

Dec 6, 2017

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in Big Data,
Cloud, Database

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Q&A with Unilog: on Product Data Management and E-commerce

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Enterprises are relying on data to power their operations now more than ever before, and this is especially true for SMBs and enterprises who want to be viable competitors in the e-commerce marketplace. With more entrants into the market, and as more businesses strive to capture, manage, and control access to data in order to enhance their productivity and outreach efforts, it is crucial that companies gain access to the right tools. One of the tools companies need today that will help them improve business processes is a Product Data Management solution.

Product Data Management (PDM) solutions provide organizations the tools to capture and manage product data and process-related information within a single system, ensuring accurate product data and knowledge transfer. This helps enterprises speed up product development and deliver a better customer experience.

Unilog, a leader in B2B e-commerce and product data management solutions, recognizes the importance of a robust PDM software for today's digital businesses. Unilog recently migrated to Google Cloud Platform with the help of Agosto Inc., a tier 1 Google Cloud Premier partner, to create a more efficient IT infrastructure for their e-commerce and PDM services. Leveraging the Google Cloud Platform to deliver high-speed computing and reliable strong connections, Unilog's PDM solution makes it easy for businesses to clean, categorize, enrich, and maintain their critical product data.

SourceForge had the chance to speak with Swamy Mahesh, the Chief Technology Officer and Vice President of Operations, to discuss why companies need to leverage a robust PDM solution to achieve the best business outcomes.

Q: Can you share with us a brief background on Unilog? What does Unilog specialize in that makes it a unique company?

A: Unilog is a global technology and services company founded in 1998 in Bangalore, India. In 2011, we opened our US headquarters in Wayne, PA, where Suchit Bachalli serves as CEO. Our company is ISO 9001:2008- and ISO 8000-certified and employs more than 800 people. Unilog specializes in e-commerce solutions and enriched product catalogs for the B2B marketplace. Our flagship product, CIMM2, is a fully integrated, cloud-based e-commerce platform designed to fit the unique needs of the manufacturing and distribution industries, including Electrical, Plumbing, HVAC, PVF and Industrial businesses, among many others.

Q: Simply put, what is Product Data Management? How does it give businesses a competitive advantage when it comes to understanding their customer base?

A: Product data management is very important in this highly digitized world, and any business that sells products can't succeed in the marketplace without it. Your business efficiency and indirect cost benefits are dependent on a number of factors:

- How easily you can build a robust catalog of relevant items for your customers
- The amount of product information you have in your system, and if it's enough to satisfy your various sales and marketing channels
- Your ability to present the data in a searchable/consumable way to customers and internal users
- How efficiently and quickly you can make data updates in your system
- The capability to export or feed data to other systems and channels that have self-service needs
- If you have a single source of truth for all your product data

Q: So how does Product Data Management differ from Product Information Management?

A: PDM involves all aspects of the product lifecycle, from sourcing and standardizing product data, to optimizing and delivering it to different sales channels. Unilog offers both a la carte and end-to-end data management solutions tailored to customer needs. Our PDM services for content include data quality analysis, taxonomy design, data maintenance, extract, transform and load (ETL) assistance.



Swamy Mahesh, CTO & VP Operations at Unilog

A PIM is the centralized solution Unilog built within CIMM2 to create a single, uniform view of master data and give businesses the ability to manage large data catalogs across the organization, as well as outside of it.

Q: What would you say makes Unilog's PDM solution unique when compared to similar solutions in the market?

A: Unilog knows that in order to run a robust e-commerce platform, true product management must be performed through a PIM. That is why we built a dedicated PIM into our e-commerce solution, CIMM2. Together, CIMM2 and the PIM create a seamless e-business that provides consistency, efficiency, and interoperability with existing ERP and back-end systems.

The CIMM2 PIM streamlines and improves business by providing built-in workflows that enable inputs and updates throughout the product lifecycle, associates products with their accessories, replacement parts and related items, and gives vendors and channel partners the ability to manage and maintain their data in the PIM system.

Q: With so many cyber threats emerging on the regular, how is Unilog addressing customer concerns about data security and reliability?

A: Stringent security is implemented via a host of services provided by Google on their compute engine and container engine platforms, plus we have strict policies and processes in place with regards to deployments and we constantly analyze threats through security portals and all third-party security updates.

Q: Digitizing, organizing, and analyzing data has never been more important for businesses. What advice or insight can you offer to businesses in regards to successfully managing data?

A: With the entire world now networked digitally, we have access to information right in the palm of our hands with mobile devices, so information follows us wherever we go. With the popularity of cloud and virtual business, it is now easier, faster and more efficient than ever to collaborate and do business with others. My suggestion to businesses is to centralize product data management, embrace technology and focus on your core business.

With Unilog's CIMM2 solution, mobile app, responsive web app and its strength to easily integrate with external systems, we make it easy to run an online storefront. Our all-in-one system lets you personalize catalogs and page views to create a more meaningful and relevant shopping experience for your customers, and eliminates the need for print catalogs and Excel spreadsheets for managing product content.



Q: What are some of the top trends in product data management that are bound to shape the future of the industry? How is Unilog keeping up with this and incorporating them into solutions?

A: We're seeing a couple of top trends in product data management right now. Organizations are consolidating data management platforms and defining universal data standards to make it is easier and faster to share accurate data across multiple distribution channels. Also, businesses are now getting product feeds from different sources, so they need a platform that can sync and syndicate data easily.

Unilog's CIMM2 platform has very robust syndication modules within the CIMM2 PIM which allow all segments of customers – small, medium or large – to syndicate content from multiple sources and publish content to various channels in a variety of formats including CSV, Excel, XML, BMECat, custom exports DIY, InDesign, PDF and more.

Q: The concept of “agility” is a buzzword that is gaining traction in the business world. How can the quality, accuracy, and reliability of data on an e-commerce website help businesses achieve agility? And what can businesses do on their part to achieve better agility?

A: Enriched content and proper data management are key factors in making businesses more agile. Enriched content, also known as commerce-enabled content, is unique, robust data that are relevant and reliable for online buyers. When you have processes and tools in place to manage this enriched content, you'll experience better consistency and accuracy, which benefits both your business and your buyers.

Organizations see higher efficiency and less duplicity when they have better data and a PIM solution in place. In addition, a content-rich site is a valuable resource for people within your organization because it offers reliable information at their fingertips so that they can answer customer questions quickly and easily.

Better content also leads to a better user experience. When an online storefront offers enriched product content, it becomes more searchable and desirable for buyers. Enriched content helps drive more people to a site and gives them everything they need to make an informed purchasing decision.

About Unilog Content Solutions

Founded in 1998, Content Unilog Solutions specializes in product data management, and B2B e-commerce software and content management. The company was initially established in Bangalore, India, driven by the mission to disrupt the B2B e-commerce space. CIMM2, the company's flagship product, is a software platform designed to help businesses compete in the online marketplace. Unilog was named one of the “50 Fastest Growing Tech Companies” in the United States by The Silicon Review in 2015.

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