



Quality Product Content Matters to Increase Ecommerce Sales



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1. Introduction:

Driving traffic, retaining customers, and increasing online sales is a **challenge** that most ecommerce companies face today. These factors are key considerations especially for B2B industrial distributors and B2C companies that have a **broad product offering** with a large number of complex product content.

High-quality **product content** is the **driving factor** of conversion. Right from sourcing to categorizing, merchandising and maintaining detailed product data is necessary for the success of any online business.

A survey found that 42 percent abandoned their ecommerce search because of poor-quality product content. This means that ecommerce companies failed to convert almost half of all customers due to lack of enough product information. B2B ecommerce is **sharply on the rise**, and distributors understand the importance of high-quality product content.

To drive traffic and conversion to your website, and to obtain higher sales rate there are some **methodologies** every industrial distributor and ecommerce company should follow:

- Product Categorization
- Product Data Gathering
- Product Characteristics
- Product Data Normalization
- Merchandising through Product Images and Copy
- Matching the B2C Experience on Technology

With the above methodologies in place, the ecommerce websites can attain more customers and observe significant rise in their online sales.

2. Optimizing ecommerce product data improves conversion:

It is well known that most buyers research on the web before deciding to buy a product, in both the B2C and B2B markets. Shoppers have many questions before buying a product. Some questions may be fairly simple, such as price, color, size, etc. But, for more complicated questions or getting more **product details**, the best web sites provide lots of information.

Many buyers today want to know all the product information that is on the package labels or inserts, including contents, specifications, safe use, how to use or clean the products, the country of origin, green info, etc. By offering information in an **easy and consistent format**, the buyers get answers to all their questions, and feel confident about making an informed purchase. Product manufacturers offer extensive information for your web site – including part lists, warranties, drawings,

complementary products, certifications, contents, safety/nutrition, independent reviews or awards about the products, manufacturer history, etc.



- If your shoppers have all the necessary information they are looking for, they are motivated to buy your products and **increase conversions**.
- Confident shoppers with the right price and delivery options **convert to confident buyers**.

maximum information for each product makes

it possible for the customers to decide if the product is right for them.

3. Increase in ROI:

Improvements to product **taxonomy, attributes, and data** can have significant impact on demand generation and operational productivity of the product data. We typically see:

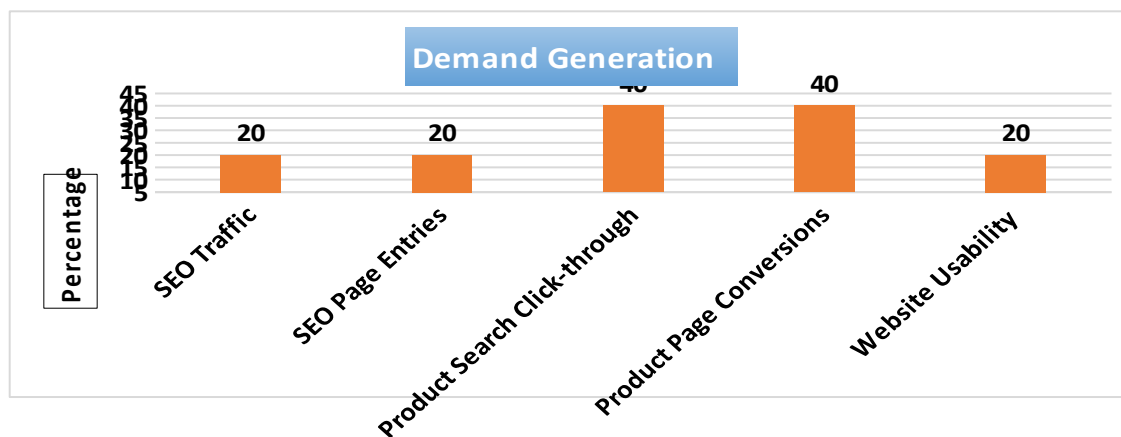
20% increase in SEO traffic

20% increase in SEO page entries

40% increase in product search click-through (CTR)

40% increase in product detail page conversions

20% increase in website usability and customer satisfaction



At Altius, we could not agree more. Research shows that customers **discover ROI in just 3 to 12 months** from product data improvement projects. Customer satisfaction, experience, and trust drive sales. When customers can **easily find** products on your site, and have **trust in the comprehensive content** about the products, they are confident in buying.

4. Ecommerce product data drives SEO:

SEO is driven by many factors, but unique content with **targeted keywords** for each product page is among the most important. You need keywords in the right places, and increasingly semantic keywords, which is other data, messages, attributes or symbols that can mean the same thing as a search keyword.

- Adding **enriched product information** increases the opportunities to embed search terms.
- **Search engine ranking** for the product pages goes up if it contains more useful content than other competitors.



When a person searches for the generic term “bag”, the term “handbag” or an image with the word “bag” in the title tag, or a link to a well-known bag manufacturer are all complimentary terms the search engine uses to **rank your page** as having relevant, or important information for the user. This enables that your page rank climbs up.

In a well-executed SEO campaign, buyers are linked from the search engine **directly to the product page**, bypassing the home pages or pages not relevant to the search terms. Good content embeds the search keywords in the product pages, in the meta tags, URLs, product descriptions, image titles, etc. **Enriched product content** includes:

- Comprehensive **list of attributes** that describe the product
- **Images** that display all sides/angles of a product
- **Collateral information** about the product, such as user manuals, specification sheets, warranty, certifications, contents list, etc.
- **Videos** that show how to use, install, clean, or repair the products
- **Feature lists** that describe how the product improves performance, provides benefit, etc.
- **Links** to helpful content regarding the products

SEO is about providing the most **relevant, comprehensive content** that answers a search query. The effort pays off in **top search ranking** and better informed shoppers, who become confident about buying from your site.

5. Ecommerce Shopping Experience:

Customers want complete and trusted information about products before they decide to buy. Poor quality product data and content destroys customer satisfaction, revenue, and profit for ecommerce sites. Good content, on the other hand, helps shoppers to find, compare, and buy products.



Quality product content is essential for great user experience and increase sales. It prevents abandonment, bad reviews, and poor SEO rankings.

Organized, up-to-date, and accurate data **reduces business costs** with fewer product returns and customer support issues, and eliminates time spent finding and correcting bad data.

To successfully compete with B2C companies online, it is important to make finding products easy and provide consistent product content to your customers. The **fundamentals** of creating high-quality content can be narrowed down to three key areas: **(a) Usability, (b) Content-first approach, and (c) Technology.**

6. B2B & B2C Experience on Usability:

In the context of B2B industrial distribution, good usability is important because the products you sell are often technical and hard to understand. Good usability lets customers navigate easily and find the products they want quickly on your website.

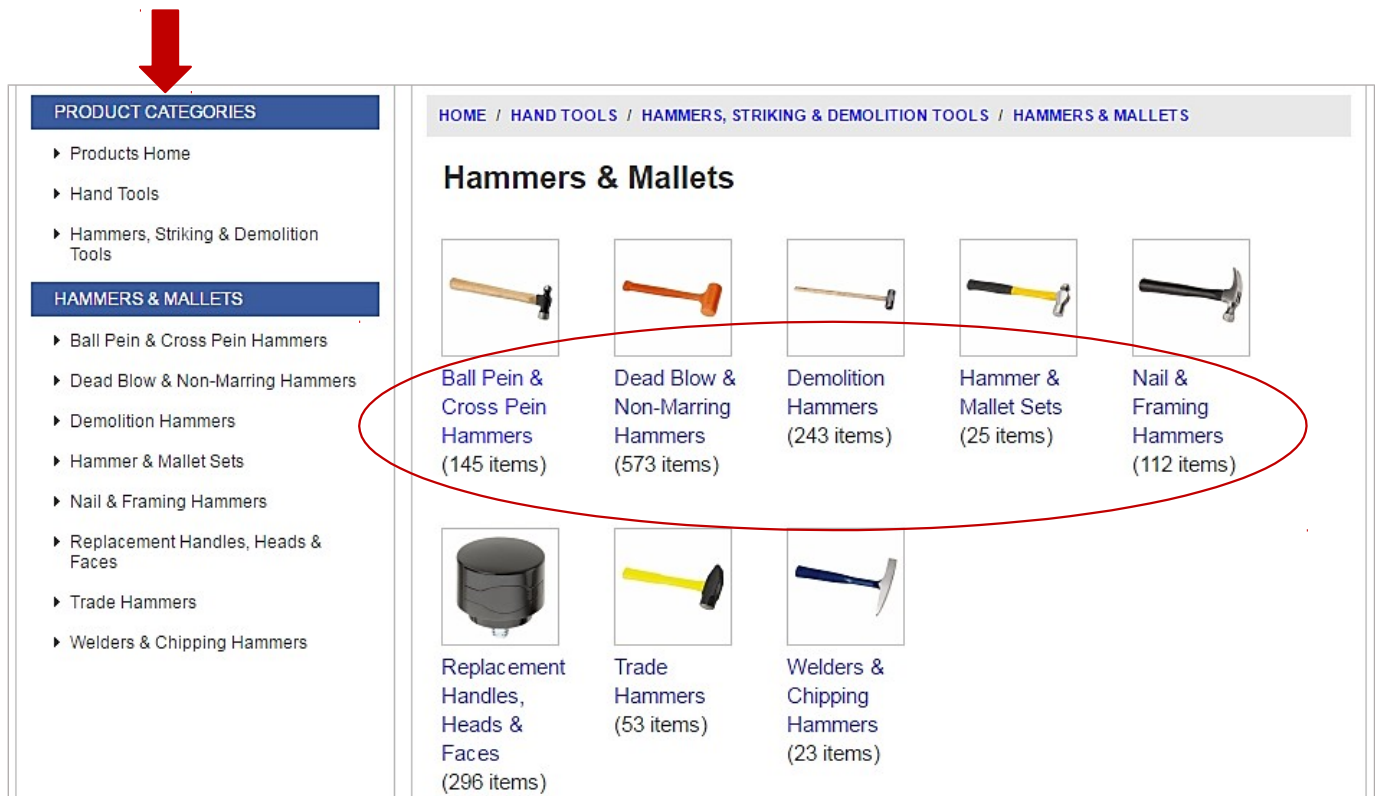
6.1 Product Grouping and Organizing:

The first element of good usability is **easy product discovery**. When a customer shops for a hammer on a B2C website, there are different ways he can discover the various types of hammers, such as Ball Pein hammers, Non-marring hammers, or Demolition hammers.

If the customer is not sure about the exact type of hammer he wants, he might look for hammers and click on the “Hammers” product category on the navigation menu. These **product categories** and how they’re **grouped** are called taxonomy.

Taxonomy is the name used to refer to **how products are organized**. To make sure that the customers find the products they want quickly, the website's product categories must be well organized. In the case of hammers, all the Ball Pein hammers must be grouped together and all the Demolition hammers must be grouped together, and so on.

The image below shows how the various hammers are organized into different groups.



There are several important rules for having **well-organized** product categories on your website:

- **Similar products** must be grouped together
- Grouped **by product type** instead of brand or application
- Separate **categories** for kits, sets, components, and assortments
- **Broad** at the highest level and **specific** at the lowest level
- Product name has to be clear and easy to identify

7. Take a Content-First Approach:

A content-first approach means your website focuses on how **customers interact** with your products online, and how they absorb the information associated with those products. It is not enough to simply put your products online and hope

customers can find and understand them. You must take active steps to ensure that your customers can easily navigate your website, **quickly find** your products, and **understand your product data**.

A content-first approach **builds trust** with your customers and sets the stage for effective use of a PIM system. PIM systems are highly efficient, if they have good product content to manage. Maintaining clear, consistent, accurate, and up-to-date product content enables the **PIM systems** to become a powerful tool for managing quality product content.

B2C companies ensure that customers can find their products easily and understand the product information. Steps are taken to make sure that **key information isn't missing or inconsistent**. When buyers can't find the exact information they need, it creates uncertainty, which might lead them to leave the site and buy from other sites.

In order to maintain high-quality product content that results in significant increase in your ecommerce sales, the following methodologies must be followed:

7.1 Product Categorization:

A best-in-class ecommerce website begins with good product categorization. Product categorization **drives findability**, which means customers can easily find what they want. Most customers begin their search by clicking the available product categories. So, care must be taken to **organize the products** in a clear, logical, and easy to understand structure.

The below image shows how the products are categorized into groups and sub-groups.

Home > Hand & Power Tools

- 3D Printing
 - 3D Printer Parts & Accessories (2)
 - 3D Printers (2)
 - 3D Printing Filament (22)
- Assembly Tools & Accessories
 - Assembly Tool Accessories (3)
 - Assembly Tool Controller Accessories (2)
 - Assembly Tool Controllers (8)
 - Screw Presenter (9)
 - Screw Presenter Rails (11)
- + Combination Tool Kits
- + Conduits & Pipe Benders
- + Crimping Tools
- + Cutting Tools

Hand & Power Tools

From cutting and crimping tools to drilling and grinding tools Hisco has a large selection of tools to get the job done. We carry the top manufacturers including Apex, Excelta, Greenlee and many more.

3D Printing

- 3D Printer Parts & Accessories (2)
- 3D Printers (2)
- 3D Printing Filament (22)

Assembly Tools & Accessories

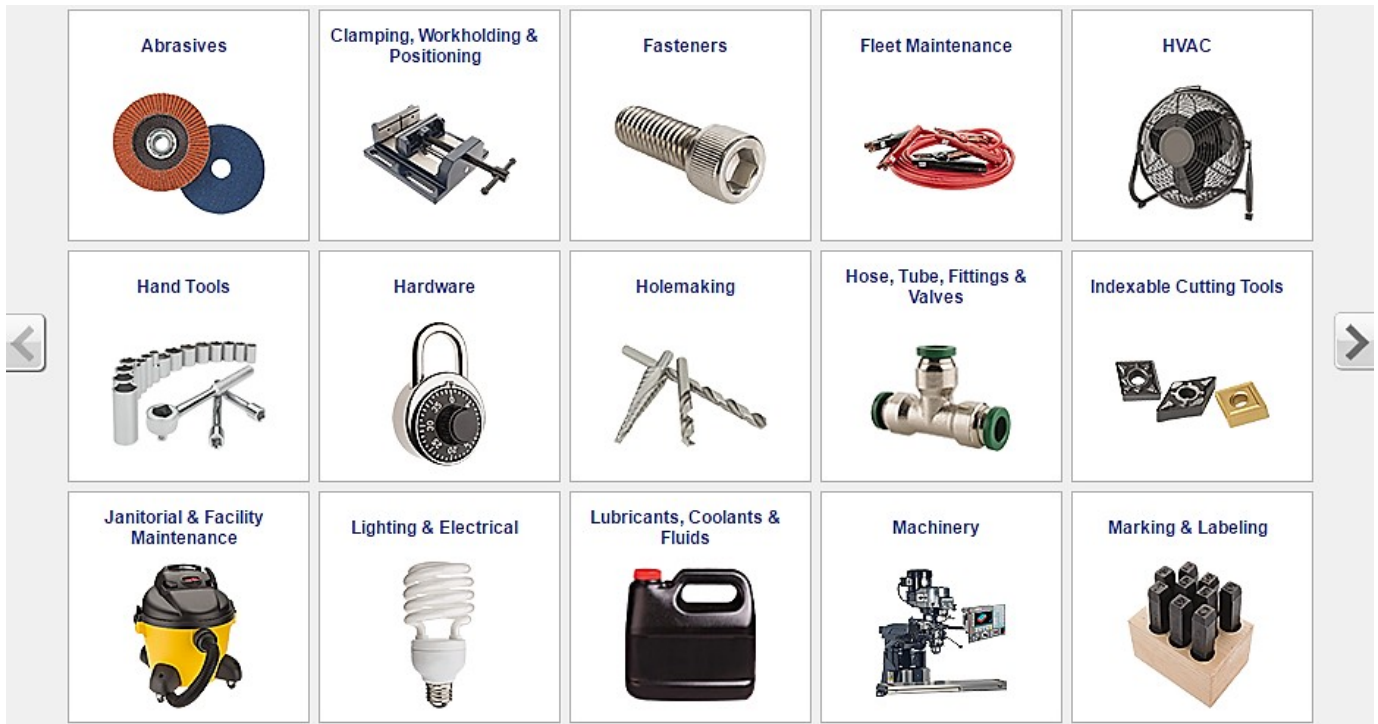
- Assembly Tool Accessories (3)
- Assembly Tool Controller Accessories (2)
- Assembly Tool Controllers (8)
- Screw Presenter (9)
- Screw Presenter Rails (11)

Product categories are the organizational **backbone** of your website. They have a direct effect on SEO, faceted navigation, and on-site keyword search. If this is not done right, the rest of your ecommerce shopping experience suffers.

Organize Products into Distinct Groups or Categories:

Organizing products into distinct groups seems like a basic requirement, but many B2B distributors don't have one in place. When there is no proper product grouping in place, the products might be scattered in different categories where they don't belong. This makes reaching the products difficult, and often times leads the customers to think that the product is not available.

The image shows the customers all the available products as its main grouping.



When products are categorized into the groups that they belong, we can **prevent the products from getting missed**. Also, the customers are provided with access to all the available products and their details without any unnecessary confusions. Customers will feel **more at ease** in reaching the products and the information that they require.

Few best practices to follow when categorizing products are **a) Choose one organizing principle b) Create product filters c) Create landing pages for product categories d) Choose your category names wisely.**

a) Choose One Organizing Principle:

One organizing principle means you've **categorized products** according to one **theme** like material, application, or product type. Research has found that users decide to stay or leave a website within the first 10 seconds. So, you must make it immediately clear to them, where they can find the product they want and its details, in order to keep them on the page.

b) Create Product Filters:

Good product categorization allows for product filters. Filters let customers refine products by characteristics of their choice like size or material. **Faceted navigation using filters** is the **standard** in ecommerce today, and customers expect it when shopping online.

The image shows the different product filters like Product type, Size, and Diameter on the left-side menu, so that customers can filter their product search.

The screenshot displays a product search interface with a left-side menu for filtering and two product listings on the right. A red arrow points to the 'Size' filter in the menu.

Left-side Menu Filters:

- 81732 (1)
- Product Type**
 - Disc Pad Assembly (1)
 - Disc Pad Face Plate (5)
 - Disc Pad Hub (1)
 - Disc Retainer Nut (1)
 - Roloc Shank (1)
- Size**
 - 1/4 in (1)
 - 1/4in (1)
 - 3/8in (1)
 - 3in (1)
 - 7 in (1)
- Diameter**
 - 2-1/2in (1)
 - 3in (1)
 - 4-1/2in (1)
 - 5in (1)
 - 7 in (1)
 - 7in (3)

Product Listing 1:

- Brand Name: 3M
- Series: 80514
- Product Type: Disc Pad Face Plate
- Price: \$28.57 / Plate-PP
- Image: Two black disc pads.
- Product Name: 3M™ Disc Pad Face Plate Ribbed 80515, 7 in Hard Black, 10 per case
- Hisco #: 00051144805150-31196 / MFG #: 00051144805150
- Availability: 0 In Stock
- Estimated to Ship 9/29/2016
- Compare button: Compare

Product Listing 2:

- Brand Name: 3M
- Series: 80515
- Product Type: Disc Pad Face Plate
- Price: \$19.35 / Plate-PP
- Image: A red disc pad.
- Product Name: 3M™ Disc Pad Face Plate Ribbed 81732, 5 in Extra Hard Red, 10 per case
- Hisco #: 00051144817320-31196 / MFG #: 00051144817320
- Availability: 0 In Stock
- Estimated to Ship 9/29/2016
- Compare button: Compare
- Link: [Quantity Pricing](#)

Faceted navigation presents customers with **an easy way to narrow down** from a broad range of products to the exact item they need. This eases decision making and enables the customer to buy the right product with confidence.

Faceted navigation is especially important for B2B distributors that sell products with more characteristics than the average consumer products. For instance, a “shirt” has only a few characteristics essential to make a purchase decision, such as size, color, and material, but **an industrial product** will have many more **specifications** due to its technical nature.

c) Create Landing Pages for Product Categories:

While searching for products, landing pages tell **customers what to do after a keyword search**. Since most customers don't land on a product detail page after a keyword search, they need instructions to understand what to do next and how to get to the product detail page. Statistics show that ecommerce websites see more conversions and online sales when they have dedicated landing pages.

For example, when the customer selects the main category – “Abrasives”, he is directed to a separate landing page, where the various types of abrasives are all grouped together. From that page, he can select the abrasive of his choice, which in turn is directed to landing page of the product.

The image shows the **product search directed** to the landing page of the product - Disc pad holder.

Home > Abrasives > Abrasive Holders & Accessories > Disc & Pad Holders > 3M™ Disc Pad Holder 915, 5 in x 1/8 in x 3/8 in 5/8-11 Internal, 1 per case

3M

3M™ Disc Pad Holder 915, 5 in x 1/8 in x 3/8 in 5/8-11 Internal, 1 per case

Hisco #: 00048011056807-31196 / MFG #: 00048011056807

Unit of Measure: EA

Quantity:

Minimum Order QTY: 1
Item must be ordered in multiples of 1

Our Price: **\$27.39**
Each-EA

Availability: **0 In Stock**
Estimated to Ship 10/4/2016

Product Weight: 38.21 lbs per EA
Country of Origin: United States

CLICK TO ENLARGE

Product Information | Technical Information

Add to Cart

Add to a Repeat Order

d) Choose Your Category Names Wisely:

The way you name your product categories and landing page matters. Product category names must include words your customers normally use to call a product. For example, if the product is industrial waste receptacle, should the product category name be waste bins? or trash cans? or waste receptacles? Through keyword research, we can find how many people search for each of these terms.

The research results show that most people call these products trash cans, with 33,100 average monthly searches. To capture the most organic traffic from search engines, this keyword must appear in the title tags, meta tags, product category names, and landing page headers.

7.2 Product Data Gathering:

As a distributor, you have to gather data from thousands of manufacturers before you onboard products to the web. Before you display product data online, you must first edit it for consistency. The challenge is to transform product data, so it looks like it came from only one manufacturer.

After gathering data from different manufacturers for a single product, it is clear that the data is vastly different for each product, even though it communicates the same thing. For instance, sometimes pound is spelled out, other times it is abbreviated as lb. or #. Sometimes there's a space between the number and unit of measure, other times not.

When displayed in an ecommerce environment, inconsistent data like this negatively affects faceted navigation, keyword search, and product findability. Customers won't understand the product information, which leads to confusion, loss of trust, and site abandonment.

Product data must be made consistent, organized, and easier to understand. Clean data greatly improves the online shopping experience for customers.

7.3 Product characteristics:

Product characteristics are collectively known as attributes and values. Product characteristics are the defining features customers need to know before they buy something. You wouldn't buy a paint without knowing its color. Your customers won't buy a bench vise without knowing its jaw width and throat depth.

When customers walk into a regular bricks-and-mortar store, they can talk to an expert salesperson about whether the product they want meets their needs. On the other hand, when shopping online, your **product characteristics** take the place of a **knowledgeable salesperson**. So, they must be **rich, organized, and easy to understand**, if you want to make the sale.

The image shows the different attributes and the values for a "Midget Fuse".

Product Specification		Product Description	Product Tags	Reviews
Brand	Mersen			
Sub Brand	OTM Series			
Size	1.5" L x 0.406" Dia			
Type	Midget/5AG			
Application	Control Circuits & Inst Protection			
Amperage Rating	5 Amp			
Interrupt Rating	10000 Amp @ 250 VAC			
Mounting Type	Cartridge			
Voltage Rating	250 VAC			
Class	Supplemental			
Compliance	RoHS;Lead Free			
Nominal Cold Resistance	0.0413 Ohms			

A survey of B2B distributors of those that reported successes in ecommerce, shows that their sites had **accurate and complete product data**. This provides a strong indication that accurate and complete data drives higher online sales.

7.4 Product Data Normalization:

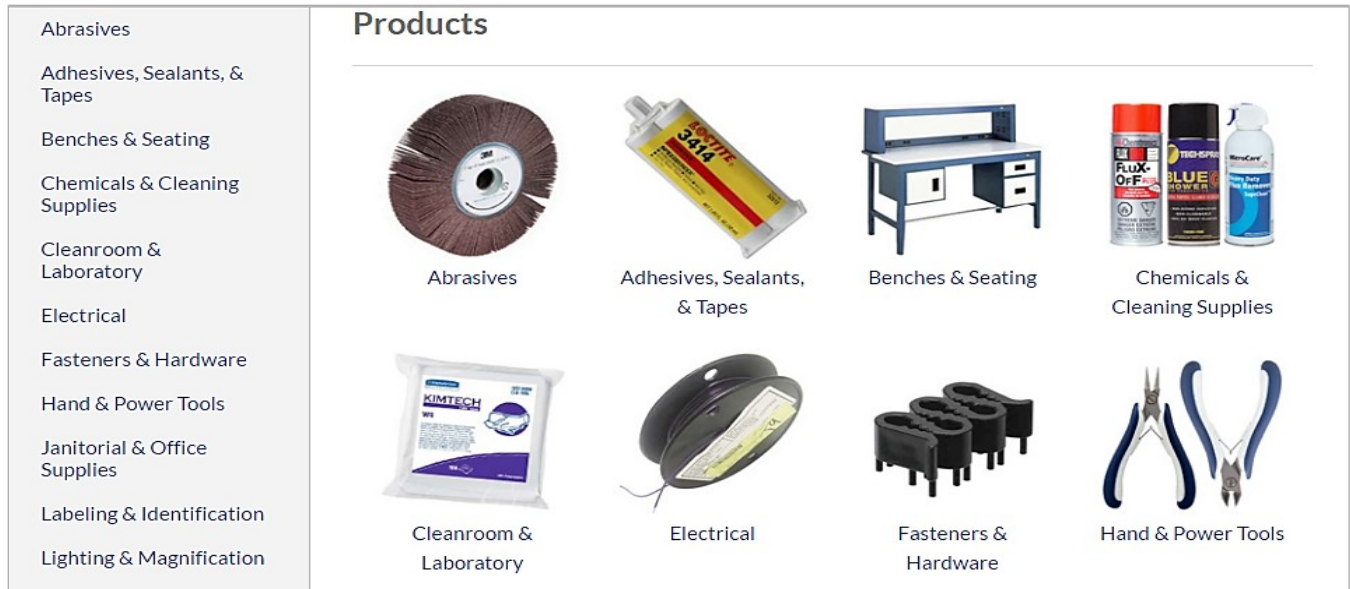
Once you've gathered product data from manufacturers, you must fit it into a specific plan. The conversion rate suffers because of inconsistencies and duplications of product data. Apparently, quite many shoppers leave the eStore confused, due to this uncertainty and lack of clarity.

Normalization is a process that **eliminates duplicate, redundant, and unclear data**. This includes transitioning weights and measures between imperial and metric, and expansion of abbreviations to maintain **uniform data** across your eStore.

Organizing your existing product information into **standard fields** like description, product title, specifications, features, benefits etc. is essential to ensure that your products are presented in a consistent and standard format. This provides customers with a predictable and easy-to-browse experience with your products. As a distributor, you gain competitive advantage by taking data from the marketplace and level-setting it so customers aren't confused.

7.5 Merchandising through Product Images and Copy:

Industrial products are more complex with many details than average consumer products. For instance, a midget fuse or roller bearing has a higher number of technical specifications than, say, a T-shirt. **Clear images and descriptive copy** help reduce this dilemma.



Research on the **role of images** in ecommerce indicates that clear, varied, and detailed images increase trust in an ecommerce site. Presented at key decision-making points, **images and copy** assure the customers that they are buying the right product.

Studies on the effect of ecommerce copywriting shows that original, easy-to-scan copy drives higher conversion and boosts organic SEO. Good product copy is informative and vital for customers to get product details, so that they can clearly understand the functionality and features of the products.

8. Matching the B2C Experience on Technology:

To match the B2C experience using technology, users must be able to easily import, manipulate, and manage company data. Different types of software are available in the market today, but one of the **most powerful tools is a PIM system**. The PIM system is an excellent platform that can save money and time for distributors. PIM systems ensure that there is only one master version of product data stored in a single place. Any secondary location of product data in another system is merely a reference to the master version. This establishes the PIM systems as **a single source of truth** for product data. If you make changes to data in your PIM system, all secondary locations of that data are also changed.

This way of maintaining a master version of product data helps prevent employees from having to update product data by hand, and it helps prevent multiple employees from having to update data in multiple systems. In turn, this prevents data errors, ensures data quality, and saves time spent managing the data.

8.1 Linking PIM Systems to ERP and CRM Tools:

Once a PIM system creates a single source to find all your product data, you can easily **link it to other software** in your business systems. This enables you to gather key data about your customers, and communicate with your customers with knowledge about the products they buy.

When you link a PIM system to an enterprise resource planning (ERP) or customer relationship management (CRM) system, you can collect information about:

- Customer buying behaviors and patterns
- Products to target to relevant customers
- Analyze targeted promotions and sales for driving revenue

Product information management (PIM) systems ensure that your data is always **accurate, up-to-date, and error free**. It facilitates employees to work from only one system, enterprise-wide. Without a single source of truth, product content can be changed by multiple people in different locations. This leads to inaccurate, repetitive, outdated, and inconsistent product content.

A study on ROI of PIM systems found that almost 60 percent of distributors saw an increase in ecommerce sales when they used a PIM. In the enterprise, the PIM systems allow you to easily and efficiently:

- Onboard new products to the web
- Normalize product data
- Update product data
- Maintain consistency in product data
- Eliminate errors and duplicate data
- Integrate with CRM and ERP systems
- Feed into catalogs, mobile, and channel partners

9. How Product Content Affects Your Sales Team:

World-class product content is highly beneficial to your sales team. Effective salespeople's key strength is to interact with as many customers as possible. When

armed with **product expertise**, they can offer additional services to your customers which helps them to make a **satisfied purchase**.



- **World-class product content** gives the sales team key information about what product lines to **expand**, and what new products to introduce to customers.
- Access to important data about customer behavior, and **product data** provides them with the key to **grow the business**.

Highly efficient salespeople take every effort to understand their customers' needs and wants. Analyzing the requirements enable them to realize what products are not selling well, and where to make changes to increase sales.

High-quality and detailed product content not only gives your **website great leverage in boosting your ecommerce sales**, but retains more satisfied customers.

10. Conclusion:

A successful ecommerce website involves more than simply making your products available online. Customers must be able to **search, find, and understand your products** in order to buy them. Findability, faceted navigation, product images and copy, effective SEO and keyword search are all **critical to the success or failure** of your ecommerce website.

A **content-first approach** creates a customer-centric ecommerce experience. This model drives online sales, because it focuses on who the customers are and what products they buy. Product content such as product category organization, faceted search, accurate data, clear images, and informative copy are essential aspects of a customer-centric and content-first approach.

Combined with technology, the **content-first approach** increases overall traffic, drives conversion, and **increases your revenue** significantly and enables you to successfully compete with B2C and B2B websites.