

## Product Content Onboarding/Publishing Best Practices

1. **Define your product and non-product related content management goals.** A sound content acquisition and management strategy starts with understanding the intended goals for the different kinds of content. Content will be gathered and deployed across all channels (retail web, mobile, catalog, social) in a variety of manners to engage and convert customers. Knowing the intended purpose will determine the type and format of the content, such as robust product information for customer research, attributes to drive search or rich images to support web merchandising and editorial content.
2. **Engineer the right efficient and effective processes.** Retailers need to first evaluate their current processes and map out requirements needed to support existing and future channels. For example, expanding to web may require a photo or video creation, internal image editing or enhanced online publishing. Mobile will require photos but are limited to smaller file sizes. Once processes and requirements for each channel have been mapped out, retailers must start to work on streamlining processes including: content acquisition from the vendors, content creation from samples, editing photos, and ultimately publishing each channel.
3. **Align internal teams and assign clear accountability.** In order to create a smooth and fast flow of content management from vendor to publishing, retailers need to evaluate the organization roles, responsibilities, KPIs and incentives. The entire team must be aware of the overall goals of content creation and the impact on the business. Aligned teams will have tight processes and SLAs for internal handoffs and delivery of content. Performance will map to incentives for reviews / bonuses based on content goals.
4. **Create a hierarchy of product content needs.** Identify the type of content required for each product based on the channel, potential sales and impact on the brand. Create content based on the business and brand needs. For example, products supported by video and rich images must have a high gross margin return. Also determine which products need fast turnarounds for onboarding based on similar criteria.
5. **Set expectations with suppliers / vendors.** Content acquisition starts with the request to vendors for product information, samples and images when placing orders. Ensure that vendors know your requirements for product sample delivery, image size, and copy attributes. Often retailers require that vendors load information directly into their systems through portals. Ensure that vendors meet expectations by including content criteria in your Vendor Guidelines and assessing chargebacks for violations.
6. **Product Information Management Systems (PIM).** Many retailers now use Excel or home grown databases to manage product information. Using a PIM can streamline the product content onboarding process and management by creating a single source of product information and make it available to everyone involved in the product content creation process both externally and internally. Once this centralized product information management system is in place, pushing the right content to the right channels at the right time is seamless and less prone to errors. In addition, retailers can benefit from utilizing SaaS solutions that offload concerns regarding scaling of the infrastructure to the providers and allows retailers to concentrate on the core of their businesses.
7. **Integrate PIM and Ecommerce Platforms.** Retailers that operate multiple channels should consider implementing a PIM solution in conjunction with a replatforming project or even before to ensure that processes most effectively improve productivity and to ensure that the solutions chosen are can be tightly integrated to secure the most streamlined process possible.

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# eCommerce Diligence™ Checklist

## Product Content Onboarding Key Questions to Ask Providers

### Company

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1. How long have you been in this business?
2. What differentiates your company from the competition?
3. How many customers have you sold? How many have left your company, and why?
4. What size or types of clients fall into your “sweet spot”? Won any awards in that space?
5. What peripheral or supporting services do you offer (e.g., technology, photo studio, video creation, vendor management, digital marketing, public relations)?
6. Describe your team and their experience, capabilities and prior design assignments.

### Products/Services

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1. What information do you need from my company as part of the content creation?
  - a. Company goals
  - b. Target customer
  - c. Desired UX by channel
  - d. Content inventory by channel
  - e. Survey of competition
2. Describe your experience in managing content for all user selling channels: web, retail, catalog, mobile, and social.
3. What optional services do you provide as part of the content acquisition and management?
4. Do you have the ability to create content (photo, video, copy)?
5. Do you provide technology to support content acquisition and management?
6. What vendor and supply chain management services do you offer?
7. Do you provide merchandising support with product attribution?
8. Do you provide other digital management services?
9. How effectively do your product and services integrate with PIM and ECP solutions?

### Process/Practices

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1. What is your product’s competitive advantage over other packages / services?
  - a. Quality, speed, price, etc.?
2. What is your content management philosophy?
3. How do you ensure the quality and brand appropriateness of content?
4. What are your quality assurance standards and practices?
5. Do you have a “fast track” path for high priority products?
6. How do you determine the ROI for content creation to segment services for retailers?
7. What key elements are included in your service?
8. What innovative content management technology and tools do you use?

### Pricing

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1. What is your pricing model for your services?
2. Are there any additional fees (e.g., technology setup, testing, vendor management)?

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