

Wasco Becomes an Agile, Omnichannel Wholesale Business with Informatica MDM - Product 360



“Product information management gives us an end-to-end, transparent process across the length of the product information supply chain”

- Jos Rust, Manager
Datamanagement

Wasco is a leading wholesaler of central heating and plumbing products and services in the Netherlands. The company’s product portfolio spans more than 450,000 products, and it operates more than 30 stores and three distribution warehouses (including a new 20,000 square meter facility). Wasco is a subsidiary of Wolseley, the world’s largest distributor and supplier within the engineering sector.

Wasco’s market is moving fast. The technical nature of modern heating and plumbing products means that engineers possess less product knowledge than they did in the past, and rely on their wholesaler for purchase advice. While Wasco’s customers want customized offers based on their personal preferences, this also opens an opportunity to cross-sell and up-sell complementary heating and plumbing products—and increase brand loyalty.

Buying patterns and customer behaviour are changing too. In the past, engineers would typically have a Wasco product catalog tucked away inside their van. Now they increasingly

rely on technology—especially mobile devices—to browse items on the Web and order them online prior to starting work on a project. They want Wasco to be present in every channel they use, delivering that same consistent service experience, whether they are buying online, in a Wasco retail outlet or over the phone.

Product information was the main obstacle to delivering this agile, omnichannel service experience. Data was resided in different silos, including spreadsheets, customer relationship management (CRM), eCommerce and enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems. Separate product information repositories meant there were different descriptions of the same product, so one channel couldn’t learn from interactions happening in another channel.

Assortments were expanding too: 10 years ago Wasco had 60,000 products online, now it was 450,000. Assortments and products change on a daily basis. Wasco also struggled to manage the data arriving from suppliers. When a new product was due for launch, for example, it sometimes

WASCO

Overview:

Wasco is one of the leading wholesaler suppliers of central heating, spare parts and plumbing products and services in the Netherlands.

Business & Technology Challenges:

- Customers moving away from in-store/ catalog purchases to online channel
- Separate product information repositories meant there were different descriptions of the same product
- Manage SKU growth and supplier onboarding more efficiently
- Make it easier for customers to find the right data on an assortment and compare one product against another

Solution:

- Informatica MDM – Product 360 transforms how product information is accurately acquired, managed and published across all channels
- Ensures the right product information is accessible to the right customers exactly when they need it
- Informatica Data Quality provides audit trails for transparency, role-based views of the data and business process management

took weeks to get the right photographs or specifications from the supplier, delaying product launches.

“In the past, we put too much emphasis on assortments, products and price—and not enough on data,” says Jos Rust, Manager Datamanagement within, Wasco. “We had a great E-Commerce site; there just wasn’t any data to feed it! It was like having a car with no engine.”

Customers struggled to find the right data on an assortment and it was very difficult for them to compare one product against another. Five years ago, for example, product information on the website used to include a commercial description, a photograph, the specification and maybe a couple of other items of data. Now customers expect to see everything from video, 360 degree pictures and complementary products, to installation manuals, CAD/BIM content, energy certificates and more.

Product information management acquires, manages and publishes product data across all channels

Wasco has deployed a product information management (PIM) strategy to transform how product information is acquired, managed and published across all channels. PIM enables the company to quickly and easily master and maintain large volumes of supplier data. This includes integrations from Wasco’s own CRM and ERP silos, as well as spreadsheets, images, video and text-based documents from supplying partners.

With PIM, Wasco also has the flexibility to author, maintain and search product data for improved data governance. This central control of data sources and data consumers ensures a consistent data model and streamlines the delivery of accurate data to all channels. “PIM

gives us an end-to-end, transparent process across the length of the product information supply chain,” says Rust.

An engineer searching for a thermostatic heating control, for example, can browse Wasco.nl from their phone, tablet or PC, or receive the same information in-store or over the phone. Whichever channel they use, Wasco ensures they receive accurate, complete product information so they can make an informed purchase. Products, such as pumps, wiring connections or radiators can also be offered to complement the order and increase the value of the sale. When Wasco sales representatives are meeting with high-value customers, they too can use that unified view of product data for selling.

As part of the PIM strategy, Wasco has created a ‘data department’ to change the way the company thinks about, and acts upon, data. “One of our biggest obstacles has been the sales-driven organizational structure,” says Jos Rust., Wasco. “Our Data Department sits above the Sales, E-Commerce and Marketing teams, making sure the right product information is accessible to the right customers exactly when they need it.”

Wasco realizes the true potential of product information

Wasco anticipates that this omnichannel wholesale strategy will transform the business in the following ways:

- **Grow revenues.** By giving customers rich product information when and how they need it, Wasco will be able to achieve higher conversion rates, higher margins, grow its customer base and increase sales per customer. For example, Wasco can develop new product groups and market these in a bundle to customers.

Benefits:

- Reduces time to market for new SKUs—from weeks to minutes in some cases
- Grows revenues through higher conversion rates and margins; increasing number of customers
- Creates a more rewarding and intimate Wasco brand experience, for improved brand loyalty
- Helps teams collaborative easily on lead generation, cross-sell and up-sell campaigns
- Wasco will be able to adapt faster to the product information provided by suppliers, give feedback to suppliers on the data, and prevent ‘back and forth’ requests for supplier information to be provided. The company expects to reduce the time needed to source and upload supplier data from weeks to minutes.
- Streamlines supplier management, via automated onboarding and data uploading
- Accelerates entry into new markets

Inside the Solution:

- Informatica MDM – Product 360
- Informatica Data Quality

- **Reduce time to market for new SKUs.** Wasco will be able to adapt faster to the product information provided by suppliers, give feedback to suppliers on the data, and prevent ‘back and forth’ requests for supplier information to be provided. The company expects to reduce the time needed to source and upload supplier data from weeks to minutes.
- **Increase brand loyalty.** High quality information creates a more rewarding and intimate Wasco brand experience. The customer service agents, for example, will share a complete view of each customer’s historical and current purchase situation. Wasco’s marketing and sales teams will also be able to collaborative more effectively on lead generation, cross-sell and up-sell campaigns.

- **Streamline supplier management.**

Wasco will achieve cost savings through the introduction of an automated, self-service supplier portal. Suppliers can quickly be onboarded, following which they can upload their assortment information to the PIM portal, where it can be checked and edited against data quality rules.

- **Accelerate entry into new markets.**

Wasco is initially concentrating on the PIM deployment in the Netherlands and Belgium. However, the company will use one common data model, and reuse similar integration and processes, to launch the PIM strategy within its Swiss sister company Tobler and other businesses.

The role of Informatica Informatica

Informatica MDM - Product 360 and Informatica Data Quality are the engine of this PIM implementation. Product 360 supports Wasco's end-to-end PIM strategy, across supplier onboarding, authoring and omnichannel publication. The solution automates the management of different data formats from disparate sources. A collaborative portal enables Wasco's suppliers and other stakeholders to contribute to accurate, complete product data. And Product 360 introduces processes to identify data inconsistencies and assign tasks between participants.

One of the particular features of Product 360 that impresses the Wasco team is the Digital Asset Management (DAM). It delivers centralized, automated management of unstructured multimedia objects such as images, graphics and video. "YouTube is one of our most successful search engines," says Rust. "Digital Asset Management means we can manage media assets in a fraction of the time it took previously—it all adds up to timelier product information for our customers."

Informatica Data Quality underpins Wasco's data stewardship and data governance initiative. It enables the company to quickly and easily create reusable data quality assessment, cleansing, validation and enrichment rules—an important asset for launching the PIM strategy in Wasco's sister company Tobler. A 'Quality Dashboard' also provides the team with a quick overview of data quality and drill-down capability to the channel, category, product or SKU level.

The role of the implementation partner Osudio

Wasco is working with one of Europe's largest e-business specialists and Informatica partner, Osudio to deliver the deployment at both Wasco and Tobler. Among many tasks, workshops

run by Osudio staff employees are used to investigate Wasco and Tobler's business processes. Following these, the specifications are written and validated by both parties.

"Osudio has provided excellent, expert support and knowledge transfer," says Rust. "Their 'over the horizon' understanding of PIM is helping to ensure the implementation at both Wasco and Tobler adopts best practices, it is on time, and it is on budget."

Why Informatica

Prior to choosing Informatica, Wasco shortlisted one other solution - Stibo Systems. Wasco concluded that Informatica's Product 360 was easier to use, offered more usable 'out-of-the-box' PIM functionality and was proven in the marketplace. "Informatica MDM – Product 360 is the most flexible option for anticipating changing market needs," says Rust. "It enables Wasco to be agile and to deliver the customer-centric focus we need to grow as a wholesaler."



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