Mark's Plumbing Case Study

How Mark's Plumbing SKUs Finally Got Found By Their Buyers

OVERVIEW

Mark's Plumbing is an independent distributor of plumbing supplies to contractors, school systems, & other governmental entities including prisons.

The challenge Mark's faced was that they had more than 1 million SKUs yet approximately only 80,000 SKUs were available on the website which lead to very unhappy and frustrated customers. They had three main goals: get at least a quarter of a million SKUs online right away, move all one million SKUs and make them available and quickly searchable to their customers.

"What a difference CSS Commerce made to our business and in such a short time! We saw the impact right away
- Project Management Team, Mark's Plumbing

APPROACH

- **Creating an Advanced Ranked & Weighted Search Tool** – Find the right search tool depends on your product descriptions and building a good toolset that will allow elastic search. We had to consider if the search tool would 1) work with their current PIM and 2) was the search tool considerate of industry standards?
    - The right search solution had to work in conjunction with and integrate with their PIM system. The PIM was designed to have enhanced product descriptions. With an enriched product description, it would make it easier to find what a buyer was looking for with exactitude.
    - The second consideration was that the current search tool being used did not take into account any of the normal symbols or acronyms common in the plumbing industry (such as quotation marks for inches, single quote mark for feet).

- **Enhancing the Buyer Experience** – Buyers were searching by part numbers and being served just the part number they had requested. Ideally, you want to give the buyer more than one possible product in the search results as opposed to the exact return.
    - It also gives you the opportunity to present the buyer with complementary products, kitted items, replacement parts, etc. It is a mix of cross-selling and upselling opportunities.
    - By creating a ranked Search system with SOLR Search, the buyer's search delivers not just the part they requested but we also display, as an alternative, the part or product that had the highest margin for Mark's, most often their own OEM brand. It was usually less expensive to the buyer, but offered a higher margin to Mark's.

- **PIM Product Description Harvesting** – By enhancing the product descriptions, the product search would be further enhanced. By adding details such as chrome, pewter or plastic materials, diameter and the technical specifications of each product, SOLR would be able to provide an enhanced search.
    - To add to the PIM, we used artificial intelligence to visit aggregator and manufacturers' websites to collect as much information as possible.
    - Secondly, we used data already inside of Mark's PIMs' system to complement one similar product to another, taking information from one product and adjusting it a little to apply the information and description to the other product.

RESULTS

Product Availability with Findability
Initial goal reached of a quarter million SKUs – and they can all be found by buyers, not just by part number or SKU. Descriptions coming from their PIM are so enhanced that a buyer can find not just the product he/she was searching for but also any complementary products as well as products he/she might have missed.

Customized Search Tool that Delivers
With the elastic SOLR Search, we were able to give Mark's a tool that will continue to grow with them as they continue to scale their product SKUs. Its adaptability and flexibility with AI is incorporated for long term growth.

Increased Sales Margin & ROI
Mark's experienced an increase in their margins just because of the way search results were served up to the buyer. By giving them options, the client was better able to showcase their higher margin OEM brand, giving them higher shopping cart values.

CONCLUSION

- The advanced search tool created with SOLR Search worked even better once the PIM data was enhanced and further harvested. The tool also serves to cross sell and upsell to further influence sales outcomes. And with better search, there was an immediate lift in sales and profit margins.

CONCLUSION

About Mark's Plumbing
Founded in 1981 by the Gasparini family, the business has grown from its humble Fort Worth, Texas based beginnings to be a national distributor of plumbing and electrical parts and maintenance services covering the entire United States. https://www.markspp.com/.

About CSS Commerce
Based in the US, we have your B2X eCommerce solutions and service you need for your OmniChannel and shopping solutions. We are expert software integration specialists in building your platform, interconnecting all your data needs with special focus on advanced predictive search and conversion on your site.

Our specialty is in the 3 pillars of online success: Commerce, Product Search and Supply Chain Visibility. These 3 pillars provide an end-to-end look at the commerce value chain. We work with leading midsize and enterprise manufacturing and distribution companies on their B2X and digital transformation strategies, solution selections and implementation.

Open your world to the latest in B2X!