

How Southwire Upgraded and Syndicated Thousands of SKUs to Their Distributors

An IDEA Connector Case Study



Introduction

Southwire Company, LLC is one of North America's largest wire and cable producers and an emerging influence in the industrial electrical space. Southwire and its subsidiaries manufacturer building wire and cable, metal-clad cable, utility products, portable and electronic cord products, OEM wire products and engineered products. In addition, Southwire supplies assembled products, contractor equipment and hand tools.

Challenge

Southwire had invested 18 months and approximately 500 staff hours on a digital content initiative to compile and enhance their product information.

Thousands of SKUs had been cleaned up and upgraded with valuable marketing content. Three online catalogs would be consolidated into one, including the company's recently acquired lines, Garvin Industries and Madison Electric, in 2021.

The company's new corporate website to display all these products was nearly complete. Yet, Southwire also wanted to syndicate all of its updated product content in IDEA Connector.

Southwire needed to identify the gaps in their product content in IDEA Connector so that the team would be able to update and add their new and improved product content.

Otherwise, the updated product content might be missing from their authorized distributors' websites.

"We want to make sure we're providing the data that our distributors need in the way they need it," said Breanna Roller, digital marketing manager at Southwire. "When our products are outdated or incorrect on a distributor's website, it misrepresents us. It's not good for the brand, the distributor or the customer. If someone purchases an item based on faulty information, it can end up costing everyone."

Southwire's challenges with their product information syndication included:

- Three thousand SKUs updated for an internal website data project needed to be updated in IDEA Connector
- Product content gaps needed to be identified in its IDEA Connector data compared to its Product Information Management (PIM) system



- The product content needed to be available to distributors in IDEA Connector with its new website launch
- Outdated product information existed on distributors' websites, interrupting the sales process
- One-off requests for product content were inefficient

Solution

On an ongoing basis, the Southwire team works closely with their IDEA client solutions rep, Gail Mayo. Throughout Southwire's digital content initiative, they worked together to find opportunities to add more value to their IDEA Connector content. Southwire has been an IDEA Connector **and an IDEA Exchange** customer for over 18 years.

Syndicating All Manufacturer Product Information

With the new IDEA Connector platform, the capacity for manufacturer SKUs and marketing content is unlimited.

"We want all of our manufacturer's product information in IDEA Connector. To do that, we help them identify the gaps in their product information" said Gail Mayo, IDEA business analyst for the client solutions team. "It's really all about asking questions. We're piecing a puzzle together to add value to their data in IDEA Connector."

To piece together that data puzzle, Mayo said that the IDEA team can proactively find opportunities for manufacturers to add more value to their product content and make recommendations.

For example, while Southwire's team was adding new SKUs, Mayo compared Southwire's product content on its website with its data in IDEA Connector. She was able to find product content gaps and opportunities.

Then, working with the Southwire team, IDEA's Mayo was able to help Southwire add more value to their product content by adding content like 360 images, warranties, and more.



Ask Questions

In the daily grind, it's common for people to do what they know and just keep doing it.

Yet, IDEA's Mayo said that one of Southwire's greatest strengths is asking questions up front to get clarity on how to handle its product information in IDEA Connector.

"The Southwire team isn't willing to make a mistake or have their products look bad. Southwire deserves kudos because their team has really taken the initiative to get the products out for their distributors, in a timely manner and keep them updated. And if they're not sure about something, they're asking questions to make sure it's right," said Mayo.

Southwire is also taking advantage of a lot of the new information that IDEA Connector can hold to enhance searchability on distributors' websites, like marketing content, marketing bullet points and seller defined keywords.

"We've been focused on adding product content to make it easier for front end users to find our products," said Southwire's Roller. "We want to make sure we've got the best information in IDEA Connector, so we're working with IDEA and asking questions along the way."

Ongoing Review

Much like the marketplace, a manufacturer's product content is constantly changing. With its acquisitions, Southwire is getting more SKUs and selling more lines. According to Mayo, it's a constantly moving spectrum.

"We've been in constant communication, whether that's adding new SKUs, enhancing digital video or packaging, or ensuring that the pricing is updated. Southwire's team has worked diligently to add so much more value to their product information and get it cleaned up for their distributor customers," said Mayo.

On an ongoing basis, it's all about matching what product content exists today to what each manufacturer has available... and making sure it stays current.

Both the Southwire and IDEA teams recommend that manufacturers follow these best practices:

- Compare the information on company websites with what is being sent to IDEA Connector. Look for gaps. If you need help, IDEA can do a deep dive for you.



- Examine the SKUs in IDEA Connector vs. the master data module on the manufacturer's end. Missing any catalog numbers or UPC codes? Is every single SKU offered to customers in IDEA Connector?
- Find out if there's any content being created by different divisions within your company (i.e. warranty or technical sheets, etc.) and make sure it is included in IDEA Connector.
- Review your data quarterly, if possible. Once a year reviews often become time-consuming and can result in outdated information going to your end user customers.

Results

According to Southwire, better product information equals a better customer experience.

"We want to make it easier to do business with Southwire," said Roller. "We always see that this has a correlation with increased revenue. We know our customers want to have a good purchasing experience, so we want to make that happen with our product content in IDEA Connector."

With improved product information and processes, also comes increased profitability.

"We believe our digital initiative will increase our profitability as we'll have less backend work time, fewer one-off requests and be able to streamline our process of launching new products with more complete product information," said Roller.

Looking ahead, the Southwire team is looking into setting up a direct mapped connection between IDEA Connector and its PIM system. This would enable the Southwire team to syndicate its content updates more quickly so that the most accurate information is in the marketplace.

Southwire has updated and added over 3,000 SKUs in this initiative, and it continues to make enhanced product content a priority going forward.

"We are focused on being customer first," said Roller. "Every year, we're hearing from more and more distributors saying, 'We want more content.' And the past year definitely increased distributors' understanding and acceptance of the need for online product content even more. Our distributors will find that it is easy to do business with Southwire using our enhanced digital content."

