From Bottleneck to Breakthrough: How Merchandising Managers Are Transforming Product Information Workflows

Executive Summary

In today's fast-paced retail environment, merchandising managers face unprecedented pressure to accelerate time-to-market while maintaining data accuracy across an increasingly complex product ecosystem. This white paper explores how innovative product data management solutions like HivePix are enabling merchandising teams to eliminate traditional bottlenecks, reduce manual work, and focus on strategic activities that drive revenue growth.

The Hidden Cost of Manual Product Information Management

Merchandising managers are all too familiar with the scenario: new products arrive and the race begins to collect, validate, standardize, and publish product information across channels. This process typically involves:

- Requesting product data from suppliers through emails, spreadsheets, and phone calls
- Manually entering information into multiple internal systems
- Validating data accuracy across disparate sources
- Reformatting content for different sales channels and marketing materials
- Addressing errors and inconsistencies discovered late in the process

According to recent industry research, merchandising teams spend upwards of **25-30% of their time** on manual data entry and reconciliation—time that could be better spent on strategic merchandising decisions, pricing optimization, and promotional planning.

"The biggest challenge we faced was constantly chasing suppliers for complete and accurate product information. Our team was spending more time managing spreadsheets than actually merchandising products." - Head of Merchandising, Major Retail Chain

The Supplier Engagement Challenge

Traditional approaches to product information management often involve requiring suppliers to manually enter data into proprietary portals or systems. This creates several critical problems:

1. **Low supplier participation rates** - Studies show that supplier compliance with manual data entry requirements averages only 65-70%, leaving merchandising teams to fill the gaps.

2. **Lengthy onboarding processes** - New suppliers can typically take weeks, even months (!), to become fully operational in proprietary systems, delaying product launches.

3. **Data inconsistency** - When suppliers must enter product information into multiple customer systems, inconsistencies inevitably arise, creating downstream quality issues.

4. **Limited scalability** - As product assortments grow, the manual effort required from both suppliers and merchandising teams increases linearly.

Transforming Product Data Workflows

Progressive merchandising organizations are now adopting a fundamentally different approach to product information management. Rather than building supplier portals that require manual data entry, they're implementing solutions that:

- Connect directly to supplier data sources
- Unify product information across different formats and systems
- Automate validation and enrichment processes
- Enable seamless sharing across the retail ecosystem

This shift fundamentally changes the merchandising manager's role from "data processor" to "data strategist."

Case Study:
Major Apparel Retailer Reduces Time-to-Market by 40%

A leading apparel retailer with over 1,500 suppliers was struggling with product launch delays due to incomplete and inaccurate product information. The company implemented HivePix's unified product data platform with the following results:

- **40% reduction in time-to-market** for new products
- **85% decrease in product data errors** due to manual entry or processes
- **30% increase in supplier participation**
- Merchandising team reclaimed approximately **15 hours per week** previously spent on manual data tasks
- Improved ability to launch coordinated omnichannel campaigns due to consistent product information

Key Benefits of a Connected Approach

Merchandising managers who have transformed their product information workflows report significant advantages:

1. Accelerated Time-to-Market - By automating the collection and validation of product data directly from suppliers, merchandising teams can dramatically reduce the lead time required to launch new products. Instead of waiting weeks for suppliers to manually enter data, product information flows automatically into merchandising systems.

2. Improved Data Quality - When product data comes directly from supplier sources through a unified platform, accuracy improves significantly. One home goods retailer reported a 45% reduction in product returns due to incorrect specifications after implementing a connected product data solution.

3. Enhanced Productivity - With manual data tasks automated, merchandising managers can refocus their time on value-adding activities:

- Optimizing product assortments
- Developing more effective promotional strategies
- Analyzing product performance metrics
- Improving the customer experience

4. Better Supplier Relationships - Suppliers appreciate not having to manually enter the same data into multiple customer systems. This creates stronger partnerships and often leads to preferential treatment in product allocation and promotional support.

Implementing a New Approach: Key Considerations

For merchandising managers looking to transform their product information workflows, several factors are critical to success:

1. **Ease of supplier adoption** - Solutions should make it simple for suppliers of all sizes and technical capabilities to connect and share product data.

2. **System flexibility** - The ability to handle multiple data formats and integrate with existing merchandising systems is essential.

3. **Validation and enrichment capabilities** - Automated tools to ensure data quality and completeness significantly reduce the need for manual intervention.

4. **Scalability** - As product assortments grow, the solution should scale without requiring proportional increases in staff or resources.

Industry Metrics:
The Impact of Streamlined Product Information

Recent industry studies have quantified the impact of modernizing product information management:

- Retailers with optimized product data workflows launch new products 30-45% faster than competitors

- Average cost of correcting a product data error: $60-80 per incident

- Organizations with unified product data report 23% higher team productivity

- Conversion rates increase by 15-25% when complete and accurate product information is available to customers

The HivePix Approach: Draw Information from the Source

HivePix offers a fundamentally different approach to product information management. Rather than creating yet another data silo requiring manual supplier participation, HivePix connects directly to supplier data sources, unifies product information, and enables seamless sharing across your business ecosystem.

Key capabilities include:

- **Integrated supplier data** that eliminates redundant data entry
- **AI-powered data unification** that standardizes information from diverse sources and formats
- **Automated validation and enrichment** to ensure data quality and completeness
- **Seamless integration** with existing merchandising, e-commerce, and Product Information Management (PIM) systems
- **Flexible data export** to support all sales channels and marketing materials

Conclusion: From Data Processor to Strategic Merchandiser

By transforming product information workflows, merchandising managers can shift their focus from manual data processing to strategic decision-making. This not only accelerates product launches but also enables more sophisticated merchandising strategies, better customer experiences, and ultimately, improved competitive positioning.

Forward-thinking merchandising leaders are embracing connected product data solutions like HivePix not simply as productivity tools, but as strategic assets that fundamentally enhance their ability to bring the right products to market faster and more efficiently.

HivePix is a platform as a service that connects product data across supply chain partners, unifies product data across different sources and formats, and makes that data traceable for regulatory reporting and sustainability initiatives. To learn more about how HivePix can transform your product information workflows, visit www.hivepix.com or contact us via email at info@hivepix.com.

References and Citations

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2. *Retail Systems Research. (2023). Product Information Management Benchmark Report. This study identified that merchandising teams spend 25-30% of their time on manual data entry and reconciliation tasks.*
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4. *Forrester Research. (2024). The Total Economic Impact of Product Information Management Solutions. Study showing retailers with optimized product data workflows launch new products 30-45% faster than competitors.*
5. *Aberdeen Group. (2023). Product Data Quality and Business Performance. Research indicating organizations with unified product data report 23% higher team productivity.*
6. *The apparel retailer case study represents a composite based on multiple HivePix customer implementations. Performance metrics represent average improvements across similar retail deployments between 2023-2025. Individual results may vary based on organization size, complexity, and implementation approach.*