

# TOGETHER

Some adventures are better tackled together

BY CARMELA ANA MELONE

**S**imple, quick, and ideally at no cost: More and more PIM vendors offer free demo versions or full basic software to download entirely free of charge. In doing so, they appear to strike a chord with many companies. After all, when greater focus is placed on the much-heralded customer experience, less attention is paid to what goes on in the background. But can it really be that simple? According to a current white paper by the Bayard Consulting Group, many stumbling blocks lurk in a DIY project such as this, almost always resulting in higher costs and increased expenditure.

The issue is that many companies underestimate the importance of a product information system and therefore the scope of a PIM project, despite the fact that the many benefits provided by a central data storage system are now widely understood. However, the strategic opportunities provided by a PIM system have not yet penetrated the consciousness of those in charge. Many current digitalisation projects primarily target distribution channels with the aim of generating more awareness, more traffic and more turnover. However, these objectives are too short-sighted, as the field of data extraction is extremely volatile. Customer expectations change, target groups come and go, and there are a growing number of new touchpoints while old channels are gradually becoming obsolete. This is why it is essential to start much earlier with all data of central importance to a company and to swing the focus from the shiny user interface to the machine room of the information supply chain.

Companies must understand that sustainable business processes and product communication agility are only possible if the foundation allows for transparent, controlled and flexible data streams. Furthermore, the fact that end customers aren't the only product information recipients must be taken into account from the start. In-house marketing, sales and customer service staff are equally reliant on accurate, reliable and current data. Retail and partner firms also have their needs and individual requirements in terms of product information. The issue of PIM is therefore not only multi-layered, but also of strategic importance, as companies determine the framework for numerous current and future business processes with the introduction of a new PIM system.

The topic of PIM implementation is therefore highly specific, which is why it comes as no surprise that DIY projects inevitably reach their limits. This starts as early as the system selection stage, during which decision-makers mustn't base their decision on website information and marketing promises alone. Neutral market experts and analysts provide an initial, objective overview of relevant solutions and can gauge whether they suit the company from a strategic view in the long term. But a specific selection requires more than this. Experts and consultants with substantial project experience offer valuable perspectives that place PIM projects on sturdy footing from the start. The better a system meets specific requirements, the fewer subsequent adjustments that will be required.

A thorough process and requirements analysis prior to selecting a system is therefore of tremendous importance to a PIM project's success. Not only are consultants able to communicate in a simpler, more target-oriented manner, their project experience helps them to analyse and document existing processes while prioritising individual requirements. This enables a common understanding of

the project and the objectives pursued by various departments and thus a positive influence on the acceptance of the new solution among members of staff.

This communication function of the external consultants is essential and continues throughout the entire project. Because the introduction of a PIM system signifies the central transformation of multiple business processes, the integration task comprises not only the system architecture, but also the processes and organisation. The way that members of staff work will change, which is often a highly sensitive procedure that is far too often performed casually and without tact. As a result, members of staff feel overlooked and inwardly block any changes, creating significant potential for frustration. Experienced project consultants counteract all of this by encouraging and supporting open and productive communication between all departments, users and persons in charge from the start. Staff members from the business and IT side are incorporated into the PIM project to define new responsibilities and roles together.

Cross-departmental cooperation also lays the foundation for the successful further development of the data model and system. The introduction of a PIM solution should always be seen as a long-term programme in which new requirements and use cases keep emerging. New distribution channels such as marketplaces, websites and apps as well as new suppliers, data pools and market segments continuously change the rules that a data model must represent. A modern PIM system may be able to model this flexibility, yet the organisation and the people in charge must also be able to handle its implementation. Juggling all these tasks at once is a major challenge that most in-house project managers are unable to master alone. They are often caught between two stools, which makes the overall communication and a neutral approach to the project difficult. They also don't have the market experience that sets the course for successful projects, particularly when it comes to PIM implementations.

*This way to the white paper on "Why PIM Isn't DIY Project":*

[www.bayard-consulting.com/en/whitepaper-why-pim-is-not-a-diy-project](http://www.bayard-consulting.com/en/whitepaper-why-pim-is-not-a-diy-project)

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