



## Winning the Race for Data Quality

*IDW Analytics Tool empowers rapid improvement for electrical manufacturers*

Product data quality is a hot topic in the industry right now. With the dramatic rise of smart phones and eCommerce websites, end users' expectations are rapidly evolving.

As pressures increase throughout the supply chain, distributors are looking upstream to manufacturers for key product content such as spec sheets, attributes, images and descriptions (SAID data elements).

Nearly 300 manufacturers representing more than 1500 brands are populating IDEA's Industry Data Warehouse (IDW) with over 2.4 million product SKU's. Even still, many distributors feel that progress is moving too slow and quality is lacking.

As manufacturers grapple with managing countless attributes, product families and formatting issues, distributors are working to keep pace with the marketplace. High quality product information is vitally important, and it requires the full support and participation of the entire industry.

Behind the scenes, things are changing. Manufacturers are rapidly adopting the IDW Analytics Tool, which brings unprecedented visibility to the health of a manufacturer's product data. This tool brings the needs of distributors to the forefront through rating criteria, empowering manufacturers to proactively pinpoint issues and make data quality improvements at their source in their business system.

### Why has product data quality been an issue for so many years?

Until recently, manufacturers had difficulties pinpointing and prioritizing issues with their data. At best, it was a cumbersome process.

"In the past, I sent my data and thought it was good to go, unless someone brought it to my attention that something was wrong with it," said **Barbara Spadaro, electronic data specialist, Bridgeport Fittings.**

For example, a manufacturer might have an item description that worked well within its system, but included a character or symbol that caused transmission errors in distributors' systems. And even when the manufacturer was alerted to an issue, it still took a lot of detective work to find out where the error was and how it needed to be fixed or reformatted.

"To provide better service to our distributors, we need to know what information they are looking for and the way they need it structured," said **Chance Brown, customer EDI & barcode manager, electrical division, Southwire.**

Ultimately, manufacturers needed a way to see their product data through their distributors' eyes.



## What help is available in the IDW to improve product data quality?

Using feedback from distributors and the Industry Standards Committee, IDEA developed the IDW Analytics Tool, an add-on in the IDW that helps manufacturers proactively manage their data. This tool visually identifies where product data issues and gaps exist. Launched in November 2012 as Supply Chain Analytics, the IDW Analytics Tool prioritizes key product information in real-time and makes it easier to fix issues at the source: in the manufacturer's business system. This enables manufacturers to focus resources on data improvements rather than wasting time finding errors.

"This tool actually shows you where the errors and issues are; I never had that before. It makes my job 1000% easier," said Barbara Spadaro of Bridgeport Fittings.

## How does the IDW Analytics Tool work?

IDW Analytics provides a user-friendly interface for a manufacturer's IDW data, with the ability to drill down multiple levels and export the errors for fixing. Manufacturers can measure progress with their peers through blind aggregate comparisons. Also, each participating manufacturer is given an appraisal rating based on the completeness and quality of the critical data fields most needed by distributors. This results in higher quality product data flowing through the supply chain to sell more products for both distributors and manufacturers.

For Eaton Crouse-Hinds, the tool provides x-ray vision into its product data, clearly categorizing and weighting product groupings to show what is highest priority.

"Now with this tool, we can see everything: whether it is stock products, appraised fields, or all the product data we populate in the IDW. We know exactly what distributors are looking for, where we have the most errors, and what data clean-up efforts are going to give us the biggest bang for our buck," said **Lorraine Mott, Project Leader Electronic Commerce for Eaton Crouse-Hinds**. "Before, there really wasn't a way to find that out without a lot of analysis and time. Now IDW Analytics provides that analysis to us with just a click."

## How are manufacturers using IDW Analytics to improve their data?

Dozens of manufacturers are already using the IDW Analytics Tool to improve their product data quality. In under a year, manufacturers using this tool have improved their overall appraisal rating by 40 to 400%. Manufacturers report increased efficiency, better use of their resources, and improved awareness of distributors' data needs.

Bridgeport Fittings leveraged the tool to help achieve IDEA's 2013 IDW Platinum Band of Excellence, which means they are providing marketing content for 100% of their stock products in the IDW.

"I use IDW Analytics every day. We couldn't have achieved the IDW Platinum Band without it. The tool shows us where the shortcomings are so we can concentrate our efforts, and it is making it easier for me to provide all the data that distributors are looking for. I would never be able to do this on my own," said Bridgeport Fittings' Barbara Spadaro.



Likewise, Lorraine Mott credits this analytics tool with helping Eaton Crouse-Hinds achieve the IDW Platinum Band. The tool's executive summary and rating system have empowered the company's data team to prioritize its ongoing data quality efforts, document its progress, and gain management support for additional resources.

"We can present the dashboard to our management team and show clearly what distributors need and where we stand with our data. We've been able to get resources allocated to help make data improvements because of this tool," said Mott. "Now they can see how missing or improper data impacts our business as well as customers and end users."

For Southwire's Chance Brown, the tool is helping his team to be more proactive. "The IDW Analytics Tool helps us identify issues with our data and find out what we need to do to fix it," he said.

### How does the IDW Analytics Tool help distributors access higher quality product data?

This tool brings all the voices of distributors together into one set of rules that represent the channel needs. The tool's rating applies the same criteria to every manufacturer, ensuring that product data is assessed on an even playing field and not driven by marketplace power or special-case situations.

Distributors' feedback is represented in the tool's error checks and the appraisal rating, which applies more weight to key product fields and groups such as marketing URL's and attributes. As distributors' product information needs change, the tool can be updated to communicate new priorities (e.g. MSDS, RoHS, and Conflict Minerals). Bottom line, with IDW Analytics, manufacturers have increased awareness of what all their distributors need. This promotes long-term solutions and a process for continual product data improvement.

"Distributors are looking for information to populate their web storefronts for end users, so they can better sell products. I truly believe we'll be able to efficiently provide that information to distributors now that we have access to the powerful IDW Analytics Tool," said Mott. "I hope that the distributors realize that many manufacturers are working really hard to provide the data that they are requesting."

### How is IDW Analytics different from other data quality programs?

The IDW Analytics Tool takes an industry-wide approach, using feedback from distributors and the Industry Standards Committee as the basis for its rating criteria. Other data quality programs often employ a one-to-one approach, pairing one distributor with one manufacturer to establish data quality expectations.

Plus, the IDW Analytics Tool is focused on improving product data at the source. It rates a manufacturer's product data quality based on the information that's currently populated in the IDW which makes it more concrete and actionable. **All ratings are private and accessible to the manufacturer only,** and the IDW Analytics Tool enables manufacturers to export errors and fix them in their business systems for all their trading partners (not just those using the IDW).



### How can distributors help improve data quality in IDW?

With the IDW, the industry has a powerful engine that was built by the industry, for the industry. It's the fuel that powers the engine—the data—that needs continual updating. As the industry continues this process of ongoing improvement, communication is more important than ever.

Distributors can help by:

- Keeping IDEA informed about your product data needs. The IDW Analytics Tool tool shows manufacturers what you need from their product data, based on your feedback. This tool is designed to adapt to the changing marketplace you serve and can be updated as needed. Contact Justin Smith at [jsmith@idea4industry.com](mailto:jsmith@idea4industry.com) to see a demo of the tool or to provide feedback on what data is most important to your business.
- Encourage manufacturers to use the IDW Analytics Tool tool to improve their product data. Manufacturers need to hear from you and become more aware of the impact their product marketing content has on your sales.

### How can manufacturers get access to this data quality tool?

The IDW Analytics Tool is an add-on tool available to any IDW manufacturer. For more information or to schedule a personal demo, contact [info@idea4industry.com](mailto:info@idea4industry.com).