

Case Study: NHS Supply Chain



The Customer

NHS Supply Chain manages the sourcing, delivery and supply of medical consumable products for over 600 NHS trusts and healthcare organizations in England and Wales. It provides a single point of access to over 620,000 products ranging from bandages to sutures and wheelchairs to cleaning equipment which are available through an online catalog.

The Challenge

The organization is operated by DHL and aims to provide over £1 billion of savings to the NHS through its progressive procurement model and by providing end to end supply chain management services. As a result, NHS trusts and healthcare organizations will have more resources to focus on quality frontline patient care.

To achieve this aim, NHS Supply Chain's product matching team take information from NHS trusts and manually match items purchased against products in its catalog. This helps trusts consolidate orders through NHS Supply Chain for products that may have previously been bought elsewhere.

Due to inconsistencies in product description between the customer and the supply chain, this process was very labour intensive. The amount of data within NHS Supply Chain's catalog is ever increasing with the addition of more products every year.

As a result the process of product matching will become even more complex, and prevent the team from helping trusts benefit from the full scope of potential savings available.

The Solution

NHS Supply Chain commissioned Dataactics, a specialist in data quality solutions to deliver an innovative and automated solution for effective product and catalog matching, which was previously being manually performed by a number of NHS Supply Chain Research Analysts.

"Using the Dataactics system we are able to provide faster quotations for prospective customers based on their information and identify additional related product lines that are also available."

"We are constantly looking at how we can improve our efficiency for the benefit of NHS trusts. The new software will provide a twenty fold accurate throughput on product catalog matching and help us deliver high quality service to our customers."

Colin Hancox
Pricing Marketing Manager
NHS Supply Chain

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Dataactics software standardizes terms and measurements within the data and white lists variable product descriptions, for example cotton bud = cotton applicator = q-tip.

Dataactics provides NHS Supply Chain with a mechanism to infuse the expert knowledge of their data analysts into the software. Dataactics Master Reference Files allows NHS Supply Chain to capture knowledge about their products and to then utilize that knowledge in their data matching processes. The matching is adaptive to the expert's knowledge, making it iteratively better over time. This will leave the company non-dependent on key specialists within the Price Matching Team as the knowledge will be captured in the software.

The solution provides various degrees of matching available to the user, exact matching, fuzzy matching, regular expressions and key word matching. These specialist matching techniques increase matching accuracy, getting the best results quicker.

NHS Supply Chain's focus is on best value for trusts and with the 'best guess' feature of keyword matching, the user is provided with a choice of similar products from different suppliers therefore enabling the user to choose which one is most appropriate for the quote.

As well as the automated matching aspects of the software, there are several reporting functions that are essential to the solution. Firstly the summary report provides all matched product information for every line of data entered. Having such valuable information at their fingertips enables the price matching team to immediately inform a trust of product matches and potential cost savings opportunities. Increased response time has been instrumental in providing the trusts with an efficient and cost effective service.

The second report brings up a list of items that were in the trusts information but not found in NHS Supply Chain's catalog. The additional items list can then be sent to the procurement team as potential new product lines to be added to the catalog. This enables NHS Supply Chain to expand its catalog for the further benefit of trusts and provide a more comprehensive service.

The Benefits

- Helping facilitate new product lines and quicker response to trusts improves customer satisfaction
- Manual labor previously spent searching through the £620,000 product catalog is dramatically reduced
- Streamlining Data processes within NHS Supply Chain provides a more comprehensive service to the NHS Trusts
- It is estimated that the Dataactics solution will provide more than an 80% saving on labor costs and also a 20 fold throughput in product matching

Applications:

Business Intelligence

Product Data Management

Master Data Management

Data Quality Management

Purchasing Data Consolidation

Regulatory Compliance

Secure Vetting

Single View of Customer

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