Acme Inc. published one large catalog every year, but this quickly became obsolete in relation to the changes to the products and to the customers' requirements. Therefore, the publication frequency has been raised to four times a year.

The decision to start e-commerce is interlinked with the same trend. Through the online store, Acme Inc. can always have an updated presentation of the products available online, and it becomes easy for the customer to carry out self-service as efficiently as possible.

For Lisa, the major challenge is meeting the management's requirement on speed in relation to the marketing of new products on the online store, while at the same time having to deliver a good purchasing experience. She knows that the customers expect to be able to quickly find the information that they need – from major product photographs, to technical specifications, to the current inventory status – but there is a great amount of work involved in acquiring the information, which today is spread across several systems in the company.

How a pim system can help
With a Product Information Management system, Lisa intermediately has a tool that provides her with a number of new options. The PIM system gathers the product information in a singe central system and this becomes "a single source of truth" in relation to the use of product information in all of the marketing and sales channels.

Where previously Lisa had to wait until the products were released for marketing – typically delayed in relation to the launch plan – now she can begin her work much earlier on in the process.

Because the product department and marketing department's work is based on the PIM system, Lisa can begin to create marketing materials at the same time as the product department is finalizing the final details. She can create the product on the online store and make it ready for publication, even though as yet there are no translations, product photographs etc., or even though the product has not yet been registered in the ERP system.

Once everyone has delivered the information that is necessary for publication, it will be stated in the system that the product is "ready for the online store", and so the product can be published on the online store directly from the PIM system.

Continued...

How a pim system can help (continued)

The close integration between the e-commerce platform and the PIM system is also a great advantage when it is necessary to make changes to the products. Rather than having to go into the online store and correcting the information, for example the uploading of a new image, Lisa simply has to upload the image in the PIM system. The new image will then be automatically distributed among all of the other relevant channels, so for example, the product sheet will also show the new image.

Using a PIM system, Lisa optimizes the time she must spend on the basic processing of product information, so that she is free instead to focus on devising new marketing initiatives.

Benefits:
- More efficient product launches with flexible process rather than rigid workflows
- Fast creation and changing of information through close integration between the PIM and e-commerce

Easily access to new markets

Easily access to new markets

If there is anything that can make marketing more complex, it is to move from marketing in a single country, to being able to conquer new markets in several languages.

This is precisely the current challenge that Acme Inc. and Lisa face. In the last few years, Acme Inc. has expanded into another three countries, and part of the strategy is that this expansion shall continue.

E-commerce makes it possible to reach a global market with far less effort than if Acme Inc. had been forced to have large, local sales representations in all of the countries. However, global e-commerce is also challenging. Language, currency, tariffs, delivery options, etc. – all help to place requirements on what the e-commerce platform must be able to support.

For Lisa, it is especially about ensuring that the products are presented correctly in all of the languages. Ensuring that all of the necessary product information is translated can be a major task, above all when changes have to be made, which means Lisa faces comprehensive work in getting all of the language versions corrected.

How a pim system can help
A PIM system means it is much easier to create and manage language versions.

Because importing and exporting data from a PIM system is simple, the translation of texts is just a task like many others that must be done before the product is ready for publishing. The translation agency can easily be integrated into the workflow, since the texts are easily exported in a format that the translation agency can work with, and the texts can subsequently be imported into the correct locations in the PIM system.

The entire task of pasting the texts into the correct locations in a given e-commerce platform is thereby eliminated, because the whole thing is managed by the PIM system. In one go, a huge amount of administration is eliminated, which would otherwise have been bound up with translation.

It is easy to add a new language version, so even though global marketing continues to be a complex task, the actual management of the product information across the markets and languages is no longer a barrier.

Benefits:
- External translators deliver directly to the system for a more efficient workflow
- New language layers are easily added

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Uniform branding
across channels

Uniform branding across channels

One of Lisa's most important tasks is to ensure that the Acme Inc. brand is clearly expressed on all of the channels, and that potential customers are presented with a uniform brand regardless of whether they look in the Acme Ltd. catalog, come across an update on social media or visit the online store.

It is generally a challenge to maintain a uniform layout across marketing and sales channels, because over time, different versions of special offer material, product sheets and similar material arise, which are spread across different systems.

With regard to the actual online store, Lisa is frustrated when the products are not presented with uniform images, or when some products have incomplete product information.

It results in an unprofessional look, and even worse – the missing product information may cause potential customers to go elsewhere.

How a PIM system can help
When the product information on an online store appears non-uniform or incomplete, it is often because it can be difficult if you have to manually have an overview and manually manage all of the products as you try to present them uniformly.

Using a central system to manage the product information in the form of a PIM system, Lisa has the optimal conditions to ensure a strong and uniform look across channels.

The system automatically scales images to the correct size, and she has the option of inserting hi-res images, she can ensure that all of the units of measurements are stated in the same way, and above all, it becomes easy to ensure that all of the products are updated with the correct text.

This is mainly because of the PIM system's functionality in relation to inheriting information. By updating information on a category, it is possible to ensure that all of the products under this category are immediately updated with the same information.

Automating the process eliminates errors that are otherwise inevitable when you manually maintain the data, which is spread across different systems. It means that Lisa can be quite sure that the product data that Acme Inc. publishes on the online store is always valid and updated.

How a pim system can help (continued)
The PIM system does not just help Lisa with the online store, it also ensures uniformity across all of the channels. Now the description of the products is the same in the website, online store, catalog, etc. By using the PIM system's layout templates, Lisa can easily ensure that it is always the same logo, font and correct images that are displayed across marketing and sales materials.

Benefits:
- Central management ensures a uniform look across channels
- Automation eliminates manual errors

The best possible
purchasing experience

The best possible purchasing experience

From a marketing perspective, the aim is to optimize the online store as much as possible, so that the new sales channel delivers the budgeted results. The customer must be able to easily find what he is looking for, and be able to find the answers to all of the questions that are standing in the way of a purchase.

There are many levers that can be pulled to achieve the goal, but the management of product information is one of the most important, because it is the basis for creating a cohesive product presentation across product categories, languages and several other dimensions.

Uniformity in product information is also important in relation to establishing good product categories and a well-functioning search function, which is crucial for the user experience.

How a pim system can help
Using a PIM system, Lisa and her colleagues gain precisely control of the product information that they need to be able to provide the customers with a great purchasing experience in the online store.

It is easy for Lisa to create product categories and structures in the PIM system, which are reflected directly on the online store, and which makes sense to the customers, when they navigate around the online store. In this way she is freed from the structure in the ERP system, which after all, has been developed on the basis of the company's needs and not the customers' needs.

By having perfect product data as the working foundation, Lisa can ensure that the customers are presented with all of the relevant products when they carry out refined searches, for example when they apply product filters based on size, color, technical specification, category or other parameters.

In the same way, Acme Inc. now avoids specific products failing to show up in a search because the text that the customers use to carry out the search has not been published with these products.

The PIM system print module also provides the customers with the option of downloading individually adapted PDF documents with information about the products that they are interested in. The documents are based on templates built up in the PIM system, so that they always have a uniform look and are always "on brand".

When you want the customers to service themselves on an online store, you are completely dependent on the information on which the customers base their purchases being actually valid and updated. Otherwise, the customers will lose confidence in the online store, and without confidence, they will not purchase anything.

How a pim system can help (continued)
The central management of product information that a PIM system provides is therefore a very fundamental condition for ensuring that Lisa and her colleagues in marketing can create the purchasing experience that transforms visitors into customers.

And above all, she can do it much faster that she would otherwise be able to do, because the management of

Benefits:
- Control of product data means that the purchasing experience can be optimized
- Search and refined searches based on valid data increases sales
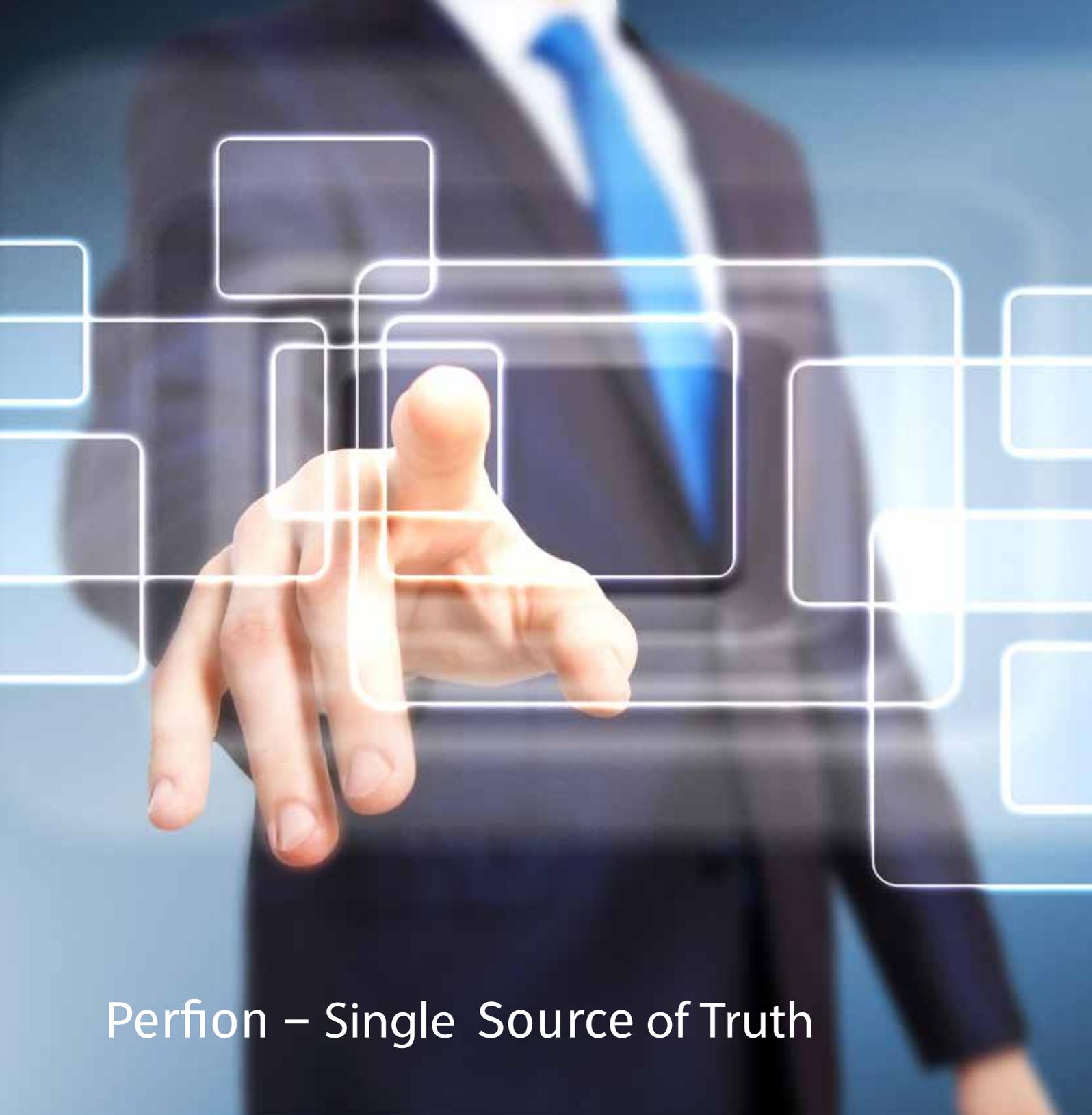
Perfion – Single Source of Truth

Perfion PIM has been developed for businesses that communicate in many channels and in several languages and which have a complex product structure with a lot of product data.

With Perfion, you have one single source for all of your texts, technical data, files, images, videos, etc. It gives you full control of all of the product data on all of the sales and marketing platforms.

As the world's only 100 % standard solution for Product Information Management, Perfion PIM gives you the basis to optimize your business's processes so you can lower time-to-market, win new markets, and always deliver the information your customers need.

Perfion's open API makes it easy to integrate the solution with the IT systems you use today – everything from your ERP system to InDesign to your Office package. Perfion also has standard integration for several e-commerce platforms, which makes it easy to update your website, directly in Perfion PIM.