IBM

WebSphere® software
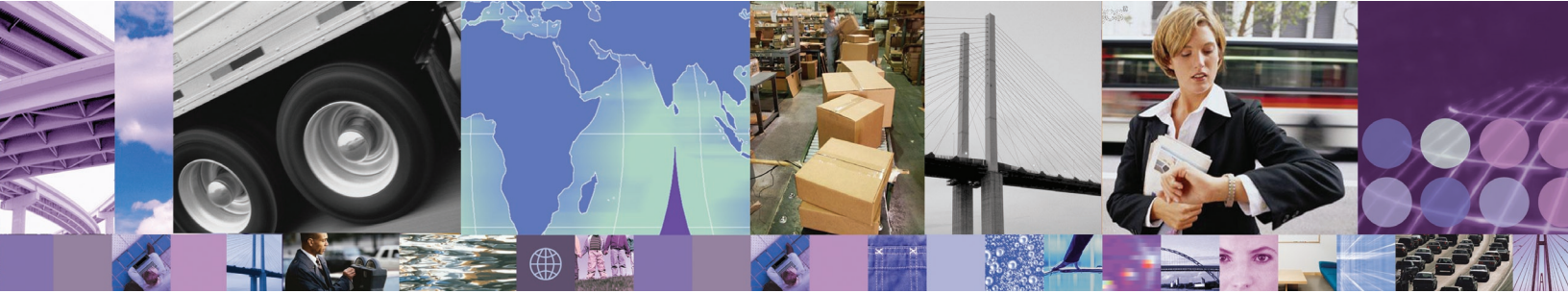
IBM WebSphere Product Center for the automotive industry

Highlights

- ■ *Collect automotive product and parts information from multiple sources*

- ■ *Automate processes for managing and enriching product information*

- ■ *Synchronize across enterprise systems and trading partners, such as Web sites, sales messaging and marketing messages to various countries*

- ■ *Drive business processes including parts management, product lifecycle management, channel distribution and e-commerce*

- ■ *Support strategic initiatives and global data synchronization standards*

The automotive industry is undergoing massive changes with an explosion of parts, faster new product introductions, falling margins and complex new regulations. With more than 14,000 frequently changing parts in any given vehicle, managing product information is a critical challenge for automotive companies. Original equipment manufacturers (OEMs), as well as suppliers, are looking for ways to transform how they manage product and parts information. This information management transformation affects the end-to end cycle from design and manufacturing through marketing, sales, service and warranty activities. Several initiatives are compelling automotive companies to improve their product information processes. The initiatives include Product Information Exchange Standard (P.I.E.S.) and Aftermarket Catalog Enhanced Standard (ACES), compliance with regulations such as the Transportation Recall, Accountability and Documentation (TREAD) Act,

and support for radio frequency identification (RFID) and global data synchronization standards.

At the same time, the quality of product information in the automotive industry is alarming.The Automotive Aftermarket Industry Association (AAIA) sponsored study on Data Synchronization Analysis of six manufacturers and six resellers revealed that even among industry leaders, over 50 percent of the parts available from the supplier are not reflected in the data files of their distributors; of the parts that are in common, nearly one-third require reconciliation for the part numbers to match exactly; and of those that do match there are costly and significant errors in data fields that are essential to e-commerce in one out of every ten stock keeping units. Product and pricing data that is not synchronized between trading partners is costing the average manufacturer about one percent of sales and the average reseller about 0.75 of sales.

ON DEMAND BUSINESS™

No aftermarket retailer or distributor would consider opening their doors for business without a full and complete electronic catalog. Yet it is common to run a business with absolutely no product information on hand for over 50 percent of the stock keeping units (SKUs) available from suppliers.[1]

A robust product information management solution can help solve these challenges. By improving the integrity of your product and parts information, streamlining your business processes and enabling you to respond to changing needs, a product information management solution can help you transform your product information into a competitive asset.

Product information challenges in the automotive industry

Automotive OEMs, suppliers and sales outlets face increasing demands to deliver accurate, consistent and current information about their products. Key challenges include:

- *Improving time to market for new products*
- *Lowering costs by streamlining and automating processes*
- *Enhancing customer service and loyalty*

- *Increasing sourcing capabilities for make or buy decisions*
- *Strengthening collaboration among OEMs, suppliers, dealers, distributors and retailers*
- *Tracking components and product lots for recalls, safety and governmental requirements, such as the TREAD Act*
- *Supporting data synchronization standards like P.I.E.S. and ACES*
- *Innovating with new technologies, such as RFID for supply chain management (SCM)*
- *Integrating data and processes following a merger or acquisition*

Meeting these demands is difficult because, perhaps more than any other industry, automotive product information and related processes are complex. An automotive part is comprised of several attributes and data.

- Transactive attributes—*like pricing, availability, supplier, description, dimensions and trading terms*
- Application-specific attributes—*like make/model/year, vehicle configuration and parts classification*
- Relationship attributes—*like cross-sell, up-sell, interchange and supersession details*
- Unstructured data—*like 3D images, exploded view diagrams and service bulletins*

There are multiple people inside and outside the organization, from design engineers and suppliers to sales representatives and marketing professionals, that handle information manually, creating big opportunities for errors and time lags. In addition, data is scattered in multiple locations across the enterprise, without a central and reliable source to address business needs, such as parts management, e-commerce, product lifecycle management (PLM) and trading partner collaboration. The downstream impacts can be serious: errors in data within your enterprise and at the point of sale (POS); delays in product introductions; wasted productivity; increased invoice discrepancies and returns; poor insight into defects; lost customer satisfaction; and lost sales.

## A single, reliable repository of product information

IBM WebSphere® Product Center helps solve these challenges by providing a single, integrated and consistent view of product information inside and outside your enterprise. Using IBM WebSphere Product Center, you can establish a central point of control to link parts information from design and sourcing all the way through sales, service,

distribution and support. Solutions are assembled around a flexible data model that aggregates information scattered across your organization's enterprise resource planning (ERP), PLM, customer relationship management (CRM) and legacy systems. You can model virtually any type of attribute — transactive, application-specific, relational, unstructured data and so on — and organize it in hierarchies appropriate to your enterprise. Rich, automated business-process capabilities and organizational modeling tools help enable users to create, validate and approve versions of product data — all designed

to help you manage the complete product information life cycle, down to the attribute level. The result is a consistent and accurate set of product information that helps you optimize sales of each product from initial introduction to end of life.

Manage business processes more efficiently

IBM WebSphere Product Center provides workflow and process automation to help ensure data quality, increase user productivity and streamline processes. Using IBM WebSphere Product Center, you can implement customizable, automated business processes,
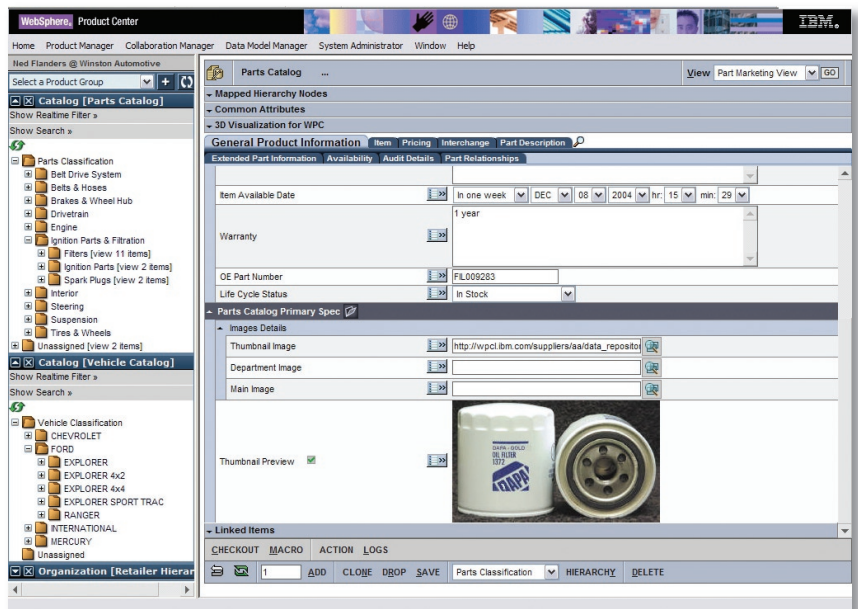

IBM WebSphere Product Center with standards compliant data model and attribute interrelationships for a new oil filter introduction.

such as new part introduction, to optimize operational efficiencies. In addition, because your processes can vary by user and department and might cross multiple groups, IBM WebSphere Product Center provides organizational modeling to support specific users, business units and processes across product life cycles. Attribute-level access control ensures that only appropriate users or groups have data privileges. With IBM WebSphere Product Center, you can manage and track processes, like product content translation and approval, with full

visibility into completion at each stage of the process. Product content managers can identify bottlenecks in the process and take appropriate steps to ensure on-time distribution of approved product content. These business-process capabilities combine to deliver an enterprise-class solution that helps reduce costs and cycle times by orchestrating and automating tasks across multiple business units, geographies and systems spanning your internal and external value chain.

Synchronize information globally

As soon as users have created or updated product information, it must be synchronized internally and externally. IBM WebSphere Product Center provides built-in tools to integrate data across your internal systems and is designed to ensure global integrity of your information. In addition, you can leverage IBM WebSphere Product Center to deliver relevant views of product information to specific sales and distribution channels or any customer or partner touchpoint — including e-commerce Web sites, partner portals and parts catalogs. And IBM WebSphere Product Center supports global automotive standards for data synchronization, such as P.I.E.S. and ACES.
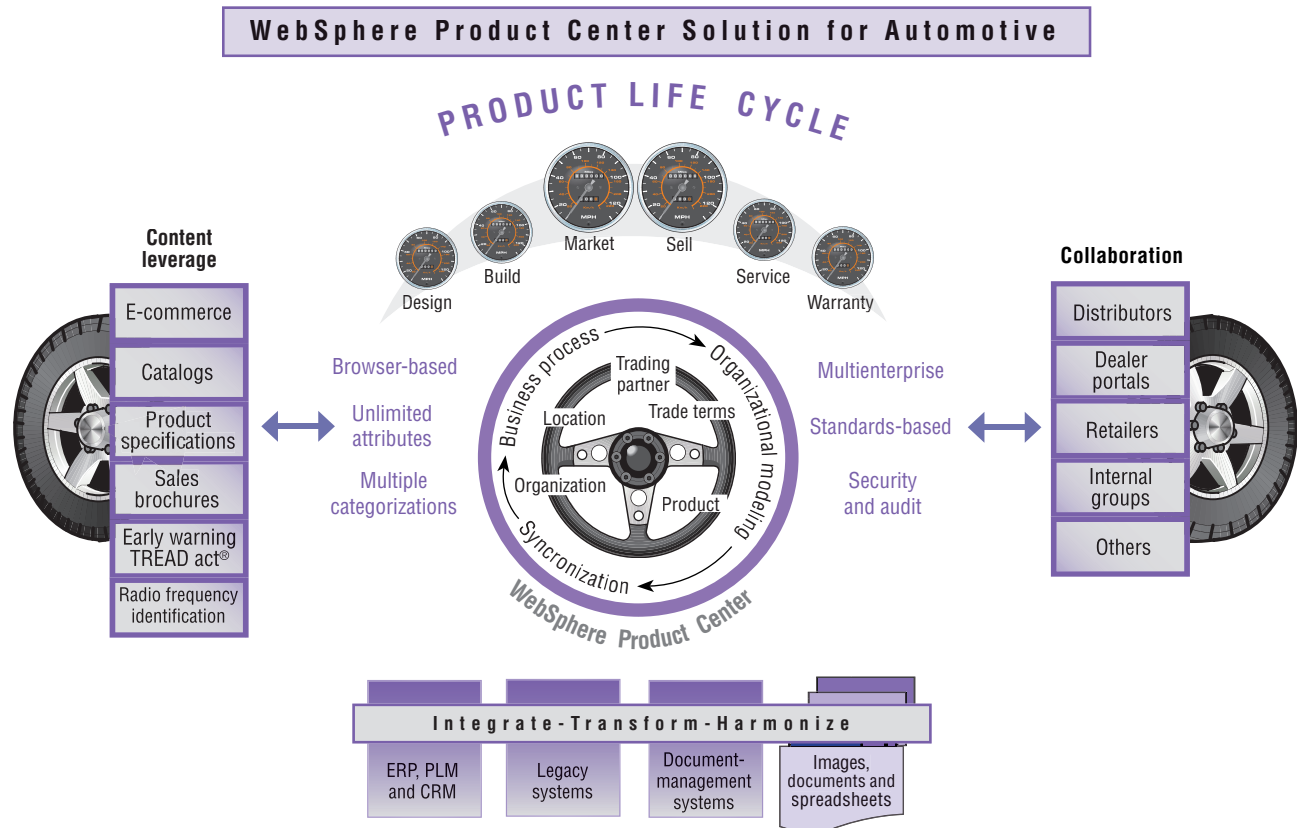
IBM WebSphere Product Center can aggregate, enrich and syndicate your product information.

A solution that can grow with your business

Effective product information management is fundamental to running your business. IBM WebSphere Product Center is designed to help you gain the potential return on investment (ROI) you expect across several areas.

- *Efficient global data synchronization*
- *Faster new product introduction*
- *Improved inventory management*
- *Better data quality*
- *Enhanced manual processes*
- *Channel-ready, on demand content generation*
- *Richer product defect information*

And because your needs are likely to grow, IBM WebSphere Product Center provides a flexible, scalable platform to address today's requirements and provide a base for the future. That means flexibility whether you are starting with project management, data synchronization, e-commerce, PLM or trading partner collaboration; or you are engaging in other, strategic initiatives, such as RFID, merger and acquisition integration or defect tracking. Leverage your product information to operate your business at the speed that the market dictates and your employees need. Become more efficient and respond faster. Get the jump on your competition. And realize significant business benefits as a result.

For more information

To learn more about IBM WebSphere Product Center, visit:

ibm.com/websphere/prodinfomgmt/

Streamline and automate processes using IBM WebSphere Product Center with role based workflow.

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[1] *Industry Analysis Results*
July 2003
By AAIA - Automotive Aftermarket Industry
Association

[a] *TREAD: A Multibillion-Dollar Black Hole*
Friday, September 26, 2003
Kevin Mixer, Heather Keltz, David Weismann

[3] Putting Products in Their Place with Product
Information Management:
*An Overview of Product Information
Management*
A META Group White Paper

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