CASE STUDY

Stibo Systems helps leading online retailer drive sales and increase efficiency

bol.com

BOL.COM

Background

Bol.com is the Netherlands' number one online retail store, with 3.4m active customers online. Bol.com's convenient online e-commerce platform provides customers with a plethora of product offerings of over 5.5 million products. Bol.com competes with other online retailers' physical stores and international e-commerce and brick-and-mortar retail companies alike.

Challenge

In 2010, bol.com found itself needing to replace its existing catalog system. Bol.com's online offering encompasses over 5.5 million products, each with over 250 attributes as well as many automated supplier connections.

Bol.com needed to establish a trusted single-source of product data, to decrease the time and effort required to add product information from new suppliers and also to be able to add new product categories faster. The company was looking for a stable, robust, and importantly, scalable platform, as bol.com's product portfolio is expected to grow significantly over the next few years. Scalability, flexibility, performance and functionality were key and a high level of automation was needed. Additionally, bol.com wanted to find a supplier with which it could develop a long-term relationship.

> **Bol.com's use of STEP doesn't stop at 'go-live' stage either — we are constantly moving to add new product data and manage it across the product channels. STEP is instrumental in this.**
>
> Menno Vis, Manager Software Development, bol.com.

CUSTOMER DETAILS
bol.com
http://www.bol.com/

INDUSTRY
Online retailer, FMCG

RETAIL

SEPTEMBER 2012

"Implementing STEP to track product master data has allowed our company to not only stay competitive, and increase sales, but also allows a constantly scalable solution as our company rapidly grows."

Menno Vis, Manager Software Development, bol.com.

Solution

In looking for a solution, bol.com was mainly concerned with product information management (PIM) and hadn't considered master data management (MDM). As bol.com began to review available PIM solutions, it became aware of Stibo Systems as a provider of not only PIM, but moreover, MDM solutions, a unique selling point that attracted bol.com executives to Stibo Systems.

As bol.com uses various IT systems (including ATG and Endeca) it was crucial that the platform chosen would be one that could easily integrate with these systems. During the RFP stage, some of the other shortlisted solution providers demonstrated issues with integration, however, Stibo Systems proved that its solution was able to feed directly into bol.com's IT architecture.

The company implemented Stibo's STEP platform, which creates a single trusted source of strategic information by integrating departmental knowledge to produce an enterprise-wide asset. Its functional richness, strong data modelling, and powerful workflow capabilities enable a business to drive revenue, reduce costs, mitigate risk and enhance agility through more efficient gathering, managing and sharing of strategic operational information.

As bol.com continues to grow as a company, continual scalability is very important to the organization, and choosing STEP highlights the company's commitments to growth.

Results

"Given the flexibility and ease of use for STEP, it is incredibly quick and simple to add new categories into our product portfolios, crucial factors which translate immediately to sales results. STEP allows us not only to manage both our product information and our volumes of data, but also allows us to look forward to future scalable solutions as our company grows," says Menno Vis, Manager Software Development, bol.com

Bol.com made the decision to implement STEP into the back end of its e-commerce offering in 2010, and went live with its largest product category, books, in Q4 2011. Using STEP, the entire category's product data was streamlined and updated to operate in near real-time to provide customers with information not only on each of the thousands of products in each category, but also on information on availability and shipping options. In this process, bol.com found STEP easy to use and integrate into its product channels. After the initial set-up, bol.com was able to decrease the amount of time required to add a new product category to its product portfolio. Further the time needed to on board and deliver content to the web using integrated and automated supplier feeds was reduced significantly from two months to two weeks, supporting its overall category expansion roadmap.

CHALLENGE

- Needs to manage a complex set of product data information with over 5.5 million products (and rapidly growing over 250 attributes per product, and many automated supplier connections

- Previous product information management system was unable to update product information consistently and in real-time, leading to missed sales opportunities

- Need to swiftly roll out entire new product categories via a scalable solution, as the company rapidly grew and developed increasing product channels, without jeopardising sales due to inaccurate product data

- Data issues, including product information consistency, price consistency and constant rolling product inventories, resulted in missed sales opportunities and threatened to alienate customers

Additionally, bol.com was able to set 'rules' within STEP, as to which books were made available for sale and in which manner. This was an unexpected benefit from STEP that provided a value-add for bol.com.

After seeing almost immediate business results with STEP, bol.com began using STEP to roll out its newest category – baby items. Already familiar with STEP as a result of its implementation in the books category, bol.com was able to go live with the new baby product category in a very short period of time. A short implementation cycle allows bol.com to move quickly, introducing new product categories as required.

In using STEP for the baby category, bol.com found it easier than ever to set up a whole new product category. Thanks to STEP, there was no elapsed IT time and configuring within the data model was simple – bol.com simply employs a generic data model with product data where 'baby' is defined as a category and new attributes can be implemented. This category and data automation is key to bol.com's offering, and STEP allows them to stay flexible in rolling out accurate categories quickly.

Following the implementation of STEP, bol.com saw an increase in the amount of sales, an increase in fulfillment rates, lowered order cancellation and overall higher revenues. The amount of available books for sale has increased significantly, with a heightened ebook offering due to automating the description of these products from their physical book counterparts.

"So far we are very pleased with the solution, and are continuing to implement STEP on remaining categories, and are building tools to automate PIM further. We are enhancing the data model to meet future categories and will continue to work with Stibo to have our requirements in the new releases of STEP."

"Bol.com's use of STEP doesn't stop at 'go-live' stage either – we are constantly moving to add new product data and manage it across the product channels. STEP is instrumental in this." commented Menno Vis, Manager Software Development, bol.com. The company has overall been very happy with the results and has also been able to use the implementation of STEP as an opportunity to take a second look at internal best practices.

Following implementation of STEP, the next stage for bol.com is to use STEP for its growing product data, as well as using STEP's various template standards and tools to automate PIM further. In this way, bol.com is able to use STEP to enhance the data model to meet future product categories as they roll out.

SOLUTION

Implemented STEP, Stibo System's product master data management (MDM) platform, to manage product data and enable swift roll-out of new product categories

RESULTS

- Amount of time required to add a new product category to the product portfolio has decreased significantly, allowing bol.com to speed up category expansion roadmap

- Decreased time required to add automated supplier content to bol.com's systems

- Rate of fulfilment has increased

- Order cancellation has decreased

- Overall increase in revenue[1]

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[i]   bol.com does not name revenue figures

About Stibo Systems   Stibo Systems, the strategic information management company tm, provides technology and solutions that enable organizations to manage their strategic information on a global scale through an integrated process. Stibo Systems' STEP architecture is a flexible, uniform master data management (MDM) platform to provide the business with a single trusted source of strategic information for the entire enterprise. Stibo Systems global customers include GE, Sears, Siemens, Target and Thule. Stibo Systems is a subsidiary of the privately held Stibo A/S group, originally founded in 1794 with corporate headquarters in Aarhus, Denmark. For more information, visit **www.stibosystems.com**.

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