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How Technology Can Help You Create A Winning Product Content Strategy in 2022



Product content has always been key to standing out on the very cluttered, very competitive digital shelf.

> 70% of consumers say plentiful product page details are critical to their shopping. Brands and retailers must deliver engaging, relevant product experiences to earn their business.

Consumers expect an accurate brand experience during their multi-channel, non-linear shopping journeys. But, consistency in data quality is challenging to maintain when digital content and rich media are being parceled out to dozens of retailers and selling platforms. Siloed teams and manual entry don't help either.

For years, product information management (PIM) and product content management (PCM) systems have lessened these ails and helped brands sell better. The next evolutionary phase in this lifecycle is product experience management (PXM), which ensures the content is optimized for a smooth omnichannel experience.

What is Product Content Management (PCM)?

Product content management is a single source of truth for product attribute details, specifications, images, videos, and other brand content.

Content comes from many sources across an organization, whether its an ERP, MDM, Excel sheets – it's likely there's data across your product, shipping, marketing and sales teams. A PCM platform helps centralize this information so team members can access, edit, and update it in real time and publish it to the relevant sales channel.

When it works well, PCM streamlines processes to gather product data and deliver it to your sales channels. It maintains accuracy of your product information, speeds time to market, and creates a better customer experience. A true PCM collects and connects "into one place all of the data and information using either a standalone technology or is layered on top of a company's existing technology."

1. Control product data.

Having a central repository for all your product information, descriptions, images, and other rich media assets is critical. Without a central source of information, your team will spend wasted hours tracking it down or stakeholders across your organization will recreate multiple versions and potentially confuse your customers.

2. Publish products.

Once you have a complete record of your product information and the content it takes to sell it online, you need it up everywhere a shopper is looking for it. In addition to working with distributors and retailers to provide complete item set-ups for their catalogs, you need a system that will deliver this content to search engines, review sites, and social media channels.

3. Manage product workflows.

Is there a trackable, repeatable way to gather, deliver, and then measure the success of this product information across multiple teams? Having workflows that can track processes and automate the hand off to teams across your organization and outside stakeholders – including creative agencies, resellers, translation services – is critical to arriving at a trusted repeatable process for getting products to market on the digital shelf.

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What is Product Information Management (PIM)?

PIM is a place to store product information brands and retailers need to sell across the digital ecosystem.

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What is Product Experience Management (PXM)?

PXM takes content a step further than PCM and places the entire focus on the consumer's product and brand experience. It's the method "brands use to deliver the right content, when and where it is needed, to drive sales, build loyalty, and grow market share."

Competitive brands require PXM.

> As Forrester reports, PXM is "the proverbial workbench for product managers and merchandisers to enrich content and create product experiences."

That's because PXM does more than centralize and publish content. Using actionable analytics, brands get the data they need to optimize product content for each sales channel and iterate with market changes.

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PXM vs. PCM vs. PIM

PCM and PIM are quite comparable and both mainly exist to benefit internal workflow.

The main difference is that PCM is more robust than PIM, allowing for the storage of images and other rich media. This technology is not enough to be competitive on the digital shelf.

A PXM system adds additional value and automation by taking into account the feedback from all of the channels that your content lives on. The underlying principle is that it's not enough to simply organize the content and deliver it, in order to be successful you must also customize the content for every channel you sell on. Can you in turn build on that version of your content and learn from the customer seeing it? FOr example, are you acting on changes on Walmart.com and new shopper requirements, adjusting your content, updating it and continuing to learn in a closed-loop of content creation, publish, learn, optimized, update.

> As Salsify co-founder Rob Gonzalez explains, "The goal of product experience management is not to create one internal version of a product that all your systems can rely on. It's to create a thousand optimized versions of the product for the consumers. There's a consumer that shops on Walmart that's probably different than the consumer that shops on Amazon. And those experiences should be different. Product experience management breaks from the tradition of reliability and instead of being an internally focused process management software, it's an externally focused marketing software."

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How to Develop a Winning Product Content Strategy

Your product content strategy is the most fundamental way to sell. Without a solid foundation, all of your merchandising, advertising, and sales efforts will fall flat. Consumers use the product content they find on a search result and product page to decide whether to buy. Ensuring it's up-to-date, accurate, and compelling is critical to your success.

1. Remember the consumer is in charge.

Tailor your message to their expectations and design product content that answers their questions along the shopping journey. For example, is there an image that can address common questions about ingredients or materials? Do you call that information out in bullets on the product description as well. Are you including a sizing chart or image that shows shoppers the scale of your product? Does your title have explicit page size information, so at a glance shoppers know if they are getting one item or several? Is there a video that would help shoppers after they purchase? If you have a complex use case or install process, a short video is a great way to build shopper confidence and ensure they use your product after purchasing.

2. If you haven't already, consider investing in product content technology that can lay on top of your existing structure.

This method is generally the most cost-effective and immediate way to begin effectual change on your entire product catalog. For example, does the investment you are considering integrate well with your ecommerce platform or brand website CMS? Will it work well with your existing MDM or ERP system? Choose a system that's flexible enough to integrate with the other software your team already relies on.

3. Build a case to get the required funding.

Solid product content boosts discoverability, search rankings, traffic, and product page conversion, leading to more revenue. Quicker speed to market means more exposure and incremental revenue. To get started, choose a small set of SKUs or one product category to test and gather results to show your business. Many brands see 10%-15% improvement of product page conversion rate when adding more content to a page. What impact would that improvement have on your sales? Measure the change in sales and sales rank after a week of more content and share the results with your team.

4. Create content that speaks directly to your shopper.

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Shoppers want to see themselves in your product information and feel understood by a brand. This includes using lifestyle images that are realistic and specific to your buyers. Having plentiful reviews is a sign brands understand consumer needs, according to 30% of shoppers. In fact consumers expect at least 100 reviews. Personalization, such as can go along way. For example, remembering purchase history is a sign brands understand consumer needs according to 15% of shoppers.

5. Continue improving.

The art of product content is ongoing. There is no set and forget mentality here if your brand wants to win the sale. The most sophisticated brands are using automation to revisit product content on a daily basis.

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How Technology Can Will Help Your Product Content Strategy

Whether it's a PIM, PCM, or PXM system that your organization invests in, the goal is adding automation and ease of access to a traditionally manual process. In order to get the most out of your investment, keep these four critical outcomes in mind.

1. Stay consistent across all brand or company channels.

Your brand's digital footprint is what consumers use to recognize you and decide what to buy. Invest in software that can help you centralize your content and make it accessible to your salesforce, distributors and retailers to avoid errors and inconsistent messaging in the marketplace.

2. Update existing product content with ease.

Using a system with automation and tracking, enables your team to have visibility into when content was updated, where it lives, and the process it takes to update that system. Depending on the level of complexity and reach of your product catalog, consider a technology that can automate retailer's requirements and provide you feedback on product and category performance across your digital shelf.

3. Manage scale within a centralized system.

As your business grows, so does the complexity of your product catalog and the number of channels you sell on. It's important to invest in a technology that can support the number of products you have, across multiple channels with enough depth on the product attributes and digital assets to serve your business needs.

4. Save time and resources.

One initial win many companies see after investing in the right technology is time and money saved. Look to a company's implementation time and understand which manual processes you'll be replacing – is your data automatically transformed, will automatic endpoint validation reduce the number of approvals? – and track the time saved so you can share those wins back with the business.

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How Brands Use PXM Today

ShurTech, the maker of Duck Tape®, was looking for ways to improve their digital shelf strategy in 2018 and took the following steps:

1. Develop a single source of truth.

As ecommerce continues its rapid dominance, brand manufacturers must rid themselves of disparate systems and spreadsheets housing their product information. The digital shelf requires the ability to quickly deliver product information.

For ShurTech, a single source of product content truth was needed across the organization. Divisions did not speak the same language to customers, which became an unnecessary roadblock to driving sales and maintaining unified global branding.

2. Streamline processes across teams.

Technology solutions can only make a widespread impact if adoption is a priority and teams utilize that technology to drive results.

Determine which teams are needed to create product experiences that will resonate with consumers.

For some brand manufacturers, the Product Management team may be reasonable for providing ecommerce teams with the most up-to-date product information. For others, it may be a team dedicated to digital content creation.

Take an honest assessment about what is working, what can be improved, and where the responsibility lies. Developing processes that match your technology will allow brand teams to be more efficient and focused on building upon the single source of truth to differentiate product experiences on a particular retailer.

3. Optimize top SKUs on priority channels.

> The end game of the digital shelf is winning your category and staying ahead of competitors.

Accomplishing this requires continual optimization and pinpointing content needs that will make your brand stand out.

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ShurTech's ecommerce team saw an opportunity to improve their top 70 SKUs on Amazon by identifying products that required stronger experiences to win the buy box. The team was able to communicate exactly what their product management team needed update on specific Amazon product pages fast. Shurtech saw a sales rank improvement of 15% for those products in just 4 months.

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Get the Most Out of Your Product Content Strategy

Consumers want more content than ever – everywhere they shop. Lever PXM to create a true omni-channel experience shoppers with robust product descriptions, images, and multimedia at every point of sale.

When we conducted our annual Consumer Research Report survey in 2016, an average of 3 images per product was the norm, and product page video content was not expected at all. Three years later, shoppers expect at least 6 images and 2 videos with shoppers aged 18-24 and 35-44 expecting 8 images and 4-5 videos.

> Maximizing rich content, A+ content, or enhanced content opportunities – however it's referred – immerses consumers in your brand and product story.

Also, the added information and media answers customer questions, which leads to a smoother transaction.

Telling a more complete, cohesive, and consistent story wherever the consumer might encounter your product by using PXM is where brands can win more of the $517 billion in U.S. online sales. Consumer online shopping preferences will continue to change in rapid fashion. 94% of consumers either abandon a site or just give up if they can't find the information they need. Create experiences with consumers are looking for to avoid losing their attention, and loyalty.

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