IBM

WebSphere® software

IBM WebSphere Product Center for retail

Highlights

- **Establish an enterprise data management foundation to support your channel strategies**

- **Publish accurate, relevant and robust product information to your e-commerce sites and partner portals**

- **Comply with industry mandates, such as GDS and RFID, as early as possible, to help you stay ahead of competitors**

- **Help teams in various countries globally market your products more successfully by managing product information in their own languages and conducting product-related business processes according to local customs**

The pressure to innovate is increasing. The days of being regarded as a technology laggard are behind you. To remain in step in an increasingly competitive environment, you, too, must find ways to reduce costs and, at the same time, seek sophisticated ways to better merchandise, distribute and promote products through your retail infrastructure. So you can maximize your organization's ability to pursue new revenue streams and preserve rapidly diminishing margins.

The success of your business depends on complying with industry standards, like Global Data Synchronization (GDS), and more fully realizing the benefits of e-commerce to support various channel strategies. Some of the largest, leading companies in the retail industry, such as Wal Mart, The Home Depot, Carrefour, Staples, Albertson's and Kroger, have made Global Data Synchronization an industry imperative, and joined the Global Data Synchronization Network (GDSN) to help improve retailing business processes, increase revenues and cut costs.
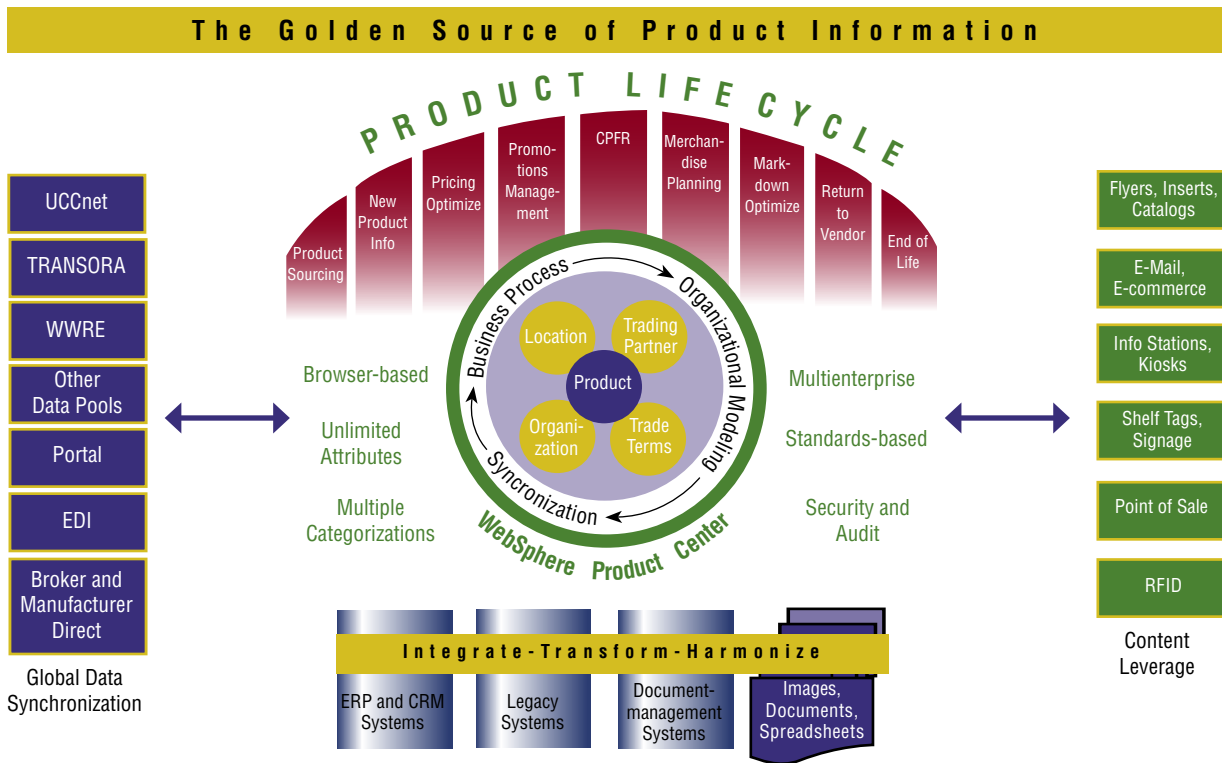
ON DEMAND BUSINESS™

Not only has the retail industry begun working to improve efficiencies through initiatives like Global Data Synchronization, it has also taken e-commerce to the next level — extending market reach and improving customer loyalty by pursuing initiatives to merchandise and sell products through multiple channels. No longer is e-commerce viewed as an experiment. Rather, it has gained acceptance as a powerful means to supplement traditional channels by supporting consumer purchasing

decisions. Gaining firm control over enterprise product information is the foundation for pursuing these and other critical business initiatives.

IBM WebSphere® Product Center, a comprehensive product information management solution, allows you to create, manage, link and synchronize the elements of your organization's product information, within and beyond the enterprise. You can integrate and centrally manage product information typically scattered across a range of systems, such as enterprise resource planning (ERP), legacy,

customer relationship management (CRM) and data master systems. This leading-edge solution also links product-related information with terms of trade, such as pricing, and synchronize this information internally with your existing systems and externally with trading partners.

WebSphere Product Center is designed to scale with the growth and complexity of your current and future product information management needs. The need to manage product information all across your business can be paramount to your continued

The Golden Source of Product Information

IBM WebSphere Product Center helps aggregate, enrich and sychronize your product information.

success. WebSphere Product Center can quickly help bring your company into compliance with GDS, while helping you automate and streamline activities associated with managing key marketing and sales processes — all to help your organization gain competitive advantage, not just achieve parity with other retailers.

From item synchronization to global data synchronization and beyond

Large retailers have begun synchronizing basic item information with their suppliers as a first step toward GDS. As standards for GDS mature, you can move quickly from synchronizing basic item information to synchronizing category-specific item, party and price information, as well as trade conditions. With this shift from item to global data synchronization, you can realize significant business benefits — including the ability to introduce new products faster, to reduce out-of-stock inventory, to reduce invoice queries and to increase order-fulfillment accuracy.

To illustrate, although basic item synchronization involves the same, standard 150 or more attributes for every product in every category, GDS recognizes that specialized, category-specific attributes are applicable to

each product category. For instance, phosphate content is an important category-specific attribute for detergents, but voltage is an important category-specific attribute for batteries.

To support this advancement in managing product information across distribution and retailing companies worldwide, the Global Commerce Initiative (GCI) is developing a Global Product Classification (GPC) schema, also known as BRICKS, that contains thousands of category-specific attributes unique to each of hundreds of different product categories. Category-specific attributes greatly increase GDS usability by providing information relevant to and important for each product category. Adding this level of granularity and detail to product information can make it more valuable to your business processes by enriching the data your partners and customers need when doing business with you. But the volume and complexity of information can quickly overwhelm your marketing and merchandising teams.

You can take advantage of WebSphere Product Center features that enable users to associate attributes to groups of items, using inheritance and hierarchies. This capability lets you more effectively manage the complexity that can accompany tens of thousands of category-specific attributes across millions of items.

Party synchronization adds more complexity. You and your suppliers must synchronize a superset of traditional location master data, as well as physical locations, such as warehouses and stores — as well as legal and financial entities, like corporate headquarters, subsidiaries and distinct accounting departments. Unlike item information that primarily moves from manufacturer to retailer, party synchronization also requires the movement of location information from the retailer to the manufacturer. With WebSphere Product Center, you can consolidate, cleanse, validate and manage third-party data from suppliers. You can also synchronize location master information from a variety of internal systems, such as legacy vendor masters, ERP, CRM and warehouse-management systems. You can also send location master and comprehensive location information to your suppliers. Using IBM WebSphere Product Center for third-party synchronization enables you to improve ship-to and bill-to accuracy, reduce invoicing errors, and reduce the time and expense associated with maintaining suppliers.

How? It's possible with WebSphere Product Center, because all your product information, linked to the relevant organization, party and location information, is readily updated, enhanced and syndicated to the systems, processes and organizations that need it.

The increasing scale and complexity associated with adopting price and trade conditions within GDS initiatives requires that retailers adopt a robust product information management solution. With WebSphere Product Center, you and your suppliers can synchronize trade conditions (terms of trade), and pricing. It supports the definition, management and synchronization of trade conditions and prices, helping reduce time and resources needed for resolving invoice discrepancies and deductions due to errors. It also manages pricing, trade conditions and promotions information at the corporate, market and store levels. Giving you centralized control of product information, as well as decentralized use of that information, to meet local requirements and partner arrangements — even in different languages or currencies.

WebSphere Product Center in practice
Some of the world's largest retailers use WebSphere Product Center to manage possibly millions of Global Trade Item Numbers (GTINs) and possibly billions of attribute values — synchronized with tens of thousands of suppliers, and disseminated to thousands of stores and users. With a data model designed to grow and adapt to your business needs, WebSphere Product Center can enable you to define and manage product attributes, location information, vendor relationships and business rules that match the way you do business. Using an intuitive graphical user interface (GUI), users can create, view and navigate product hierarchies in multiple internal merchandising and external categorization schemes, such as GPC, UDEX, A.C. Nielsen and IRI.

A sophisticated security model helps you control user access according to your organization's needs. Support distinct roles and responsibilities by defining what information is viewable by people in certain roles — up to thousands of users. They can be internal, from your merchandising, marketing, logistics or store operations teams. Or external from your suppliers and distributors. You can also limit the kinds of activities people in different roles can perform, such as editing or approving information updates. Comprehensive audit trail capabilities help with tracking and reporting about who made what changes to product information and when.

WebSphere Product Center is developed using an open architecture based on Java™ 2 Platform, Enterprise Edition (J2EE) standards, which gives WebSphere Product Center the flexibility and reliability to grow with your business, and to smoothly integrate with your internal systems.

Robust messaging and tight integration with leading enterprise application integration (EAI) solutions, such as IBM WebSphere Business Integration, helps to ensure you can leverage WebSphere Product Center with a wide variety of internal systems.

Product information management and private-label products

If your company is pursuing a private-label initiative, it must operate like a manufacturer when bringing these products to market. To move from concept to store shelf, private-label merchandising means creating product specifications, identifying and capturing key product attributes, selecting suppliers and sourcing the items. As a part of this process, internally generated product information must be synchronized with internal merchandising, pricing and store systems. To develop a world-class, private-label business, you need a product information management system designed to meet the requirements of both you

and your manufacturers. By providing an extensible data model, and scaling to house and maintain a large volume of product information elements, WebSphere Product Center is a solution with the breadth of capabilities needed to tackle private-label initiatives. WebSphere Product Center is in production at leading global manufacturers and provides extensive capabilities for creating and managing product information in support of private-label retail initiatives.

Product information management and the collaborative enterprise

Product information management serves as the foundation for building broader collaborative capabilities across and beyond your enterprise. Key departments — merchandising, category management, sourcing and catalog maintenance — can all benefit from a single, reliable source of accurate product information. A centralized system greatly reduces the cost of fueling multiple sales and distribution channels with rich, relevant product information.

WebSphere Product Center not only delivers product information to your sales and distribution channels, it provides the same accurate, consistent and current information to any customer or partner touchpoint, such as e-commerce sites, partner portals, kiosks, retail shelves, end-caps, circulars, catalogs and point-of sale displays. Leverage existing investments in legacy applications and all the valuable product information contained in them, to automate what can often be disconnected, manual processes to update, create and syndicate this information. Workflow features in WebSphere Product Center help to reduce costs and cycle times by orchestrating and automating tasks across teams, organizations and systems — spanning your internal and external supply chains.

Centralized, synchronized product information — a requirement for RFID

RFID is poised to become a transformational technology for retailers. Having accurate, comprehensive and accessible product information is a core readiness requirement. RFID implementations require the electronic product code (EPC) stored in the RFID tag to be linked to detailed information about the product, such as supplier, location and batch. WebSphere Product Center can help translate the EPC to provide detailed and accurate product information whenever a tag is scanned as the product moves through the distribution chain from manufacturer to store shelf.

A solution that can grow with your business

Effective product information management is fundamental to running your business. WebSphere Product Center offers you a leading-edge, product information management solution. Leverage your product information to operate your business at the speed 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:

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