

The Forrester Wave™: Product Information Management Solutions, Q4 2016

The 10 Providers That Matter Most And How They Stack Up

by Fiona Swerdlow and Nasry Angel

December 5, 2016

Why Read This Report

In our 28-criteria evaluation of product information management (PIM) providers, we identified the 10 most significant — ADAM Software, Agility Multichannel, Contentserv, EnterWorks, IBM, Informatica, inRiver, Riversand, SAP Hybris, and Stibo Systems — and researched, analyzed, and scored their solutions. This evaluation shows how each provider measures up and helps eBusiness professionals make the right choice for their business.

Key Takeaways

Informatica, Riversand, And Stibo Systems Lead The Pack

Forrester's research uncovered a market in which Informatica, Riversand, and Stibo Systems lead the pack. EnterWorks, Agility Multichannel, inRiver, Contentserv, and SAP Hybris offer competitive options. IBM and ADAM Software follow as Contenders.

eBusiness Pros Are Looking For Self-Service, Connectivity, And Automation

The market is growing because more eBusiness professionals see PIM as a way to address some of their top challenges. eBusiness pros increasingly trust PIM providers to act as strategic partners and are including them as part of their digital transformation initiatives.

Integration And Syndication, Usability, And Vendor Portal Tools Are Key Differentiators

As legacy enterprise applications become outdated and less effective for the business user, improved integration and syndication, usability, and portal tools will dictate which providers will lead the pack. Vendors that provide these offerings position themselves to successfully deliver quick and lasting value to their customers.

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Forrester conducted product evaluations in August 2016 and interviewed 10 vendor and user companies: ADAM Software, Agility Multichannel, Contentserv, EnterWorks, IBM, Informatica, inRiver, Riversand, SAP Hybris, and Stibo Systems.

Related Research Documents

[The Forrester Wave™: Product Information Management \(PIM\), Q2 2014](#)

[Polishing Up Your Products — Why PIM Really Matters](#)

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PIM Is Indispensable In The New Era Of Distributed Commerce

PIM is the business application that orchestrates critical information and content that customers need along their multitouchpoint product research and buying journeys (see Figure 1). Modern retailers know they must proactively provide their customers with rich, consistent experiences that are appropriate for each device and context. In the age of the customer, modern retailing is largely shaped by shoppers who use digital touchpoints to research and buy products: In 2017, digital touchpoints will, in some way, affect over half of total US retail sales — that is, 51%, or \$1.71 trillion.¹ The empowered customer increasingly is willing to experiment with new technologies, owns multiple connected devices, and uses a mobile phone in-store to research everything from ratings to prices.² PIM is a key strategic investment to deliver that vision.

Rich, accurate, and well-managed product information is an essential tool for store associates and customer contact center reps at any point in the customer's shopping journey. Retailers need a channel-agnostic central hub from which they can deliver just the right product information to the customer, regardless of that customer's location, the time of day, or the stage in the customer life cycle, not just before the purchase but after it as well.³ At its core, a PIM application enables eBusiness professionals and their customer-obsessed organizations to:

- › **Publish information to established and emerging target systems and touchpoints.** In the new commerce environment, PIM is the launch pad for new product experiences taking place across myriad digital and physical touchpoints. In addition to the well-known print and eCommerce target systems, PIM is evolving to publish product information directly to online retailers like Amazon (where 65% of online adults look up product information on a mobile phone) and search engines like Google (where nearly 70% of online adults do the same).⁴ For example, a branded manufacturer that has an emerging direct-to-consumer business can now publish product information to one of these channels to inform customers of its offerings and potentially capture additional revenue.
- › **Manage publishing workflow and approvals by channel.** Business users use PIM to write channel-specific business rules to configure thresholds for publication readiness that are channel-specific and adhere to the strict requirements of the channel. It's no secret that large retailers leverage their size to get manufacturers and distributors to comply with their ever-changing product information requirements. This influence can mean that just when suppliers have established a process to comply with the retailers' demands around a product, the requirements change again. For example, a large retailer might require a minimum of three high-resolution images and a video for one particular product line but five images and no video for another. PIM enables business users to write this logic into the system and apply it at scale to entire product lines.
- › **Synchronize product information across digital touchpoints and physical stores.** Regardless of the customer's shopping behavior (e.g., buy online and pick up in-store; ship to home; or research online and buy in-store), eBusiness pros must synchronize inventory and product information among touchpoints as varied as desktop and mobile website, in-store point-of-sale

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systems, and mobile apps. Customers will quickly spot inconsistencies, resulting in higher product returns, increased customer service calls and emails, lower repeat purchases and loyalty, and general dissatisfaction.

- › **Develop and grow a single trusted source of reliable product information.** PIM thrives as the convergence point for multiple product data sources and as a connection hub for applications while also tackling the challenge of doing data quality at scale. Industrial, brand, and consumer packaged goods (CPG) companies that manufacture their own products have historically managed product information within enterprise systems like enterprise resource planning (ERP) and product life-cycle management (PLM) but also, quite often, through basic spreadsheets. Historically, they've pulled information from sources like suppliers, third-party data engines, taxonomy systems, and standards boards. These tools individually fall short when it comes to reliably enriching products for digital commerce. For example, supplier portal capabilities within PIM tools apply the retailer's specified quality and governance rules to data submitted by suppliers on the fly. This capability greatly reduces the amount of "dirty" data that business users have to deal with and, in turn, allows them to focus more on strategy than manual data-cleansing work.
- › **Reduce time-to-market for new product launches.** PIM tools provide flexible workflow and business process management capabilities to orchestrate both the structured and unstructured data work among the different roles. It enables automation for business users to reduce time-to-market by setting up sophisticated business rules that apply validation checks, trigger workflow actions and notifications, and update the appropriate touchpoints once they meet a minimum threshold for readiness. In a poorly governed data environment, users frequently find multiple versions of a product description and images as well as compliance documents, ingredients lists, and Excel spreadsheets scattered throughout file shares. In addition, processes are typically fractured, with products sitting in a queue for long periods before they're approved. This means that in an industry like financial services, it can take six to nine months to launch or refresh a product — an unacceptable situation in today's world, where customers have a plethora of choices and can easily move on.
- › **Merchandise products effectively.** Without product insights, merchandisers are flying blind: PIM dashboards deliver insights for merchandisers around the ROI of truly telling a product story. For example, merchandisers can test and quantify the impact of adding one more image or video to a product.⁵ Add to that data on clicks and views, customer feedback for similar products, and shopping cart analyses, and merchandisers will know how best to build a product category and tell that product story. For example, if a product is targeted to Millennials, it's probably a good idea to include video because this generation consumes more mobile video than any other.⁶ In addition, product insights play a significant role in how merchandisers create product categories and bundles, not just based on traditional associations like paint and a paint brush but on tangible customer buying patterns like paint, a brush, and masking tape to protect the environment surrounding the painted surface.

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FIGURE 1 The Role Of PIM In A Customer Journey**PIM Graduates From Product Data Management To Product Experience Management**

Emerging PIM capabilities such as content benchmarking, visual merchandising, and advanced asset management capabilities will prove crucial to enable customer experiences, particularly around the discovery and exploration stages of their journeys. Customers have spoken: Having accurate product information is a baseline expectation, and 64% of US online adults today shop online because the product presented there is more informative than what's in-store.⁷ Customers now are taking it a step further, with well over half of online adults stating that it's important for them that retailers offer feature and price comparison tools, visualization tools (e.g., different colorways, alternative views, or zoom), and the flexibility to refine search results by attributes like price, brand, and style (see Figure 2).⁸ Ultimately, these offerings augment or even help mimic the physical experience of picking up and examining products and comparing them with others nearby.

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FIGURE 2 Customers Tell Retailers They Want Product Experiences, Not Just Product Information**Percentage of online adults who indicated it was important for retailers to provide them with these website features:**

Base: 4,399 US online adults (18+)
(multiple responses accepted)

Source: Forrester's Consumer Technographics® North American Retail And Travel Online Benchmark Recontact Survey 1, Q3 2016 (US)

PIM Is For Business; MDM Is For Technology Management

There's some confusion in the market about what tools are best suited to manage the quality and consistency of product information. eBusiness pros must evaluate master data management (MDM) tools as well as PIM and product content management and syndication tools. Each appears to solve the same set of challenges to manage product data, yet vendor demonstrations have shown us that these tools are very different. Business users such as marketers and merchandisers can readily identify with the application look and feel of PIM, which offers an intuitive environment for managing product data and associated content. Data management professionals are drawn to MDM solutions that are obvious extensions to their data management tools, such as extract-transform-load (ETL), data quality, and metadata management, and that help them with data integration demands. So how should organizations determine whether a PIM tool is the right choice? There are four options to consider (see Figure 3):

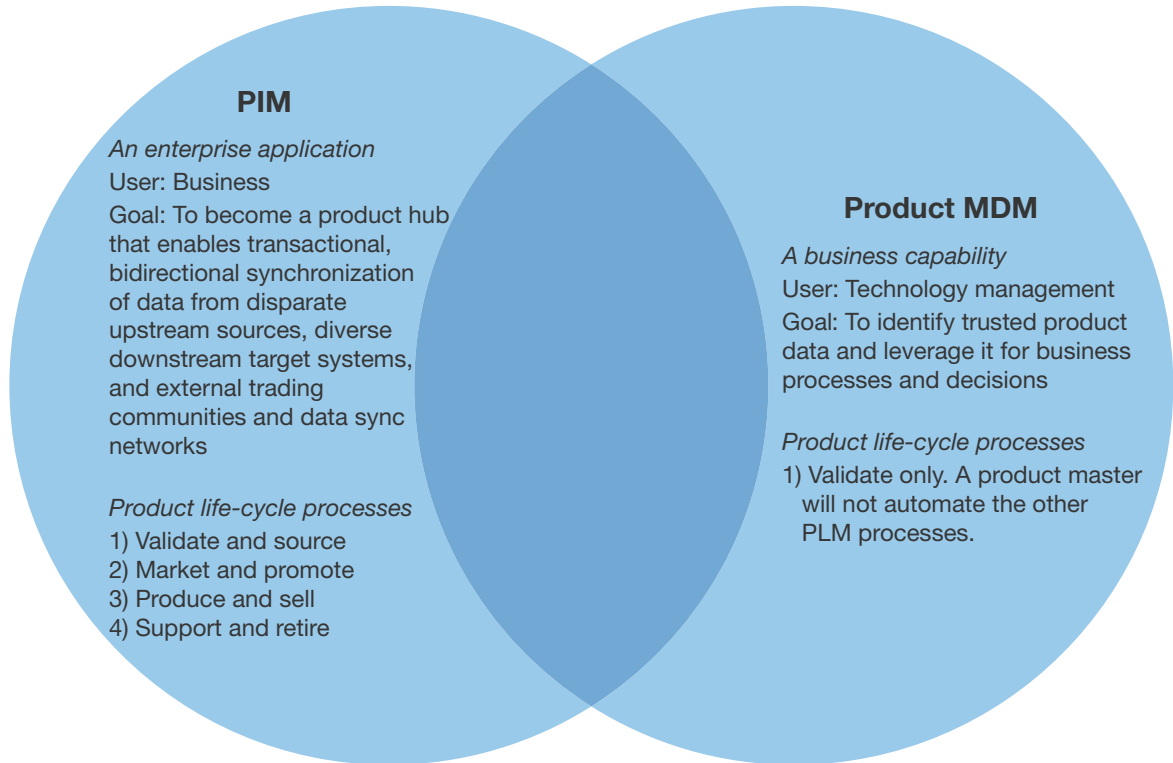
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- › **PIM pure-play.** The PIM pure-play option is concerned with how consumers will use product information through sales and marketing channels (e.g., an online or mobile store). Business users need an application that maintains catalogs, bringing together product attributes with merchandising elements such as images, video, audio, descriptions, price, and bundles. PIM is ideal for situations where merchandisers and marketers are dynamically constructing and reconstructing compelling packages and offers, all in an environment in which they, as nontechnical users, can easily work. A useful analogy is to envision that CRM is to customer as PIM is to product. Critical capabilities include product visualization, workflow management, discrete and mass product updates and refreshes, and seamless integration with content tools (content management, digital asset management, print, eCommerce, etc.) for product definitions/bundles and workflow.
- › **MDM pure-play.** Master data management tools excel at managing and orchestrating product data and elements across applications and data sources. The technology management organization typically owns and manages MDM. It acts as an orchestration point in the integration layer of an information architecture. Where PIM may be the system of record for the customer-facing view of product information, MDM manages the complexity of gathering product data, syndicating the data to other systems, and providing product data consistency and links to other master data domains (i.e., customer, supplier, and location). eBusiness pros can connect product data to content in the form of metadata to link by a tag or file, but it's not presented natively within the MDM tool. MDM environments generally are much more technical, so common users include technology management and data professionals in business operations. Critical capabilities include data integration, multidomain data modeling, data quality and matching, data governance, metadata management, and multiplatform support (i.e., RDBMS, Hadoop/NoSQL, applications, etc.).
- › **Hybrid PIM/MDM solution.** Overall, Forrester recommends that organizations use their MDM tools as the engine and orchestration point across multiple domains and include PIM as the business application for business users to manage product catalogs. Many PIM vendors offer their own MDM standalone tools or have MDM capabilities integrated into their PIM tools. Why? A mature PIM capability within a complex omnichannel ecosystem requires a front-end business solution and a robust back-end engine. PIM vendors may present their tools as MDM for other domains, as PIM will often contain nonproduct data such as supplier information. However, the nature of the environment is optimized for a product view and product management workflows.
- › **Product content management and syndication.** These mostly cloud-based tools, which include offerings from vendors like Salsify, primarily facilitate managing and exchanging product content among brands, distributors, and retailers. They typically maintain category-specific schemas to meet the demands of each channel or touchpoint, channel-specific syndication rules, and digital asset management (DAM) capabilities to manage digital content. These tools satisfy PIM use cases with eBusinesses that don't require enterprise-grade data management platforms but instead need something to sit on top of or connect to their existing data management infrastructure.

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FIGURE 3 PIM Looks And Feels Like MDM, But It's Really An App

PIM Evaluation Overview

To assess the state of the PIM market and see how the vendors compare, Forrester evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of top PIM vendors. After examining past research, user need assessments, and vendor and expert interviews, we developed a comprehensive set of evaluation criteria. We evaluated 10 vendors against 28 criteria, which we grouped into three high-level categories:

- › **Current offering.** The criteria we selected to assess the strength of companies' current offerings reflect the needs of both eBusiness and enterprise architecture professionals. Because of this, we included technical integration and systems governance criteria alongside criteria that evaluated the effectiveness of the business user tools for end users. We analyzed each current offering using 10 groups of criteria: architecture and scalability; integration and syndication; workflow and business process support; product taxonomy and relationship management; time-to-value; product attribute management; roles and privileges; administration tools; vendor portal tools; and data quality management, governance, and reporting.

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- › **Strategy.** To assess how well each solution provider is positioned for future success, we compared the strategies of each with the needs of eBusiness and enterprise architecture executives, industry trends, and Forrester's forward-looking vision of the PIM market. We examined each company's product road map and strategic direction; target market and enterprise track record; and partnerships and services.
- › **Market presence.** Many eBusinesses today support their PIM needs with homegrown technology or legacy solutions that the vendor community no longer supports. eBusiness and enterprise architecture executives must look for vendors that have a strong and stable installed base, demonstrate steady growth, and offer a solid network of implementation and support partners. To determine the current market presence for our evaluation, we combined information about each provider's revenue; revenue growth; customer base; new customers; and geographic and vertical market penetration.

Evaluated Vendors And Inclusion Criteria

Forrester included 10 vendors in this PIM assessment: ADAM Software, Agility Multichannel, Contentserv, EnterWorks, IBM, Informatica, inRiver, Riversand, SAP Hybris, and Stibo Systems. Each of these companies has (see Figure 4):

- › **Inclusion in our prior Forrester Wave.** All vendors were included in the Forrester report "The Forrester Wave™: Product Information Management (PIM), Q2 2014."⁹
- › **An established enterprise PIM offering.** Vendors must have an established enterprise PIM offering and must actively market a productized PIM solution. Vendors must have initially released the product version included in the evaluation prior to August 2016.
- › **A standalone offering for PIM.** Beyond the ability to support product data in a broader MDM solution or within an enterprise resource planning (ERP) or eCommerce platform, these vendors offer standalone PIM enterprise applications with unique capabilities that allow them to validate and source, market and promote, produce and sell, and support and retire products.
- › **A focused product road map.** Each of the vendors evaluated has a focused product road map that aligns with the direction of the market and emerging scenarios tracked by Forrester.
- › **Mindshare among the Forrester client base.** Forrester client inquiries, shortlists, consulting projects, and case studies frequently mention the vendors we evaluated.
- › **A focus on retail, distribution, CPG, and manufacturing verticals.** Beyond the ability to support product data in a broader master data management (MDM) solution, these vendors have rich support for the unique needs of retailers, distributors, CPG firms, and manufacturers.

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FIGURE 4 Evaluated Vendors: Product Information And Selection Criteria

Vendor	Product evaluated	Product version evaluated
ADAM Software	ADAM products	4.3
Agility Multichannel	Agility	7.0
Contentserv	CS	16.0
EnterWorks	Enable	8.2
IBM	IBM InfoSphere Master Data Management Collaborative Edition	
Informatica	Informatica MDM – Product 360	8.0.5
inRiver	inRiver PIM	6.3
Riversand	MDMCenter	7.8
SAP Hybris	SAP Hybris PCM	6.2
Stibo Systems	STEP Trailblazer	8.0

Inclusion criteria

Inclusion in our prior Forrester Wave. All vendors were included in the Forrester report “The Forrester Wave™: Product Information Management (PIM), Q2 2014.”

An established enterprise PIM offering. Vendors must have an established enterprise PIM offering and must actively market a productized PIM solution. Vendors must have initially released the product version included in the evaluation prior to August 2016.

A standalone offering for PIM. Beyond the ability to support product data in a broader MDM solution or within an enterprise resource planning (ERP) or eCommerce platform, these vendors offer standalone PIM enterprise applications with unique capabilities that allow them to validate and source, market and promote, produce and sell, and support and retire products.

A focused product road map. Each of the vendors evaluated has a focused product road map that aligns with the direction of the market and emerging scenarios tracked by Forrester.

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A focus on retail, distribution, CPG, and manufacturing verticals. Beyond the ability to support product data in a broader master data management (MDM) solution, these vendors have rich support for the unique needs of retailers, distributors, consumer packaged goods (CPG) firms, and manufacturers.

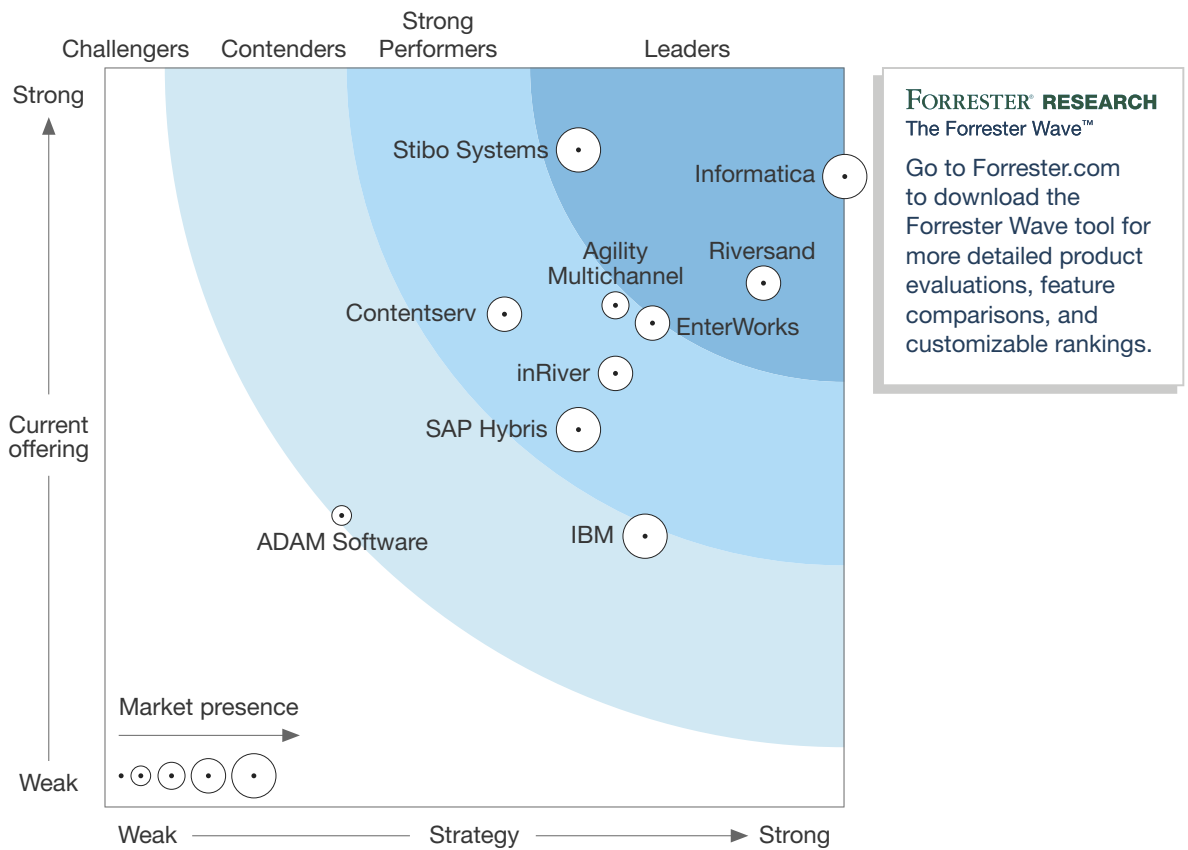
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Vendor Profiles

This evaluation of the PIM market is intended as a starting point only. We encourage clients to review detailed product evaluations and to use the Forrester Wave Excel-based vendor comparison tool to adapt criteria weightings to fit their individual needs (see Figure 5).

FIGURE 5 Forrester Wave™: Product Information Management Solutions, Q4 '16



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FIGURE 5 Forrester Wave™: Product Information Management Solutions, Q4 '16 (Cont.)

	Forrester's weighting	ADAM Software	Agility Multichannel	Contentserv	EnterWorks	IBM	Informatica	inRiver	Riversand	SAP Hybris	Stibo Systems
Current offering	50%	1.97	3.39	3.33	3.27	1.83	4.26	2.93	3.54	2.55	4.44
Architecture and scalability	10%	1.40	3.00	2.60	2.20	2.60	4.20	1.40	3.00	4.60	3.40
Integration and syndication	25%	1.65	4.00	1.90	2.90	1.60	4.00	3.35	3.50	2.60	5.00
Workflow and business process support	5%	5.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	2.00	5.00	2.00	5.00	3.00	5.00
Product taxonomy/relationship management	5%	4.00	5.00	4.00	5.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	5.00	3.00	5.00
Time-to-value	10%	3.00	1.00	1.00	5.00	1.00	5.00	3.00	3.00	5.00	5.00
Product attribute management	10%	3.50	4.50	4.00	3.50	2.50	3.50	3.00	4.00	3.50	3.00
Roles and privileges	2%	4.60	3.80	3.00	3.80	4.20	4.20	2.80	3.80	5.00	3.80
Administration tools	5%	1.00	2.60	5.00	1.40	0.60	2.60	4.60	1.80	1.00	1.80
Vendor portal tools	18%	1.00	3.00	5.00	3.00	1.00	5.00	3.00	3.00	0.00	5.00
Data quality, governance, and reporting	10%	0.00	3.40	4.80	3.40	2.80	4.80	2.80	4.60	1.40	4.80

All scores are based on a scale of 0 (weak) to 5 (strong).

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FIGURE 5 Forrester Wave™: Product Information Management Solutions, Q4 '16 (Cont.)

	Forrester's weighting	ADAM Software	Agility Multichannel	Contentserv	EnterWorks	IBM	Informatica	inRiver	Riversand	SAP Hybris	Stibo Systems
Strategy	50%	1.60	3.45	2.70	3.70	3.65	5.00	3.45	4.45	3.20	3.20
Product road map and strategic direction	45%	1.00	4.00	4.00	5.00	2.00	5.00	4.00	5.00	1.00	1.00
Target market and enterprise track record	35%	1.00	3.00	2.00	3.00	5.00	5.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	5.00
Partnerships and services	20%	4.00	3.00	1.00	2.00	5.00	5.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	5.00
Market presence	0%	1.20	2.85	3.65	3.35	4.40	4.65	4.00	3.35	4.50	4.60
Revenue	35%	1.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	5.00	5.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	5.00
Revenue growth	10%	3.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	2.00	3.00	5.00	3.00	0.00	4.00
Customer base	25%	1.00	3.00	4.00	3.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	3.00	5.00	5.00
New customers	15%	0.00	2.00	5.00	5.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	2.00	5.00	4.00
Geographic and vertical market penetration	15%	2.00	3.00	3.00	2.00	5.00	5.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	4.00

All scores are based on a scale of 0 (weak) to 5 (strong).

Leaders

- › **Informatica is well positioned to tackle the future of commerce.** Product 360 has one of the most complete sets of deployment, quality, and data management capabilities for PIM. In addition, it has visionary partnerships with Amazon and Google Manufacturer Center for the exchange of product content. Informatica has a diverse global customer base spanning retailers, distributors, and manufacturers. Customers choose this PIM solution in large part for its usability to support an omnichannel environment. Solid visualization, complex catalog management with inheritance, and strong workflow capabilities help business users create, manage, and govern product data. Informatica PIM workflow is extensive, and users can deploy it further upstream and downstream using Informatica BPM.

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One of the biggest customer pain points is pricing transparency: Customers told us that negotiating with Informatica is particularly difficult, given complex pricing models and various components, such as data quality, that are billed separately. By contrast, customers are very satisfied with Informatica's global network of customers and partners as well as with its support, which is second to none in the space.

- › **Riversand offers a well-rounded business tool to master product data.** Riversand offers customers maximum flexibility to model product data. The product shines in its workflow, approval, and business process support as well as ease in onboarding and syndicating data. Business customers can configure and control product information to match any display option from mobile, eCommerce, print, email, or search engine optimization, to name a few. Furthermore, data quality runs in the delivery process and proactively notifies product teams and merchandisers of errors or issues. It has a tightly integrated DAM with embedded image/video editing and rendering features.

Riversand has room to improve: Specifically, customers want a more intuitive UI and a more efficient UX when using the product in conjunction with the DAM tool, which Riversand is addressing in its next product release. Additionally, Riversand needs to complement its well-developed integration frameworks with more certified out-of-the-box connectors.

- › **Stibo Systems offers a breadth of native capabilities at maximum scale.** Stibo Systems has been growing its PIM offering organically over its 30-plus years in this space. The company's broad set of out-of-the-box PIM capabilities, industry-specific knowledge, and breadth of professional services solidifies its position as a PIM market leader. Stibo Systems' particular product strengths include connectivity with its breadth of back- and front-end connectors as well as strong data integration and syndication. This solution excels at integrating with real-time systems, providing many transport and format options.

To rise to the next level, customers want Stibo Systems to improve its UI intuitiveness and the time required for business users to master using the product. This vendor rapidly deploys new functionality to meet market demands but needs to proactively help customers who feel that updates are sometimes so frequent that it's difficult to keep up. Customers also noted that Stibo Systems works exclusively with an Oracle database, which can be limiting, depending on the customer's database environment. Nevertheless, the solution scales well as the volume of products increases.

Strong Performers

- › **EnterWorks is well positioned to deliver product insights in the cloud.** EnterWorks competes on its ability to extend and incorporate data from other domains in addition to product. It also provides its customers with strong reporting capabilities and flexibility in its cloud architecture. Supported by healthy funding rounds, the company has grown steadily since Forrester's 2014 PIM Wave evaluation.¹⁰ The solution has robust reporting capabilities, allowing users to easily view, track, and manage the products for which they are responsible. It includes dashboard widgets that

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enable users to scorecard vendor quality and performance, which are also exposed in the tool's vendor portal. The portal offers a complete business workbench that provides visibility into the state and quality of product data and product management workflows.

Customer feedback highlights EnterWorks' professional services organization as an outstanding business partner to implement PIM. Well-developed search capabilities make finding and managing products easy: Users can search using full text, faceted search, or filters and can run side-by-side comparisons. Customers noted that they need a more updated and intuitive UI, which EnterWorks is actively addressing in its latest version of the product.

- › **Agility Multichannel excels at connectivity and flexibility in working with data.** Agility Multichannel builds on its extensive PIM experience with a modular interface that lets business users easily model and test how content enrichment affects customer engagement. The firm boasts a broad set of partnerships, a breadth of connectivity to leading eCommerce tools, Adobe's Creative Cloud for print, and backend enterprise systems. Starting with Agility version 7, the product ships with Pentaho Enterprise Edition, which brings robust data integration and business analytics, particularly for customers with more complex data integration needs that otherwise would require additional MDM investment. Additionally, the product ships with a library of widgets that allow for individual roles (e.g., product managers, online merchandisers, and suppliers) to design optimized workflows from a single web-based tool set.

When it comes to improvement, Agility Multichannel's search falls short in relation to other vendors that have side-by-side product comparison and difference-highlighting capabilities and better-developed capabilities to report and visualize searches. Agility is a well-rounded product that will benefit from continuing to expand its global ecosystem of partners.

- › **inRiver's product fits hand-in-glove with the business user.** Sweden-based inRiver has rapidly gained traction in the PIM space: It approaches building a product around the everyday needs of the marketer. Customers highlight the tool's usability and the intuitiveness of the UI, with one customer noting that it was off and running with the tool within a week. The company's new "software-as-a-service (SaaS) first" model is attractive to many organizations with aggressive cloud strategies. Its strong network of technology and implementation partners is one of the main catalysts for its rapid growth in the US market. In fact, partner-led opportunities drive a significant portion of license revenues.

Customers told us they're very satisfied with how easy it is to adopt the tool as well as with ongoing support and training. One caveat is that the product has limited back-end connectors, which typically requires the client to build custom connectors. Nonetheless, the company's vision and road map are attractive, including plans to release a multitenant SaaS solution in the first half of 2017.

- › **Contentserv aims to deliver business insights with the flexibility of the cloud.** This Germany-based vendor built its PIM tool with commerce, merchandising, and business process in mind. Customers lauded the product for being easy to learn and use upon implementation. Contentserv makes it simple for business users to enrich products by previewing information in the format of the channels as well as

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to compare, update, or merge products while viewing them side-by-side. The firm provides extensive support to validate and manage errors, which allows customers to write data quality rules natively embedded in PIM and DAM. Another plus is that its embedded media asset management tool strongly supports customers that need to localize product information on a global scale.

Traditionally competing in the European market, the company has set its sights on North America to continue building its client base. Areas where the company could improve include more certified out-of-the-box connectors to more of the commonly used back-office applications in the market as well as a more robust set of customer support services to help customers decrease time-to-value.

- › **SAP is in the process of integrating PCM to the broader Hybris suite.** SAP originally entered the PIM space through its Hybris acquisition, with the vision of integrating the product into its unified front-office suite while providing a strong set of business user tools (the SAP Hybris PIM Cockpit) for business-focused, merchandising, eCommerce, and marketing roles. Other PIM vendors in this Forrester Wave have partnerships with eCommerce platforms, so SAP Hybris' value proposition is unique in having a combined PIM/eCommerce/web content management system (WCMS) offering built on the same flexible Java architecture and data model. As a result, Hybris appeals to firms that have both PIM and eCommerce project priorities.

Overall, customers reported that the system is complex to use and that the UI for the merchandiser and business user is outdated. PIM prospects should investigate whether the promised new UI for 2017 will satisfy their business user needs. Forrester found that the vast majority of current SAP Product Content Management (PCM) implementations are within SAP commerce install bases (customers) that have modest PIM requirements. We also found that SAP is still very much in the process of integrating SAP Hybris PCM into the broader SAP ecosystem.

Contenders

- › **IBM's Infosphere MDM is set to reinvent itself in light of Watson.** This solution shows strengths but is also a product in transition. One of its current strengths is IBM's breadth of integrations with other enterprise platforms to facilitate product information flow. The tool effectively supports product data syndication by integrating with other systems via point-to-point and middleware tools and supports many communication protocols and data formats. However, the product needs considerable improvement in its UI/UX, with customers noting that it "feels intimidating to use." Nevertheless, the company is well positioned to bring a cognitive element to its product that can augment the capabilities of the modern business user.

Customers' biggest concern with this product is that their data stewards must author everything, so IBM needs to provide more support around product enrichment and facilitating self-service. Fortunately, effective April 1, 2016, Persistent Systems has agreed to purchase IBM's PIM intellectual property: IBM remains the primary sales channel, but the new owners are already upgrading the product. The new team will create an updated role-based UI that empowers business users to bring products to market with minimal to no customization and IT dependence.

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The 10 Providers That Matter Most And How They Stack Up

- › **ADAM Software's PIM/DAM combination sets it apart.** ADAM Software's product is well suited for customers that need to manage both product information and a large number of digital assets and users across many languages and geographies. Its PIM strength lies in preparing product information at the point of customer engagement while needing little to no support from technology management. Combined with its leading DAM tool, its PIM capabilities offer a differentiated product for customers. The combination is especially effective for those businesses managing high-quality digital assets that require strong workflow capabilities to orchestrate product information and content work.

Looking ahead, customers noted that they need this solution to offer a unified PIM/DAM UI to eliminate having to switch contexts when they use the tool, something that's already part of ADAM Software's road map of planned enhancements. The company has prioritized supporting merchandising and marketing features and now needs to invest in data quality, bulk update, and product import feeds.

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Supplemental Material

Online Resource

The online version of Figure 5 is an Excel-based vendor comparison tool that provides detailed product evaluations and customizable rankings.

Data Sources Used In This Forrester Wave

Forrester used a combination of 40 data sources to assess the strengths and weaknesses of each solution. We evaluated the vendors participating in this Forrester Wave, in part, using materials that they provided to us by July 2016.

- › **Hands-on lab evaluations.** Vendors spent one day with a team of analysts who performed a hands-on evaluation of the product using a scenario-based testing methodology. We evaluated each product using the same scenarios, creating a level playing field by evaluating every product on the same criteria.
- › **Vendor surveys.** Forrester surveyed vendors on their capabilities as they relate to the evaluation criteria. Once we analyzed the completed vendor surveys, we conducted vendor calls where necessary to gather details of vendor qualifications.
- › **Product demos.** We asked vendors to conduct demonstrations of their products' functionality. We used findings from these product demos to validate details of each vendor's product capabilities.
- › **Customer reference calls.** To validate product and vendor qualifications, Forrester also conducted reference calls with two to three of each vendor's current customers.

The Forrester Wave Methodology

We conduct primary research to develop a list of vendors that meet our criteria to be evaluated in this market. From that initial pool of vendors, we then narrow our final list. We choose these vendors based on: 1) product fit; 2) customer success; and 3) Forrester client demand. We eliminate vendors that have limited customer references and products that don't fit the scope of our evaluation.

After examining past research, user need assessments, and vendor and expert interviews, we develop the initial evaluation criteria. To evaluate the vendors and their products against our set of criteria, we gather details of product qualifications through a combination of lab evaluations, questionnaires, demos, and/or discussions with client references. We send evaluations to the vendors for their review, and we adjust the evaluations to provide the most accurate view of vendor offerings and strategies.

We set default weightings to reflect our analysis of the needs of large user companies — and/or other scenarios as outlined in the Forrester Wave evaluation — and then score the vendors based on a clearly defined scale. We intend these default weightings to serve only as a starting point and encourage readers to adapt the weightings to fit their individual needs through the Excel-based tool.

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The final scores generate the graphical depiction of the market based on current offering, strategy, and market presence. Forrester intends to update vendor evaluations regularly as product capabilities and vendor strategies evolve. For more information on the methodology that every Forrester Wave follows, go to <http://www.forrester.com/marketing/policies/forrester-wave-methodology.html>.

Integrity Policy

We conduct all our research, including Forrester Wave evaluations, in accordance with our Integrity Policy. For more information, go to <http://www.forrester.com/marketing/policies/integrity-policy.html>.

Survey Methodology

Forrester's Consumer Technographics® North American Retail And Travel Online Benchmark Recontact Survey 1, Q3 2016 (US) was fielded in May and June 2016. This online survey included 4,400 respondents in the US between the ages of 18 and 88. For results based on a randomly chosen sample of this size, there is 95% confidence that the results have a statistical precision of plus or minus 1.5% of what they would be if the entire population of US online adults (defined as those online weekly or more often) had been surveyed.

Forrester weighted the data by age, gender, income, and region to demographically represent the US online adult population. The survey sample size, when weighted, was 4,399. (Note: Weighted sample sizes can be different from the actual number of respondents to account for individuals generally underrepresented in online panels.) Lightspeed Research fielded this survey on behalf of Forrester. Survey respondent incentives include points redeemable for gift certificates.

Endnotes

- ¹ This forecast highlights the effects of retailers' cross-channel selling efforts. See the Forrester report "[Forrester Research Web-Influenced Retail Sales Forecast, 2015 To 2020 \(US\)](#)." This report, an annual update of Forrester's Web-Influenced Retail Forecast, lays out the current state of web-influenced sales in the US and the factors that will drive growth through 2020. See the Forrester report "[Brief: Digital Touchpoint Investments Significantly Influence US Retail Sales](#)."
- ² Source: Forrester's North American Consumer Technographics Retail Survey, 2015. For more information, see the Forrester report "[The Rise Of The Empowered Customer](#)."
- ³ Forrester defines the customer life cycle as the enterprise's view of the phases a customer passes through in the course of an ongoing relationship with a company. The stages include discover, explore, buy, use, ask, and engage.
- ⁴ Source: Forrester's Consumer Technographics North American Retail And Travel Online Benchmark Recontact Survey 1, Q3 2016 (US).
- ⁵ Outdoor retailer Recreational Equipment (REI) found that when customers watched a video about a product, the conversion rate doubled compared with that of nonwatchers. When customers made a purchase after watching the video, more than half the time, it was in the same session as the video view. Similarly, specialty home furnishings retailer Cost Plus World Market told Forrester that it sees 1.9 to 2.5 times the conversion rates for pages with video versus those without. For more on this, see the Forrester report "[Short-Form Product Video: Blockbuster Conversions Without The Hollywood Budget](#)."

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⁶ Source: Forrester's Consumer Technographics North American Online Benchmark Survey (Part 1), 2016.

⁷ Source: Forrester's Consumer Technographics North American Retail And Travel Online Benchmark Recontact Survey 1, Q3 2016 (US).

⁸ Source: Forrester's Consumer Technographics North American Retail And Travel Online Benchmark Recontact Survey 1, Q3 2016 (US).

⁹ In Forrester's 19-criteria evaluation of product information management (PIM) vendors, we identified the 10 most significant providers in the category — ADAM Software, Agility Multichannel, asim, Enterworks, hybris (an SAP company), IBM, Informatica, inRiver, Riversand Technologies, and Stibo Systems — and researched, analyzed, and scored them in three areas: current offering, strategy, and market presence. This report details our findings about how well each vendor fulfills our criteria and where they stand in relation to each other to help eBusiness and channel strategy professionals select the right partner for their product information management needs. See the Forrester report "[The Forrester Wave™: Product Information Management \(PIM\), Q2 2014.](#)"

¹⁰ For details of this evaluation, see the Forrester report "[The Forrester Wave™: Product Information Management \(PIM\), Q2 2014.](#)"

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