



**WOLSELEY**

## Wolseley Lays a Strong Foundation for Innovation

## Background

Wolseley UK is the operating company for Wolseley plc, the world's number one distributor of heating and plumbing products. Their products are sold via printed catalogs, its website and stores.

## Challenge – A Complex Product Line

The Wolseley UK sourcing team manages 500,000 product lines across 1,500 stores and six print catalogs. Accurate, detailed product descriptions are essential. Even the slightest discrepancy can have a big impact when it comes to specialty heating and plumbing products that must meet safety, health and building codes.

“We are advertising products that people are buying to a very detailed specification, so they have to have very accurate information,” said Rachel See, head of e-commerce at Wolseley UK. “Otherwise, customers will end up purchasing the wrong product, which not only is an inconvenience but also can have health and safety implications.”

Wolseley UK products are constantly evolving, as lines are added and updated, which means that the company must continually update its product information across all marketing channels.

### INDUSTRY

Heating and plumbing products

### CHALLENGES

- Managing 500,000 product lines across 1,500 stores, multiple websites and catalogs
- Products constantly evolving
- Product descriptions and attributes had to be accurate across all marketing channels
- Support for the deployment of new innovative technologies

### SOLUTION

Implemented STEP, Stibo Systems' product information management (PIM) software

### RESULTS

- Consistent data available for websites and other marketing communications
- Greater employee productivity and improved customer service
- Increased customer loyalty
- Increased ability to deploy innovative customer-facing technologies that require continual access to accurate product information
- Reduced catalog production time by 40 percent

## Challenge – Staying Ahead of the Market

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To stay ahead of the market, Wolseley invested heavily in information technology. As an innovator in the use of technology to improve business performance, the company began to look for a smarter way to gather, maintain and publish product information.

“Our customers are experienced tradesmen, and they expect helpful descriptions and thorough specifications for the products they buy,” explained See. “To stay ahead of the market and maintain our competitive advantage, we wanted to have a more streamlined and cost-effective way of providing this information.”

Specifically, Wolseley wanted to find a better way to gather product information and enrich it with digital assets, such as installation diagrams, technical data, and health and safety sheets. The company also wanted to provide its store personnel with faster access to product information.

## Solution

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The company began to look for a corporate-wide product information management (PIM) platform after See moved to Wolseley UK’s e-commerce team in 2008.

“We evaluated two other systems, but Stibo Systems’ STEP came out a clear winner,” said See. “It quickly became apparent in our evaluation that the system would be able to perform well in a much more complex environment with many more products across websites, stores and catalogs.”

As a product information management platform, STEP works by enabling businesses to gather raw master data in a central repository. It enriches and manages this information, makes it consistently available throughout the business, and quickly delivers approved information throughout the product life cycle – from procurement to multiple sales and support channels.

## Results – Greater Employee Productivity & Customer Service

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See and her team initially used STEP to rework the company’s range of printed catalogs. From there, they implemented STEP to manage and centralize product information across all channels, brand by brand. To empower store employees with faster access to better product information, the company used STEP to create PIP—Wolseley UK’s Product Information Pages—and made it available over the company’s intranet.

PIP was designed to quickly and easily provide accurate and detailed product information to employees in stores. Employees using the service can instantly access accurate information on technical, health and safety specifications, as well as images and returns policies. The sourcing team also posts FAQs on PIP, covering the most common inquiries it receives from colleagues.

The in-store teams started seeing the benefits of the new system very quickly. In fact, in the first month alone, the pages received several thousand hits. See explained, “PIP has enabled our customer-facing employees to serve customers more quickly and provide a great level of service, which is leading to increased employee productivity, happier customers and greater customer loyalty.”

## Foundation for Innovative Tools

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STEP has also become a foundational element of SAM (Stock Availability Manager), an automated, audio stock-inquiry service that gives Wolseley’s customers real-time stock information on more than 36,000 products via any phone. Stock levels are continually updated throughout the day, allowing customers to get the information they need quickly, without placing a call to Wolseley personnel. “SAM wouldn’t be the competitive differentiator it is today had it not been for STEP,” said See. “With STEP, we’re now even more confident that the information that customers get through this innovative system is accurate and reliable.”





STEP has enabled Wolseley to deploy a number of touchscreen kiosks in its Sustainable Building Center, a national showcase for all sustainable and green building materials that Wolseley offers. These kiosks allow visitors to see presentations of the latest environmentally friendly products. By taking their product information feed from STEP, Wolseley ensures that the information presented to visitors is up-to-date and accurate.

## Catalog Production Time Reduced by 40 Percent

Wolseley UK has reduced catalog production time by 40 percent as a result of implementing STEP, giving the production team more time to focus on researching and developing the product range while improving catalog accuracy and drastically reducing production costs. "Having all product information in one central repository has made a tremendous difference in how we operate," commented See. "It has helped us to be more innovative in how we go to market and how we serve our customers."

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Rachel See | Head of e-commerce at Wolseley UK

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### About **Stibo Systems**

Stibo Systems believes the future of business requires a Digital Business Core™ of operational data that is continuously shaped and delivered to produce superior business outcomes. Stibo Systems is the driving force behind hundreds of forward-thinking companies around the world who have unlocked the full value of their information; empowering business users to act with confidence in their data, adapt quickly to changing market conditions and go beyond to anticipate what's next. Stibo Systems is a privately held subsidiary of the Stibo A/S group, originally founded in 1794. Its corporate headquarters is located in Aarhus, Denmark. For more information, visit [www.stibosystems.com](http://www.stibosystems.com)