

Selerant's DevEX: Delivering on the Promise

CIMdata Commentary

For more than 25 years CIMdata has reported on the product lifecycle management (PLM) industry. For most of this time, the primary focus of the “mindshare leading” PLM solution suppliers that make up the majority of the market has been targeted toward large discrete manufacturers. Much of this has been due to the historical roots of most of the major PLM solution suppliers, which encompasses various discrete product development activities, especially mechanically-oriented computer-aided design tasks, bill of material creation and management, engineering release and change control, and related activities. This history has resulted in a well-educated set of PLM solution suppliers and industrial organizations, many of whom are still predominantly mechanically- or electromechanically-oriented. Currently, we're seeing a growing focus on many non-discrete industries (e.g., food and beverage, consumer packaged goods, petrochemical, specialty chemical, etc.) where specifications are the foundation upon which the product lifecycle operates—not bills of material. For Selerant and other specification-centric PLM solution suppliers, this is not a new thing, but one that has been gaining significant momentum in recent years.

For Selerant, which was founded in 1990, the development and delivery of PLM solutions targeted at consumer packaged goods (CPG) formula-based manufacturing companies is core to their business. DevEX, Selerant's PLM platform, is their solution in support of the needs of these specification-centric industries. Selerant's time in the market has allowed them to gain a solid understanding that these companies require PLM solutions that can support their need to develop not only products, but also long-term brand recognition. In order to be successful in the CPG market, solution suppliers like Selerant will need to understand and recognize that product development and market development cannot be separate, independent activities within a CPG company for it to be successful. They also need to understand and their solutions need to support a CPG company's need to innovate its products while at the same time validating it against market requirements.

DevEX 2.0 is Selerant's most recent release of its PLM platform. Developed on Microsoft's .NET Framework 3.5, Selerant reports that this newest release should provide DevEX users a much richer experience, with significantly improved response time and user interface usability. DevEX 2.0 also takes advantage of Microsoft's SharePoint technology. This enables DevEX users to upload and download, and archive documents for a greater level of version control than previously provided. CIMdata is happy to see that Selerant is taking advantage of the major components of Microsoft's information technology stack. This should allow Selerant to continue to focus on enhancing DevEX's core formula and other specification specific enabling functionality and leave IT component functionality to Microsoft.

Some other noteworthy DevEX 2.0 developments are as follows:

- DevEX now offers a new claims sub-system, an entirely new tool. It has been designed to enable product developers to work collaboratively with marketing to ensure that the target marketing and/or product claims (e.g., low fat, low in salt, etc.) and be delivered to the targeted consumers, and in turn these claims can be validated from a regulatory requirements perspective.

- DevEX now ships with a significant number of specification templates. Selerant views specifications as a preferred way to organize complex sets of information related to a product's content (i.e., its formula) and its packaging. These templates, with their design in best practices, allow companies to get up and running quickly. Additionally, DevEX allows these templates and existing specifications to be copied and altered as required.
- DevEX's multi-formula view functionality allows developers to review a newly-recalculated formula and compare it to the original formula as well as other formulas managed by the system. In addition, this functionality allows developers to contrast multiple constraints, such as fat, sugar, costs, and allergens. Finally, developers can switch between the multi-formula view and single formula view as they look to further optimize a given formula.
- DevEX's new Recipe Stage Visualization tool allows users to visualize an entire recipe and drill down in a specific stage to understand individual steps and formula composition. This functionality appears to be very promising. In many ways, it represents how digital manufacturing supporting technologies can be utilized by specification-centric development organizations.

For many years, CIMdata has stated that it was just a matter of time before a discrete manufacturer would implement PLM enabling technologies. However, for some time now it hasn't been matter of when, but rather how fast. Now for food and beverage, consumer packaged goods, petrochemical, specialty chemical, and other specification-centric companies, it is also no longer a matter of when, but how fast. PLM is no longer an option, but a necessity. Selerant is an excellent example of the type of specification-centric solutions that exist on the market today. Selerant's long history in developing specification-centric and formula management functionality is impressive as is their list of clients. In today's world of highly-configurable and complex products that must adhere to ever changing regulations, the old way of using office automation tools to manage the product lifecycle is no longer viable—to do so will ultimately place a company on a non-successful path.

About CIMdata

CIMdata, an independent worldwide firm, provides strategic consulting to maximize an enterprise's ability to design and deliver innovative products and services through the application of Product Lifecycle Management (PLM). CIMdata provides world-class knowledge, expertise, and best-practice methods on PLM. CIMdata also offers research, subscription services, publications, and education through international conferences. Visit <http://www.CIMdata.com> for more information.