

Akeneo's PIM solution gives builders merchant, Bradfords, the tools for commerce success

London, UK | 19 April 2022 - Builders' merchant, [Bradfords Building Supplies](#), has transformed the way it merchandises its products online using a solution from Akeneo, the global leader in product experience management (PXM) and product information management (PIM). With better, enriched product data, Bradfords has grown online conversions by 20% with Akeneo PXM Studio.

Founded in 1770 in Somerset, Bradfords has been serving its community of building tradesmen for over 250 years. From its beginnings supporting local communities with farming and agricultural supplies, it has grown into a builders' merchant with over 40 locations in the UK, selling through its Bradfords Building Supplies and Yeovil Plumbing Supplies stores, as well as direct via its B2B (business to business) and D2C (direct to consumer) ecommerce sites, and more recently marketplaces.

Prior to working with Akeneo, the builders' merchant was using a mix of spreadsheets and manual processes to manage product information, which were both time consuming to update and prone to error – a problem that was exacerbated as its online order volumes grew, rising +26% in 2020, its numbers of sales channels grew online, and it enhanced its digital D2C offer. Ruth Rose, Bradfords' Product Data Manager, explained, "We were trying to cope using a series of disjointed processes that meant any enrichment would take multiple teams' involvement to complete a simple product set up, and we could not easily see what information was missing. Using Akeneo completely changed the way we work, giving us structure and the ability to monitor and report on the completeness of ranges. It then became clearer what effect the missing information would have from a front-end point of view on the website and was in turn easier to fix."

Bradfords was also unable to see clearly what information was missing from online product listings and had to rely on suppliers who in turn did not always have the information, which impacted shopper confidence and, ultimately, conversions, as Fergus Bell, Head of eCommerce, explained: "This was not a problem in our stores because we have staff on hand who are product experts and can use their expertise to guide and assist the shopper during their buying journey, providing real-time product information to support the sale. But as our business grew online, we weren't able to offer the same levels of one-to-one service in the way we would in the store. And we knew, in our very competitive market, this was simply not good enough because detailed and accurate product information is a vital step in the journey to conversion."

The problem of online product information management was also compounded by the fact that Bradfords trades not just on its own websites but through multiple marketplaces, including eBay and Amazon, which come with their own nuances and templates for product information that they require from merchants selling through their platforms.

Partnering with Akeneo, Bradfords was able to overhaul its systems and processes by centralising all product information in one platform, creating a single source of truth for product data and imagery, while removing operational silos and driving efficiencies. By introducing Akeneo's PIM solution and automating the workflow, Bradfords has cut the time taken to onboard a new product from three days to two hours or less, as well as helping its marketplace partners deliver exceptional, engaging and compelling content at the point of sale to meet the evolved needs of increasingly digital-first shoppers. This has built confidence into their customers' online buying journeys, with more accurate and richer product information helping Bradfords to improve online conversions by 20%, whilst also helping to reduce returns, as shoppers are better supported through PIM to select the tool that is right for them.

Bell said: "Online sales have become a bigger part of the business, and Akeneo's PIM solution has played a key part in helping us optimise the digital sales channels and increase conversion. Not only are we seeing conversion rates improve, but we are also seeing returns volumes falling because customers are ordering and getting the product that is exactly what they asked for or that best matches their needs."

"We are just scratching the surface of what the solution can do," Bell continued. "We are now looking to use it to build product associations to make our customers' buying journeys even easier. We will also investigate its Asset Management capabilities to create an even better customer experience and make it easier for us to introduce rich content assets, such as video, which are popular with non-trade customers, which represent our fastest-growing market segment."

Fred de Gombert, CEO and Co-Founder of Akeneo, commented: "Increasingly forward-thinking retailers are recognising the role of PIM, which is becoming the cornerstone for commercial success. While this is true of any retail organisation, it is particularly pertinent when it comes to complex or considered purchases, such as with Building supplies and DIY, or where a supported sale is needed to

help the shopper select and buy the right tool for the job. And this is something that Bradfords are using to drive competitive advantage in a traditional retail sector that's looking to digitally transform and meet the new online needs of both B2B and B2C customers."

"We're thrilled Bradfords are not only seeing the benefits of our PIM solution across their own channels, but that is helping them streamline and enhance their marketplace strategy, so it can now deliver compelling, consistent and personalised product experiences across all of its touchpoints," de Gombert concluded.

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About The Bradford's Group

The Bradfords Group is a building supplies company with headquarters in Yeovil, Somerset. The business trades as Bradfords Building Supplies and Yeovil Plumbing Supplies in 44 UK locations.

About Akeneo

Akeneo is a global leader in Product Experience Management (PXM) solutions that help merchants and brands deliver a compelling customer experience across all sales channels, including eCommerce, mobile, print, and retail points of sale. Akeneo's open-source enterprise Product Information Management (PIM), and product data intelligence solutions, dramatically improve product data quality and accuracy while simplifying and accelerating product catalogue management.

Leading global brands, including Fossil, Staples, Tarkett, and Grundfos, trust Akeneo's solutions to scale and customise their omnichannel and cross-border commerce initiatives. Using Akeneo, brands and retailers can improve customer experience, increase sales, reduce time to market, go global, and boost team productivity. For more information, visit <https://www.akeneo.com>