THE STORE API

Areas of application, features & highlights

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THE STORE API

Description, differentiation, benefits

The API as a panacea for growing purchasing demands

What purchasing organizations want is clear: local content displayed in their own eProcurement system so that employees can search all procurement channels. The goal is to avoid unnecessary OCI punchouts and complicated processes for a simplified order process. This generally requires the provision of static content by suppliers. However, due to sales strategy, many suppliers today prefer to show their assortments in online shops to minimize costs and resources. With Store API, both options are possible!

THE STORE

The central node for content provision

The Store supports suppliers by acting as a centralized self-service content management application for the provision and management of assortments for any number of purchasing organizations. Whether WPS4, SAP SRM, Meplato Mall as a closed catalog cloud or other procurement systems – suppliers are able to flexibly respond to purchasing demands and make their assortments available to customers quickly and easily. Thanks to the existing API, purchasing companies are able to optimally link in suppliers, both from a technical and commercial standpoint, and visualize diverse business models (such as their own contracts, marketplaces, external procurement services and webshop assortments).

THE STORE API

A combination of real-time synchronization & controlling

Standard methods for the provision of static content, such as XML, BMEcat and file uploads or downloads, are steadily losing ground due to the digital transformation of purchasing and new technological options available. Cost-intensive and time-consuming manual validation, negotiation and adjustment of catalog items will be replaced by progressively automated, rule-based processes in future.

Meplato already offers suppliers the option of providing catalogs and webshop assortments via an API interface. This approach eliminates punchouts and complicated processes and it is no longer necessary to create and manage BMEcat catalogs. The benefits are obvious. By implementing the REST-based Store API, suppliers can:

- Display their own content directly in the customer's procurement system and boost their visibility on the purchasing side

- Considerably increase sales of articles from catalogs and webshop assortments.

- Considerably reduce the internal workload for price and assortment adjustments at article level (high update rate) with virtually real-time transmission to the customer system

- Load catalogs from their own content management system directly into the Store, fully-automatically, saving the process costs incurred by costly catalog distribution

Purchasing companies benefit from being able to offer their employees a strategy-compliant shopping experience in real time. The Store also supports suppliers in the provision of high-quality content. Thanks to extensive checks and reporting, suppliers can carry out valuable in-depth analysis of their own content. Assortments can be checked against the customer's project profile and the interface shows which specifications (image quality, product descriptions, classifications) must be fulfilled. This makes it much easier for buyers to find the supplier's assortments and represents a huge benefit for both parties.

TECHNOLOGIES UNDER COMPARISON

Cost vs benefit

The BMEcat format undoubtedly set a standard for the provision of catalog data and the same is also true of the classic OCI punchout process. However, the pursuit of automation, fast assortment updates and dynamic good content in the purchasing process calls for new innovative solutions. The new API enables suppliers to effectively fulfill these growing demands.

Suppliers have generally invested heavily in developing their capability to generate BMEcat files and prefer not to implement changes that have not been explicitly requested. However, their future success will depend largely on whether they are able to provide their customized assortment in up-to-date, digital format, regardless of whether or not a BMEcat is generated or product/catalog data is updated via an API.

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THE STORE API
Possible applications, conditions, implementation

Setting standards together – still passing round cassette tapes or are you now streaming?

The current catalog order process is very slow: laborious creation of a file (offline), which is then pushed on to a server, uploaded and downloaded, read, checked and negotiated. This procedure is repeated until buyer and supplier are in agreement. The time span involved can range from days to weeks. Technological advancements generate efficiency gains, but developments in the eProcurement sector are hampered by bureaucracy and investment protection – rather like sharing songs on cassette tapes with friends when the rest of the world is streaming.

Suppliers that can answer the following questions with "yes" are perfectly prepared for the digital future:

a. Can I call up a customer's assortment at the push of a button? (High-quality product data with the products that the customer purchases)

b. Can I call up all prices for a customer's assortment at the push of a button?

If these conditions are fulfilled, a catalog update via the Store API is nothing more than a request code.

In contrast, it is worth looking at the duration and actual cost of generating individual BMEcat catalogs from the request to the finished file on the purchasing company's server. Experience has shown that the development of a BMEcat export , continual error fixing and the upgrading of other functions involves costs of several thousand Euros a year or per catalog, regardless of whether the supplier relies on internal or external development competencies. It is a model that cannot be scaled and which evolves into a cost driver, particularly when there is a high demand for catalogs.

The implementation of API , on the other hand, entails a one-time procedure of 1-2 days. The ensuing provision of catalogs and assortments only involves minimal time and effort or is even completely automated. Client libraries are available in the most common programming languages to facilitate integration of the Store API by suppliers (https://github.com/meplato). Developers can access details and specifications in extensive online documentation, reducing time and effort to a minimum. Access can easily be requested via www.storemanager.de.

This is how simple it is:

1. You implement a program that synchronizes and regularly updates your data in the Store with the aid of the Store API. This is a one-time procedure. You can then use the same method for every additional purchasing company connected to the Meplato network. Once set up, the system runs autonomously.

2. The Store publishes your data in the procurement system after customized content validation. This process is fully automatic.

3. You can also use the Store as a central SaaS application for the provision and management of your catalogs and assortments for any number of other purchasing projects.

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> *Implementing the Meplato Store API has meant that we have been able to considerably increase sales of our webshop articles, amongst major customers such as Bosch. Our products are visible to buyers directly in the multi-source search process, and are more frequently purchased as result. It also saves time and money spent on catalog creation and assortment adjustment. Changes are immediately pushed into our customers' procurement system. The cost and effort of implementation is minimal compared to the ROI.*
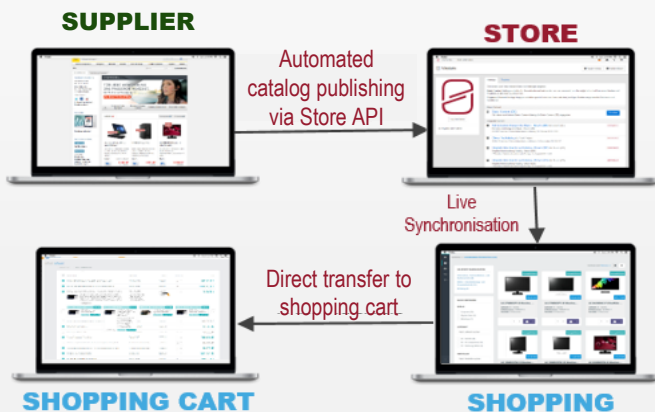> "
>
> *Nicolas Werner, Movisia Automation GmbH*

Fig. 1: Webshop content integration via Store API

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THE STORE API
Synergy effects and facts

For whom does the Store API offer particular benefits?

The API, and OCI-API connection in particular, benefits every purchasing company that wishes to implement strategy-compliant purchasing practices and every supplier that wants to maximize sales volumes while reducing costs. However, for suppliers or marketplaces that market their assortment via their webshop and make daily assortment or price updates, implementation of the Store API provides an additional sales channel that promotes article visibility to buyers from large, international purchasing companies and saves processing costs.

API + OCI: THAT IS THE FUTURE

A combination of synchronization & real-time controlling

The API offers decisive advantages for the integration of webshop content. However, this does not mean that it marks the end of standard OCI connections. Instead it is possible to draw on synergies and combine the benefits of both connections. This enables buyers to view specific product details, execute validations, availability checks or configurations, for example, of product variants directly on the supplier's webshop interface. Products available directly in the procurement system thanks to API can be accessed or configured in the detail view through OCI punchout to the supplier's webshop and synchronised in the shopping cart of the procurement system after strategy-compliant editing. This represents a clear benefit for suppliers, who often invest considerable resources in the development of their own sales frontends. In fact OCI+API connection offers advantages for both parties:

- The features of the supplier's own webshop remain unchanged
- Lead times are reduced through continual stock and price queries
- Option for configuration of product variants

To comply with given purchasing strategies, companies will in future prefer articles from webshops that are also connected via API.

Fig. 2: API, OCI + API connection variations and shopping cart transfers

For any further questions around the Meplato Store API do not hesitate to contact us via mysrrm@meplato.com.

AT A GLANCE

Possible applications

- Static catalogs
- Webshop content

Services

- Client libraries in all common programming languages
- Extensive development documentation

Duration of implementation

- 1-2 days (depending on conditions)

Cost

- Free of cost

Advantages for purchasing companies

- All content sources are centralized in the company's own search feature
- Enables a strategy-compliant shopping experience in real time
- Request up-to-date information on delivery status and stock and thus reduce lead times
- Visualization of all business models (own contracts, external procurement services) in own procurement system

Advantages for suppliers

- Considerably increase sales of articles from catalogs and webshop assortments
- Reduction of internal cost of price and assortment adjustments at article level
- Boost visibility to buyers
- Load catalogs from internal supplier system directly into the Store, fully-automatically, saving the process costs incurred by costly catalog distribution