



Increasing Online Sales of Parts and Accessories With Enhanced Content

Introduction: Competing in Today's Online World With Enhanced Content

The automotive parts and accessories aftermarket, like other markets, has moved dramatically toward online sales in recent years. **Retail sales of automotive parts and accessories over the Internet, excluding auctions, are now estimated to be over \$2 billion annually.** It is the fastest-growing sales channel in the industry.

In addition, today's consumer has evolved into a **multichannel shopper**. Many shoppers use the Internet to gather research before making a purchase either online, or over the phone, or in a retail outlet.

One critical component of any successful online store is complete product information and data, or enhanced "content," which includes descriptions, photos, year/ make/ model/ sub model application information, and other related information.

This enhanced content is important for two main reasons:

- 1). Content gives the customer enough information and confidence to make a decision to buy; and
- 2). The online store has more content that gets indexed by search engines, giving it greater visibility in the online world.

Successful online retailers have long ago discovered that content is directly related to increased sales. This is sometimes also referred to "merchandising." **Retailers often report large sales increases for a single product or brand, simply by adding enhanced product content online.**

One online retailer increased sales of one brand **from \$2,000 per month to over \$30,000 per month, over a 90-day period, simply by adding enhanced product content to their website.**

When it comes to enhanced content, as one of the world's largest online retailers with \$10 billion in annual sales has put it, "great merchandising wins."

“ *We've seen an immediate sales increase with enhanced web content, when the correct photo, year/ make/ model application information and product description are used.*

”

-Rob Eberhart, DCi

“ There is a direct link between product content on a website and sales. DCi solves the content problem and lets an ecommerce retailer increase sales by letting them focus on building their business, not creating data. ”

-Rob Eberhart, DCi

This also demonstrates the phenomenon of the synergy of related products. Successful retailers have known for years that adding additional products for sale doesn't decrease sales for existing products. *Instead, overall sales tend to increase.* That phenomenon is demonstrated in real life when big-box retailers build larger "super stores," when direct marketers add pages to their catalog, or even when fast food chains cluster their stores next to each other. It is especially true when online retailers add additional products to their existing product line.

At DCi, we maintain the key to competing online is a simple, proven equation:

Enhanced Product Content = Online Sales

Industry Data Formats

ACES XML and PIES have been promoted as aftermarket industry-standard data formats. Here are various data formats defined.

ACES XML (Aftermarket Catalog Enhanced Standard):

Remember the "A" and think of *Application data*: vehicle year, make and model. The ACES XML format requires each row to be for one specific vehicle application. *ACES XML cannot include universal-fit products.*

PIES (Product Information Exchange Standard): Remember the "P" and think of a *Price sheet*: part number, description, prices, dimensions, weights, and so on. Each row of a PIES file contains information for one part number.

DCi Enhanced Content: Includes up to 20 proprietary data tables unique to the automotive aftermarket including information such as a product's features and benefits; digital assets including installation instructions or warranty; required, recommended and replacement parts; and up to six photos. Designed to include universal-fit products.

Whatever form of data or content you require, including your own custom format, DCi can deliver.

A Common Bottleneck for Online Content That Prevents Sales: Managing Content In-House

Many retailers selling online have attempted to create or manage automotive product content and data in-house. Unfortunately for many retailers in the past this was an overlooked area, discovered after already investing thousands of dollars to create a website.

Creating or managing content in-house creates three main problems for small- to mid-sized online retailers: 1). The amount of money required to pay to create content from scratch outweighs any

potential profit; **2**). The amount of time to create content results in an extraordinarily long lead time to get products to market; and **3**). The constant change in data makes it impossible to maintain accurate content, resulting in outdated product content virtually from Day One.

Look at the workflow required to maintain data in-house below. It quickly shows the tremendous workload:



The overhead required to maintain data in-house includes paying people to do research, make calls to manufacturers, make measurements including weights and dimensions, write copy, etc.

Compare this to outsourcing product content from DCi:



Automotive Aftermarket Product Data: Constant Changing

Another problem in maintaining data in-house is staying current with the constant changes to data. In fact, the amount of data that changes in an average month may be surprising.

There are two main types of changes. These changes occur at the part number level and at the vehicle application level.

Part number changes primarily come from manufacturers and are mostly the result of new products, product updates or modifications, and new prices.

Part number-related content is vital to profitably selling products. This includes part number, description, jobber prices, retail MAP prices, multiple dimensions, billable shipping weight, actual weights, country of

“ Unless you’re prepared to maintain thousands and thousands of records day in and day out, the typical online retailer simply can’t keep up with the mountain of data and content in the industry. ”

-Rob Eberhart, DCi

origin, hazardous material (hazmat) codes, UPC/GTIN bar codes, and dozens of other types of vital information. This PIES information is updated daily to reduce costs and maintain profitability. DCi’s processes constantly communicate with manufacturers to stay up-to-date on this content.

Here are actual part number-level changes from a recent 30-day period out of the nearly 200 brands managed by DCi:

74,468 new part numbers released

75,129 new prices released

454,387 part numbers with at least one modification

Application-level changes usually come from outside sources and include monthly changes to the ACES XML year/ make/ model tables authored for the industry by AAIA. In a typical month, **DCi must update over half a million part number records due to changes in these tables.** *This is in addition to the numbers shown above for manufacturer part number-level changes.* These application-level changes can be the results of a new vehicle platform being released, a change to an existing platform, additional years added to an existing platform, or simply ongoing maintenance to the AAIA ACES XML vehicle tables.

Universal-Fit Products: The Non-Application Application

Universal-fit products, the products that fit any vehicle, have been an application challenge. It’s common for 20% to 50% of aftermarket manufacturers’ product lines to be universal fit and with some manufacturers it’s 100%. Ironically the current industry data standards do not account for these universal products.

Historically there have been many “work around” solutions in the aftermarket, including making a universal product fit *all* vehicle combinations, a “non-application application.” It’s easy to see, with hundreds of thousands of universal products and tens of millions of vehicle combinations, how this can create terabytes of unnecessary data that slows down servers and takes up extra data storage. This also creates numerous problems when creating a product look up for a consumer website.

Many years ago, recognizing the opportunity of these universal products, DCi created a proprietary way to categorize these products without creating excess, unnecessary data.

Outsourcing Online Content: An Affordable Option

DCi has a better solution to having robust and enhanced product content on an ecommerce website. Outsourcing the content for an ecommerce website allows an online retailer to be competitive.

A service like this may be referred to as Infrastructure as a Service (IAAS) or cloud computing.

DCi ecommerce customers have populated their online catalogs with the industry’s best content, for less than the cost of an administrative assistant.

Look at the table below, comparing maintaining “build your own” product content in-house, to using DCi as the source:

Description	DCi	Build Your Own
Labor cost per product on website	NONE	\$\$\$\$
Programming to display content on website	\$	\$\$\$\$
Availability of new product content	Immediate	When you can get it
Speed-to-market: time frame for products to go “live” on website	Immediate	Usually slow
Automatic update to monthly vehicle updates	YES	No
Increased revenue through better product exposure	YES	No
Automatic manufacturer data updates	YES	No
Data elements to allow intelligent parts search	YES	No
Choice of brands to sell	YES	Yes
Industry’s most accurate and complete enhanced content	YES	No
Product information for universal products	YES	Yes
Application-specific products linked to millions of vehicle combinations	1917-2010	Very difficult
Proven method of increasing sales	YES	?
Data resides on your own server	YES ¹	Yes
Reduced customer returns due to more accurate data	YES	?

¹DCi has options to deliver raw data to your server, or an embedded “plug and play” solution.

Why Use DCi?

DCi is your go-to source for product content for several reasons.

- 1). The content is more current than any other source.** DCi has a team of electronic catalog experts, with hundreds of years combined experience, working as an extension of the nearly 250 brands that trust DCi to maintain their product data and content. Updates and changes to a product line are sent instantly to DCi. In fact, many manufacturers prefer to send their raw data to DCi, *and rely on DCi for content for their own websites!*
- 2). The content is more complete than any other source.** DCi has an unmatched ability to include related, required or recommended parts. DCi can include multimedia files including photos, instruction sheets, warranty information, and other information.
- 3). The content is more affordable than any other source.** DCi pricing starts as low as \$495 for the initial download and \$200 per month for access to five brands including one photo per part number.
- 4). DCi has more content than any other source.** With nearly 250 of the industry’s leading brands, nearly 1.4 million part numbers, and over

52 million combinations of year/make/model/submodel applications, DCi is the industry's data and content source. Many of the industry's most widely-used formats, online catalogs, and data delivery standards were developed by or with DCi.

Contact DCi Today

It's been proven many times: *Enhanced Product Content = Online Sales*. With enhanced product content supplied as an outsourced service, sales go up, costs go down.

To get more information on increasing online sales by using the industry's most complete enhanced product content, contact Rob Eberhart at DCi.

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