



Content Sourcing

Trade Service And Manufacturers ... A Symbiotic Relationship

The ancient Chinese sage, Lau Tsu, once said, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." It's an excellent quote to remember when facing any daunting task. When we apply that statement to the "journey" a manufacturer's price and product information takes from its point of origin (the manufacturer) to its final destination (you), that first step is more like a giant leap! Put in a Trade Service context, it's clearly the most critical step the data takes along the way.

Acquiring data from the manufacturer is not as simplistic as it might sound. There are many challenges that must be overcome on a daily basis in order to ensure a smooth and uninterrupted flow of new information from vendor, to Trade Service, to distributor. In this issue of Partners, the focus will be on the most crucial leg of the data's journey: "from vendor to Trade Service."

A Symbiotic Relationship

The best partnerships are those that benefit both sides equally. This is the kind of relationship Trade Service has developed over 75 years with hundreds of electrical, plumbing, HVAC, and industrial manufacturers. Simply put, Trade Service helps manufacturers by removing the burden of efficiently communicating their price and product information to authorized customers. And manufacturers help Trade Service by providing the original source information for the content-based products we offer to the industry.

In this edition of Partners, we present the various components of Trade Service's content sourcing activity, photos of some of the sourcing staff, and examples of how our dedicated team fosters mutually-beneficial relationships with manufacturers whose data we receive, process, and transmit to you, the authorized user.

Up To The Challenge

Our sourcing department keeps in contact with hundreds of manufacturers to ensure that we receive their latest information as soon as it is available. This benefits



*"Our goal in Sourcing is to lighten the manufacturer's burden."
– Kelly Campbell, Sourcing Manager. Also shown, Robert Jones, Internet Sourcing Representative.*

our customers with on-time data delivery. The number of active relationships we maintain changes regularly, but currently, we work closely with approximately 1,500 manufacturers across the electrical, plumbing, HVAC, and industrial industries.

Contacts Go Many Levels Deep

The sourcing team maintains an extensive contact database so we are always current on the latest communication or situation in which we are engaged with a manufacturer. This ensures smooth continuity in resolving any issue under discussion, regardless of which sourcing team member makes or receives a call.

Establishing the right points of contact with a manufacturer can be complex and often takes years to cultivate. For example, we often need to speak with one person about printed price sheets, another individual about electronic data files, and still another about e-commerce catalog content. There are other times when we must contact someone in marketing or customer service to resolve a particular issue. And these many contacts must

... please see page 2

... Content Sourcing (Not Just Pricing)



"Our manufacturers know that their data is released only to their authorized distributors." – Lynn Tracy, Authorization Coordinator

be maintained regularly, so the thread is not broken when turnover occurs.

Sometimes An Uphill Battle

The mantra of any good pricing service is: "Get the data out on time!" Despite our high percentage of on-time deliveries, there are instances when it's a physical impossibility. On one recent occasion, a manufacturer set an effective date for a price change, but did not receive their new price sheet back from the printers until after this date had come and gone. Undaunted, our sourcing team kept the pressure on, not resting until the price sheet and data file were safely in our hands. Then, we scheduled an interim update so you did not have to wait until the next weekly feed. Always your advocate, we are specialists at limiting the negative impact of such an occurrence and use all measures available to acquire the data and deliver the update to you in the quickest possible time-frame.

Persistence Pays Off

Our goal is to deliver all pricing data to you by its effective date. We can achieve this if we receive the vendor's latest information before it is effective.

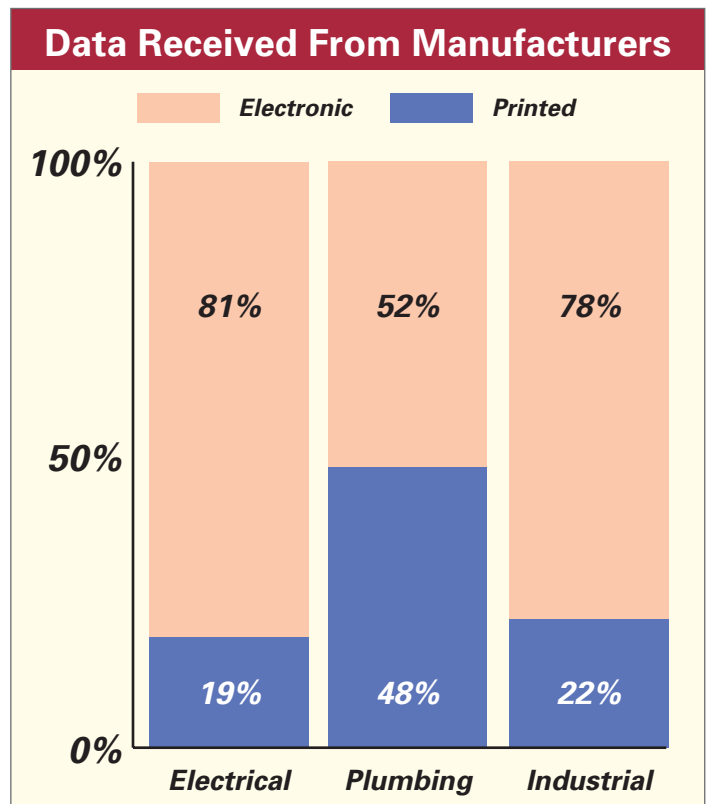
Ideally, all manufacturers will send us their information without being asked. However, in cases where this does not occur, our team maintains tickler files for each vendor and makes proactive telephone calls until the data is received in house.

Not Just Pricing

Pricing is just one of the many data elements we request and receive from each manufacturer. On each manufacturer call, we verify current status with regard to pricing, catalogs, discount codes, multipliers, UPC numbers, catalog numbers, descriptions, product images and terms and conditions.

Printed Versus Electronic

Our preferred method to receive pricing feeds from manufacturers is electronically, either via Internet download or an emailed Excel or Access file. However, some manufacturers are able to provide their data only by printed price sheet. Trade Service distinguishes itself from the competition by having the resources and expertise to work with virtually any information format the manufacturer provides. Even when working from a paper price sheet, Trade Service is still able to deliver the accurate and timely information you have come to expect. The chart below shows a breakdown of how manufacturer data is delivered to us across all the industries we serve:



... please see page 3

... Content Sourcing (One-On-One Relationships)

A Word From Our Manufacturer Partners

The comments offered below from two of our partners speak to the value of the Trade Service / manufacturer relationship and what it represents to our common customers and the industry at large:

"Ideal Industries has enjoyed a mutually-beneficial relationship with Trade Service for many years. We work closely together to ensure that our product line is accurately and appropriately represented to our common base of customers. Many of our clients regularly communicate with us via EDI and therefore must have access to valid and up-to-date UPCs on our entire product line. Trade Service receives and processes our data in such a way that UPCs, as well as our published pricing and product information, is delivered expediently to customers in a format their business systems can easily accept."

– Troit Freeland

Senior Manager, Sales Operations,
IDEAL Industries



"Watts Water Technologies believes it's mission critical for our distributors to have at their disposal all the information they need to streamline procurement and to educate their customers on the value and availability of our product line. Trade Service has helped us in this effort by enabling our pricing and product details to move seamlessly through the supply chain and be effectively applied at each level of the trading process."

– Michael Gaulin

E-Services Marketing Manager
Watts Water Technologies



Relationships Make The Difference

Notwithstanding the tremendous efficiencies and increases in productivity that automation has brought to business in recent years, much of how companies interact today has become impersonal and mechanized.



"Resolving a content problem with one of our supplier partners makes my day!" – Alaura Soukthavong, Sourcing Specialist

In the content services business, this unfortunate effect produced by automation can have an extremely negative impact on the service's ability to deliver a high quality product to its customers.

The reason for this is that product and pricing content, although it eventually ends up as a definable, "hard coded" and tangible tool that you use to support critical business processes, it definitely does not start out that way! To ensure that the data you receive is accurate and works properly within your business system, maintaining a personal, one-on-one relationship with each manufacturer is paramount.

No Magic Bullet

Many distributors may not realize how "loose" content can appear in the raw. And there is no electronic "hopper," into which raw content can be inserted and then emerge in the pristine format required to be effectively used within your business system.

This is probably the single largest differentiator, setting Trade Service apart from its competition. Other services ask the manufacturer to jump through hoops to prepare their data so that it can be received into the right bucket and then processed without human intervention. Unfortunately, when this happens, some square pegs are forced to fit into non-corresponding round holes. The effect data created in this way has on your business can be devastating.

At Trade Service, a dedicated group of professionals

... please see page 4

... **Content Sourcing** *(Auditing and Verification)*

(our Sourcing Team) takes the lead in daily interaction with our manufacturer partners to:

- Ensure their updated information is received at Trade Service in a timely manner and then delivered to you by its effective date
- Provide help and direction in the proper assignment of UPC codes
- Develop short "invoice" product descriptions, and commodity codes
- Resolve data problems caught by our editorial staff, eliminating potential market impact
- Address issues or concerns raised by our mutual customers

In short, Trade Service takes the manufacturer's content in its raw form and then becomes the "hopper" that ultimately produces the clean, usable data you receive as a Trade Service customer.

Data Auditing and Accuracy Verification

One of the most valuable benefits manufacturers receive through their association with Trade Service is the extensive data auditing that each of their items undergoes before it is released to you, our customer. This process leaves no stone unturned, including proactive communication back to the manufacturer each time we uncover a data anomaly, oversight, or potential inaccuracy. When this occurs, the manufacturer is contacted immediately so the issue may be thoroughly reviewed and resolved. It is gratifying when this process catches a

problem before it reaches the market, avoiding potentially serious repercussions for our customers.

You Always Have A Choice ...

The industry offers you a choice of content providers. We hope this message helps convey that not all providers are the same. Thank you for choosing Trade Service. If you would like more in-depth information about our company, product offerings, or manufacturer relationships, let us know.

Thank you for choosing us!

These distributors recently chose Trade Service as their content provider:

Russell Belden Electric Company
Bibico Electric Supply
Cal Coast Electrical Inc.
Carr Sales Company
Central New York Plumbing & Heating Supply
Frost Electric Supply Company
Keller Supply Company
Lumen, a division of Sonepar
Maxwell Wholesale Plumbing Inc.
Mesco Electrical Supply
P W Supply Company
The Fulton Group

HARDI Backs Trade Service as Exclusive Provider of Pricing Services to HARDI Membership

An industry press release recently announced that "On March 21, 2006, the Heating, Air-Conditioning, and Refrigeration Distributors International (HARDI) trade organization and Trade Service Corporation, a long-established provider of product and pricing services to the HVACR industry, signed an agreement in which HARDI endorses Trade



Service as the sole, exclusive, and official pricing service provider to HARDI members."

This partnership and endorsement by HARDI underscores Trade Service's commitment to be the content provider of choice within all the industries it serves. To read the complete press release, please visit the News & Events section of our web site.



Trade Service – The trusted provider of quality product and price information since 1931