akeneo

Kill your Spreadsheets

Increase:
- Data Quality by **30%**
- Productivity by **50%**
- Conversions by **400%**

Simplify your chaotic workflow.

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akeneo

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Introduction

Are you still managing and enriching product information with spreadsheets?

You're not alone. Spreadsheets are the most commonly used product information tool — more than one-third of businesses still use them. The only problem is that spreadsheets are terrible at product information management and enrichment.

Spreadsheets suck at many critical tasks

Here are just a few of the critical tasks that spreadsheets are bad at:

- Dealing with multiple sources of information
- Differentiating between different versions of media and product descriptions
- Handling multiple languages and translations
- Accommodating multiple contributors
- Enforcing separate edit, approval, and publication
- Version control and content rollbacks
- Staging new products and catalogs
- Quality control

So why do so many people use spreadsheets for a job that they are not designed for?

It *seems like* an easy solution.

Until they start to grow, that is — then marketers quickly find themselves struggling with dozens of files, 20+ columns in every spreadsheet, and multiple tabs. Version control quickly becomes a problem, and suddenly your team is dealing with outdated, incomplete, and incorrect product data being pushed to prospective customers.

But it's not.

Managing growth in spreadsheets creates a nightmare. As marketers increase distribution platforms and sales channels, they begin to realize they have a problem : spreadsheets don't scale well.

> *Growth is wonderful... Unless you're trying to manage your product information with spreadsheets. Then growth becomes a nightmare as you struggle to maintain compelling, complete, and up-to-date product information. Additional channels, localizations, and product categories only multiply your problems.*

There is a solution

The product category for eCommerce catalog management is generally referred to as product information management, or PIM for short. PIM solves all the problems that spreadsheets don't because they are custom-built for managing product information across websites, eCommerce platforms, print catalogs, points of sale, mobile applications, and more.

Companies that switch from spreadsheets to the Akeneo PIM report the following improvements:

PERFORMANCE

50%
Productivity

30%
Data Quality

4x
Conversions

PRODUCT RETURN

Lower
Return Rates

Faster
Time-to-Market

How PIM Impacts Your Bottom Line

PIM has the power to revolutionize your productivity when it comes to product enrichment and catalog management. As such, some people tend to think of it as a time or cost savings tool. However, in our experience, very few customers use it to directly save on labor costs. Instead, they utilize those time savings and efficiency improvements to tackle transformational expansions of their business.

Multi-Channel Made Practical

t's no secret that your businesses needs to expand our revenue opportunities to thrive in a globalized environment. However, like many things, going multi-channel is easier said than achieved.

A successful multi-channel strategy is more than offering your products everywhere to everyone. It requires that you customize the customer experience to where and how they shop. Many retailers lack the resources needed to expand at the rate that they would like while still providing a great customer experience across multiple channels — that's where PIM comes in.

> *PIM can super-charge your multi-channel plans by simultaneously freeing up resources while lowering the barriers to expansion.*

Here are just a few ways that PIM will impact your bottom line:

Multi-Platform With Half the Work

Akeneo provides plug-ins to automatically export your product data to whatever platforms you need, including eCommerce platforms like Magento, OroCommerce, and more. The large ecosystem of integrators is constantly creating new connectors and can quickly accomodate custom platforms.

Print Catalogs at the Touch of a Button

Akeneo's InDesign connector means that you can leverage all the effort that goes into building your online catalog or eCommerce shop by exporting all (or just a subset) of your products for use in comprehensive or specialty print catalogs.

Localization at Less Cost

You already know that customizing your product descriptions for specific markets with translations, local units of measurement, and appropriate multi-media will increase conversions by up to 400%. With PIM, the effective cost of creating and maintaining these localizations drops by over 50% through improved workflow and integrations for multiple data-sources, translation services, and local distribution platforms. This radically improves the economics of creating localizations for markets large and small.

Faster Time-to-Market

Of course, opportunity costs are measured not just in dollars and euros but in days and weeks. For many industries such as apparel, electronics, and toys, time-to-market is critical to success. Amp up sales and avoid leftover merchandise by accelerating the time it takes from receiving initial product SKUs from suppliers to pushing out fully enriched product descriptions in every language and version needed across multiple platforms.

PIM enables the efficient scaling of your product and localization teams across geographic and organizational boundaries. Harness the power of distributed teams to quickly and accurately offer your products to global multi-channel market.

Better data quality, available in more languages and across more platforms will mean more impressions, higher conversion rates, and lower returns.

In other words, shredding your spreadsheets and converting to PIM is not just a matter of day-to-day efficiency. Rather, it is one of transformational opportunity. Sound good? Let's find out how it works.
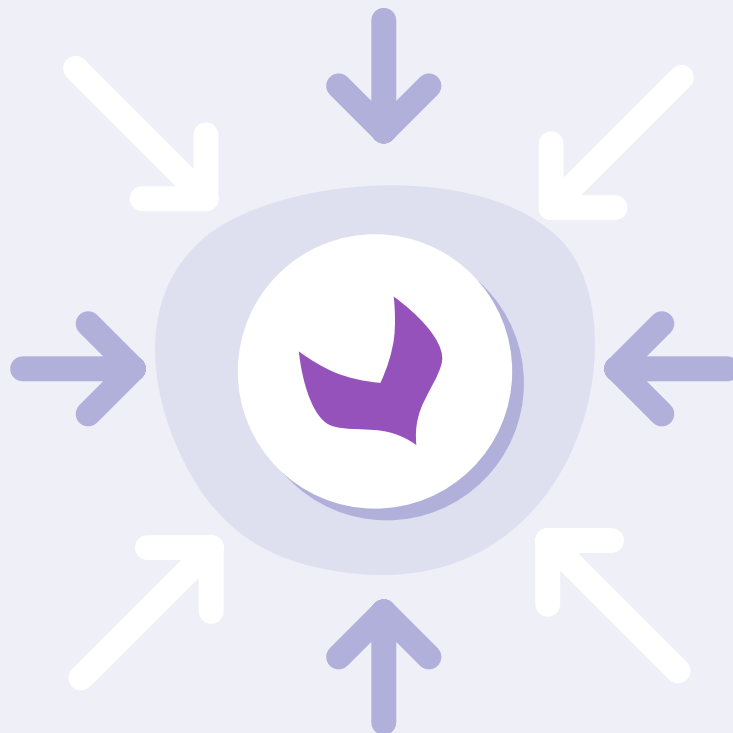
Simplify Your Work

Convert your collection of spreadsheets into a single definitive source of product information across every sales channel in every language.

Streamline your current chaotic workflow:

1. Import your data

Automatically import your data from any third party system including ERPs, spreadsheets, and your supplier's systems.

2. Organize and classify

Organize and classify your products however you want. Stop trying to organize your workflow around SKUs, and use more logical product groupings instead. A well-designed GUI can eliminate hundreds of useless spreadsheet columns.

3. Enrich, edit, and translate

Rich your product information, add rich media in any format, and translate just the descriptions that are needed.

4. Utilize built-in workflow and quality checks

Enable multiple contributors with edit/publish workflows and automated checks to ensure that all mandatory fields are always completed.

5. Publish your data

Export all product data to any e-commerce platform, marketplace, mobile application, print catalog, or point of sale interface.

"

Here's how you do it.

"

Reimagine Your Workflow

The most important thing to keep in mind is to integrate PIM into your current or ideal workflow. If you try to adapt your workflow to match the requirements of your PIM, rather than the other way around, you will likely fail due to user adoption problems. PIM should serve your people, not the other way around!

> *Build out your PIM to match your ideal workflow...don't try to bend your workflow to match your PIM or stick to antiquated workflows imposed by the constraints of spreadsheets.*

Marketers are often surprised at how many improvements in workflow they can achieve with the flexibility that PIM enables. PIM can be a catalyst for revolutionary changes in efficiency that pave the way for additional product lines, geographic regions, and marketing channels.

Enable Team Collaboration

Build out your PIM workflow with your team in mind. For instance, many teams have some members that are responsible for data enrichment and others for approval and publication.

Example of tasks that might be assigned to specialized workers include:

- Translations
- Product descriptions
- Uploading of photos or videos

Sometimes, these tasks are done by separate companies, freelance workers, or just down the hall. Regardless of where they are located, you should set-up your PIM so that these teams can make their changes in a draft environment and automatically notify management when the updates are ready for approval. Approvals or requests for changes can be made within the PIM and then published to the various marketing channels. There's never a reason to leave the PIM. This maximizes efficiency and reduces the chances for publishing incomplete or erroneous product information.

In fact, if your team feels the need for a separate task manager or emailed communication about the status of catalog completion, then you're doing it wrong.

> *Resist the siren song of setting up a task manager!*

A good workflow enables delegation and makes next steps clear to all team members

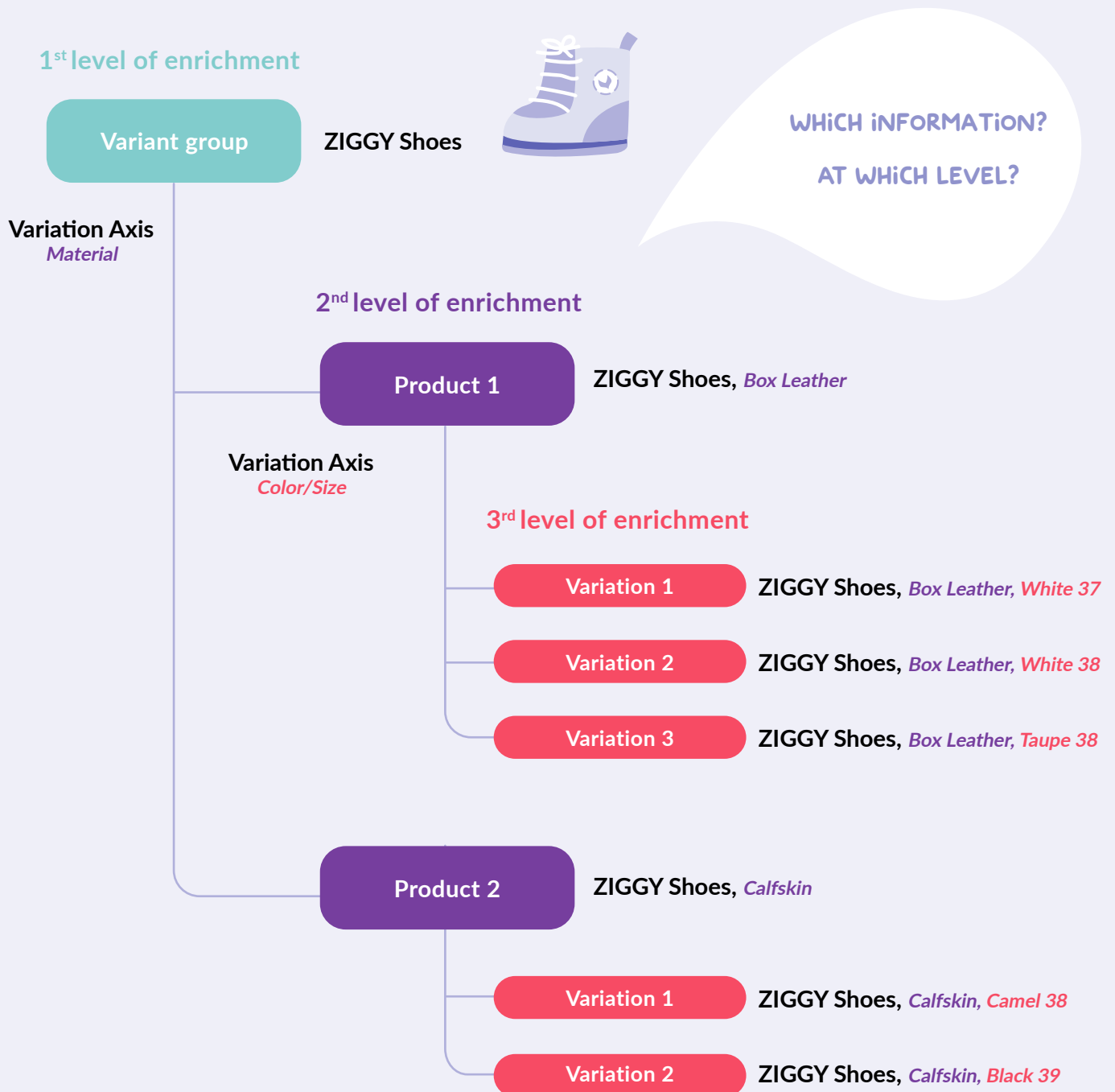| All ▾	PRODUCT LABEL	AUTHOR	CHANGES	PROPOSED AT ▾	STATUS		
☐	Samsung Galaxy Wi-Fi	marylin	**Price** ~~258.87~~ EUR 489 EUR	Jan 6, 2016 2:09 PM	**Waiting for approval**	✔	✖
☐	Sony NWZ-E435F	lionel	**Weight** 2 Kilogram	Jan 6, 2016 2:09 PM	**Waiting for approval**	✔	✖

Group SKUs into Models

Every SKU in your catalog is unique, but they often have many commonalities. For instance, some SKUs may have largely similar product names, descriptions, specifications, and other commonalities but with different variations such as color, size, etc.

If you group such SKUs into models, you can then enrich the common attributes at the upper level instead of managing each SKU, and take other bulk actions like enabling/disabling, deleting, and more.

Think about an organization system that allows for a logical and efficient product enrichment flow across the variations. Optimize this organization flow around your product information enrichment process.

Product with variations

1st level of enrichment

Variant group   **ZIGGY Shoes**

Variation Axis
Material

WHiCH iNFORMATiON?

AT WHiCH LEVEL?

2nd level of enrichment

Product 1   **ZIGGY Shoes,** *Box Leather*

Variation Axis
Color/Size

3rd level of enrichment

Variation 1   **ZIGGY Shoes,** *Box Leather, White 37*

Variation 2   **ZIGGY Shoes,** *Box Leather, White 38*

Variation 3   **ZIGGY Shoes,** *Box Leather, Taupe 38*

Product 2   **ZIGGY Shoes,** *Calfskin*

Variation 1   **ZIGGY Shoes,** *Calfskin, Camel 38*

Variation 2   **ZIGGY Shoes,** *Calfskin, Black 39*

Group your SKUs according to products with common attributes.

Connect and Automate
Your Data Sources

Start off by evaluating your sources of product information. Are they coming from an ERP? Customer databases? Emailed spreadsheets? Take the time to automate this flow of information directly into your PIM.

A good PIM solution should have open connectors to hook into any source of information. Akeneo, for instance, has a marketplace of pre-existing connectors for many ERPs, databases, as well as CSV and Excel spreadsheets. What's more, with Akeneo's open APIs, our thriving ecosystem of integrators is able to create custom connectors to virtually any product information source.

Don't waste your team's time manually exporting information from product data sources to spreadsheets and then importing them again into your PIM. This creates a huge pain point of human error and outdated data.

> *Don't take half-measures. Automate ALL your product data sources.*

Work with your IT team to integrate each of these sources with your PIM. Depending on what you're integrating, and the PIM solution you've chosen, this may be plug-and-play, or it may be more challenging.

If your IT department doesn't have the resources available, consider working with a specialized integrator.

> *Does reading the words "work with your IT team" give you a headache? Consider working with a PIM implementation team.*

Once the basic plumbing is done, figure out how often each of these sources needs to be updated, and work with your IT team to have your PIM suck the updated information in on a regular basis.

This import automation effort represents a significant investment in resources, but the payoff is tremendous. You'll never cut and paste again. Your time spent with Excel and CSV files will be limited to uploading them into your PIM (and this can generally be automated as well).

Enrich and Update Your Product Information

As a catalog, product, or ecommerce manager, this is really where your team should focus. And, now, thanks to magic of PIM: you can.

- Keep products information up to date.
- Show colors, sizes, and specs.
- Enrich product file with photos, videos, and other media.
- Customize the information of your products per channel or country

Define Rules to Classify New Products Automatically

With clearly defined product categories, you can set up automation rules to classify your products into the right categories and easily enrich product information by adding values directly to the product.

Carry Over Product Information Across Related SKUs

You can define a product structure that will allow you to manage common information without having to touch each SKU. So, for instance, every size and color of a specific T-shirt will carry identical product information EXCEPT for those fields that should change.

You can set up similar automation rules across language descriptions (for instance, automatically bringing across specs that don't change across languages), while ensuring that your English language product descriptions don't accidentally Deutsch sprechen.

Localize easily and efficiently

A product or SKU will have many elements that don't vary across every, or any, localization. Specify which fields need to be updated for each product and for each localization. This allows you to maximize automation by carrying over common attributes and details while ensuring quality control by tracking which fields have been localized and which still need to be modified.

Separate Marketing Channels

Just like localization, some fields will need to be updated for different channels but many elements may remain the same across some or all channels.

Automate Quality Control

A good PIM will automatically detect whether ever required field for every product record has been filled out. This prevents incomplete or inaccurate product records from being published.Enrich and Update Your

Publish Different Versions for Different Channels, Platforms, and Locations

Of course, the whole point of managing your product information is to give your prospective customers the most complete, accurate, and compelling product information possible - no matter where they are looking.

That means pushing slightly different product information for different channels, platforms, and geographies. Without automation, every new outlet, platform, or location becomes a huge pain point and often results in wasted time, versioning problems, and huge headaches.

However, you can set up your PIM to automatically export different versions for the different channels you sell. Your PIM will also automatically take into account:

- Languages
- Measurements
- Formats, descriptions and media for different channels like ecommerce, print, and point of sale

Much like setting up your import integration, you may need some help from your IT or an outside consultant in setting up a complex export configuration.

> *Akeneo has numerous off-the-shelf integrations with eCommerce platforms like Magento, Mirakl, Shopware, and PrestaShop-- not to mention an InDesign plugin for the automatic creation of print catalogs. Plus, our deep ecosystem of integrators can easily setup an automated export process for custom systems.*

Akeneo has easy-to-use connectors for Magento, Prestashop, Mirakl, Shopware, Print catalogs, and more.

PIMGento 2

Reviews (12)

★★★★★ 23 votes   Free

Prestaneo

Reviews (14)

★★★★★ 20 votes   Free

Just released in Akeneo 1.6 is the Export Builder. This feature allows you to customize all the attributes of your exports: choose the products for the selected channels and locales, filter on completeness, define the dates of the products' updates, choose the status...and more.

Focus on Your Real Job

The best part of automation is that it allows you and your team to focus on your real job: effective merchandizing to increase sales.

How will you know that you have a good system?

- You never have to resort to cutting and pasting in spreadsheets
- Your team relies upon the workflow and completeness meters within the PIM—not external checklists or task managers
- Your team feels happier & more relaxed

If you take these steps, we guarantee that efficiency and quality will go up and that you won't miss your spreadsheets at all.

Take the Next Step: About Akeneo

About Akeneo

Akeneo is a global leader in Product Experience Management (PXM) solutions that help merchants and brands deliver a compelling customer experience across all sales channels, including eCommerce, mobile, print, and retail points of sale. Akeneo's open source enterprise PIM, and product data intelligence solutions, dramatically improve product data quality and accuracy while simplifying and accelerating product catalog management.

Leading global brands, including Sephora, Fossil, Shop.com, and Auchan, trust Akeneo's solutions to scale and customize their omnichannel and cross-border commerce initiatives. Using Akeneo, brands and retailers can improve customer experience, increase sales, reduce time to market, go global, and boost team productivity.

Akeneo is based in France, Germany, and the United States. For more information about our solutions: www.akeneo.com.

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