

CASE STUDY: HAMMOND MANUFACTURING

Data Distribution

Consistency Achieved through Automation



Hammond supports electrical and electronic manufacturers' needs for power distribution, racks and enclosures through a global network of agents and distributors. The century-old company chose Orbweaver for its data distribution platform to streamline and automate its processes.

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Hammond is over 100 years old and still focused on growing—not just in size, but in operations and strategy. The company vision to provide quality products and service is evolving in 2020 to include a focus on efficiency and consistency. As it took a hard look at workflow challenges, Hammond took an easy first step to remediate them, with a commitment to maintaining their high level of service and customer satisfaction through automation.

Business obstacles

Hammond has tens of thousands of small customers who rely on its distributors for accurate information on small enclosures, rack cabinets, electrical enclosures and related power distribution components. While the electronics distribution channel is a cornerstone of the Hammond operation, the company found that a lot of product information on these Web sites was out of date and inconsistent. If a user looked up a Hammond part number online, the results would be wildly different across channels, often leading to uncertainty and confusion for the buyer. Occasionally, there'd be inconsistency or ambiguity about size or material of an enclosure—two critical attributes for purchasers. If someone is keyed into an exact specification, he can't wonder "What exactly am I getting here?"

In another instance, when data on a product would change, like an enclosure's water tight IP rating after further testing, communicating that change to hundreds of distributors was no small feat for Hammond. In fact, a basic attribute alteration could take up to a year to update across the channel.

Hammond needed all of its part information to come from one source—one source that was accurate and updated consistently. If an employee noticed a mistake on a

particular Web site and pointed it out to a distributor, it would often take several e-mails back and forth for clarification, follow-ups, and execution of the correction. This process, in and of itself, was prone to human error and massive delays. But most critically, Hammond found its employees were endlessly uncovering these "fixes" and making repairs, likening it to a giant (not so fun) game of "whack-a-mole." They needed to ensure their attributes were accurate and comprehensive, with an automated solution to manage the data as it evolved.



A “no-brainer” business decision

The challenges were widely understood across all levels of their organization, so decision-makers immediately supported a strategic move toward automation and integration available through Orbweaver. Hammond reasoned they could eliminate manual workflow and improve parts marketability for a modest investment in the data distribution service, calling it a “no brainer.” They’d be able to deliver all of their product data electronically to distributors: the information they want to give them and in the format they want it shown, all in a consistent and up-to-date manner. This, ideally, would contribute to improved sales overall.

The process would be in stark contrast to its previous method: emailing back and forth Microsoft Excel files which served as only a snapshot in time. Some of the bigger distributors with gigantic data collection teams would scrub or peruse the Hammond Web site to get information, but human limitations were always revealing themselves: a typo here, a misinterpretation there. No, the future was clearly in automation, and Hammond decided it wasn’t going to wait any longer for the future to begin.

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“Orbweaver works with the big distributors daily so they understand their data requirements. Integration has been moving quickly...it’s been pretty simple on our end: supplying the same information to Orbweaver that we’ve been manually e-mailing to distributors all these years.”

Tom Ballou

Technical Sales & Marketing Representative
Hammond Manufacturing



Evidence of expertise

Hammond got to know Orbweaver in May 2019 at EDS, where representatives explained how their automated method of data exchange for distribution partners and direct customers would improve the accuracy, reliability, and efficiency of sales operations. By helping customers make educated decisions backed by solid data and smooth integration, component selection would become simple.

Hammond decided to check with their key distributors about the move toward digitization with Orbweaver. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive: distributors were already working with Orbweaver daily, so integration was not going to be problematic. Hammond also learned through word of mouth and personal experience that Orbweaver had a deep understanding for the data requirements of the distributors, as well as for the wants and needs of customers. While Hammond had previously established what product attributes would be of most interest to its customers, Orbweaver had some other suggestions about product attributions for the channel. Their level of industry expertise proved valuable and “eye opening” according to Hammond, who is now selling more parts due to redefined attribute data—including cross-reference information—that is attracting customers in a new way. Orbweaver has valuable insight about what drives the purchasing decisions of customers in this specific industry.

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“Their ability to truly understand this specific industry really well is their greatest strength.”



Tom Ballou

Technical Sales & Marketing Representative

A solutions-driven approach

Not only does Orbweaver understand the purchasing of electronic components, they understand manufacturers’ perspectives and the vast potential of the distribution channel. Hammond says, “Their ability to truly understand this specific industry really well is their greatest strength.” This focus has enabled Orbweaver to support Hammond’s digital data distribution goals in a simple, straightforward manner.

Hammond is supplying the same information to Orbweaver that they’ve been giving manually to distributors for all these years:

- 01 The product attribution file (the largest piece)
- 02 The cross-reference information
- 03 The pricing file
- 04 The inventory file

Orbweaver is taking in data from multiple flat files via URL and SFTP and distributing client-specific data to multiple distributors in multiple specified formats, including CSV, EDI and API.

Hammond called this distribution “magic,” later clarifying that it has less to do with wizardry and more to do with Orbweaver’s solid distributor relationships and clear insight about how the information is consumed, and then reformatted. Through automation, the entire process of data distribution is simplified and streamlined for discernible realization of efficiency and ROI.

Hammond’s goal is to achieve this automation—with verification of data consistency—with 15 key distributors in the first three months.

Hammond has found that from a customer’s point of view, having the product information consistent across the whole channel makes their purchasing decisions much easier. Why not provide data that’s current, clear and consistent today? Contact Orbweaver to learn how we can help increase your data agility to meet operational and strategic business goals.

Together, let’s make the electronics industry more agile, more efficient, and more relevant today.

And let’s sell more parts.

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