unilog

CLIENT
Affiliated Distributors (AD)

LOCATION
Wayne, PA

INDUSTRY
Industrial Distributors

PROJECT
Product Content Development and Taxonomy Design

" Unilog is the only company that can offer both the technology platform and content services at the scale AD members require. "

Noah Kays
Director of Content Subscriptions, Unilog

AD
Together, we win.

PROBLEM

Competition in the industrial distributor marketplace is fierce. Large eCommerce chains pour millions of dollars into obtaining, enriching, and uploading good product content for hundreds of thousands of items in order to sell them on their site. While many small to mid-sized distributors have opened an eCommerce storefront, they struggle to provide the robust content needed in order to compete with these mega online distributors. Often, B2Bs just do not have the budget, resources, or time to dedicate to this enormous, but necessary, undertaking.

Members of the North American wholesale buying group, Affiliated Distributors (AD), experienced these same challenges. AD's more than 600 members, who consist of independent distributors and manufacturers of construction and industrial products, are the backbone of its member-governed organization. From the corporate and divisional boards, to the councils and committees, AD's members have a strong voice and presence that contribute to the company's success.

Realizing their obstacles in the digital commerce space, particularly the lack of digital product content, the AD member community had a vision to build a master product catalog featuring hundreds of thousands of products with enriched data, which would be available to members to sell online.

SOLUTION

Representatives across AD's industries searched for an eCommerce and content services partner to help develop an affordable and efficient solution that could meet member needs. That partner was Unilog. Their experience and expertise in B2B eCommerce, product content development, and taxonomy design made them an ideal choice to help build and support the program.

RESULTS

AD set an initial goal for Unilog to develop and upload rich content for more than 200,000 SKUs from AD's Industrial Supply Division into the master catalog within nine months of the program's signing date. Unilog met that goal and continued development, exceeding 800,000 industrial items by the end of the first year of the program. Next, they built a taxonomy and 200,000 SKUs for the Electrical Services Division, added another 200,000 SKUs for the Plumbing, HVAC, and Pipes, Valves & Fittings Divisions and, more recently, launched the Bearings & Power Transmission division with a custom-built taxonomy and an initial set of 200,000 SKUs. While these divisional SKU numbers are impressive, AD members actually have even more items available to them, as many common items are shared across divisions. This communal catalog supports AD's philosophy and slogan, "Together, we win."

Now, with 3.46 million unique, enriched SKUs available in the master catalog – and growing, AD members are successfully exporting the content-rich product data to their eCommerce sites and reaping the rewards of having a larger, more dynamic product offering for their online shoppers. "A manufacturer SKU is totally undeveloped – it's nothing in comparison to what we get out of AD," said AD member Jake Fegely, COO of Cooney Brothers, Inc. "AD SKUs are attributed, they have images, they're properly formatted, there's a complete description…so there's really no comparison between manufacturer-provided data and what we're getting from AD."

How did AD and Unilog succeed in their efforts? With leading edge technology, an expert skill set, and a community of product experts. AD's data service platform, powered by Unilog's CIMM2 software, is a cloud-based implementation with a dedicated Product Information Management (PIM) module that houses the most up-to-date product data. Along with the PIM, the AD platform also features an easy to-navigate user interface with specific functionality which allows members to export products from the master catalog into their own catalog subset.

Using industry best practices and the expertise of the entire AD community, Unilog built the taxonomy for 8,000 leaf nodes, or product hierarchies, in just three months and are

> **"** *The great thing about the AD program and the entire offering is you have three legs of a program – from content to the software piece to the consulting portion.* **"**
>
> **Jake Fegely**
> COO, Cooney Brothers, Inc.,
> and AD Member

now at 14,000 categories that span Industrial, Electrical, Bearings & Power Transmission, Plumbing, Pipes, Valves & Fittings, as well as HVAC divisions. For many companies, this type of product taxonomy project can take years due to overcome organizational hurdles such as multi-level approvals and executive buy-in. Unilog's product content team also took charge of both building and enriching the product data for the platform, which proved a huge asset to this project. "Other companies may be able to enrich data, but few can build it from scratch," said Noah Kays, Director of Content Subscriptions at Unilog. "Unilog is the only company that can offer both the technology platform and content services at the scale AD members require."

Throughout the data build and enrichment process, all content is reviewed for quality and accuracy by both Unilog and subject matter experts in the AD community. By having AD members check and suggest improvements to the data, AD has created a dynamic content production environment that continues to evolve so that it can address the content needs of its members.

The AD platform also features a built-in Customer Service Representative (CSR) portal that allows CSRs to log in and view items in their own catalog, as well as all the items in the master catalog, making the portal a great resource for product information. With the comprehensive AD platform, representatives can view, browse, compare products, and then use that information to perform transactions on their own site.

For those who don't have an online webstore, AD offers members the option to subscribe to both the product catalog and a storefront using Unilog's eCommerce platform, CIMM2, to give them a complete eCommerce solution in one convenient place – their AD community. "AD has brought forth the tools that we need to make a

successful implementation of an eCommerce platform. So, with B2X Partners, with the Unilog data, and with everything else that has been provided for us, we can make that happen," explained AD member Mike Abeling, President of Consumers Pipe & Supply Co.

AD is pleased with the progress and success they have had so far with their product content efforts and plan to continue working with Unilog to build an extensive master catalog for its members. They realize the success of this ambitious program hinges on the deep partnership between AD and Unilog, and the dedication of AD's member community. AD members not only help drive and dictate the program, they keep it grounded to ensure they are meeting the needs of the entire AD membership. "eCommerce is a process that is continually improving, and AD has been a great partner to help us get to where we need to be," remarked AD member Chris Fine, Director of Marketing at French Gerleman. "It's really put us on a level playing field with some of the national competitors out there."

ABOUT AD

AD is the largest contractor and industrial products wholesale buying group in North America. AD provides independent distributors and manufacturers of construction and industrial products with support and resources that accelerate growth. Our 600 plus independently owned members span seven industries and three countries with annual sales in excess of $37 Billion. AD served industries include electrical, industrial, plumbing, PVF, HVAC, building materials, bearings & power transmission and decorative brands. For more information visit: www.adhq.com.

ABOUT UNILOG

Unilog is a global technology company that delivers powerful, affordable eCommerce solutions for the B2B marketplace. Our cloud-based eCommerce platform and product data enrichment services help distributors, manufacturers, and wholesalers increase online sales, reduce cost to serve, and enhance their digital channel. Unilog is an ISO 9001:2008- and ISO 8000-certified company with North American headquarters outside of Philadelphia, PA and international headquarters in Bangalore, India. For more information, visit www.unilogcorp.com.

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