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Automating E-commerce Content Creation

Using Natural Language Generation To Power Personalization and Increase Conversions

The Dream:
Websites That Sell Like People

What if e-commerce product descriptions could mirror the techniques of the best human salespeople in the world?

After attentive listening to the buyer's needs, great salespeople present their merchandise in a way that covers the product's specific attributes in an engaging style that is aligned with the store's overall brand experience.

Applying those sales skills to e-commerce would mean product descriptions were effortlessly customized for each product in a language that was specifically crafted for connecting with buyers. Instead of simply listing features, each description would tell a story. The tone, style, and format of each description would mirror the way real customers think about the product.

Of course, traditional e-commerce today doesn't operate according to these rules.

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The Reality:
Limitations of Today's E-commerce Sites

Salespeople in physical stores usually have the luxury of selling to one customer at a time. E-commerce platforms, on the other hand, traditionally rely on generic product descriptions, raw feature lists, and static pages that don't respond to customer preferences.

A good product description needs to showcase the product's features and benefits using a solid combination of engaging, informative, and persuasive copy that is also SEO friendly. Standard merchandising data is vital; think of it as the skeleton of a product description. But the muscle is translating that data into the language of your target customers. Every detail in the product description should also convey why that particular product is valuable to the buyer. Ideally, every product description should be in the voice and tone of your brand. All of this, of course, is in the service of higher conversion rates that drive your top line.

Unfortunately, highly engaging product descriptions require a large investment of time and money. The more products a site sells, the more people are needed to write, edit, proof, and publish the copy. The tone and format of the copy must be consistent, which requires on-going updating, expanding, and maintenance. Even if a brand has a clear style and tone, enforcing consistency among a group of writers — many of whom may be freelancers — can present logistical issues for editors and merchandisers.

When you're selling millions of products, advanced personalization and customized engagement do not scale. A single product description can cost as much as $5 to produce, not to mention the time required. If you're selling even as few as 5,000 SKUs, the cost adds up quickly.

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The Reality:
Limitations of Today's E-commerce Sites

Of course, e-commerce companies don't *have* to pay for product copywriters. Indeed, those with millions of products may not be able to. Product descriptions can come right from the manufacturer, usually in the form of a simple bulleted list.

In the short term, using existing product descriptions may seem like a smart way to keep costs down. However, using manufacturer-provided descriptions for products offers no differentiation between your site and your competitors'. The manufacturer's description may not be written to appeal to your customers or even to be consumer-facing. What's more, adding cookie-cutter product descriptions that appear elsewhere on the web can have a negative impact on how your product pages rank in search.

Unique content is far more preferable; as marketing analytics firm Kissmetrics notes on its [blog](#), "the more unique content you write for your product description will always be better for your SEO efforts."

Fortunately, there is now an alternative to both expensive manual product descriptions and generic copy that isn't SEO friendly. The advent of data-driven content generation brings new opportunities for efficiency and personalization at scale for retailers.

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The Technology:
Enabling Advanced Human Interaction

Two advances have made it possible to effectively replicate the techniques of the best salespeople in an e-commerce environment at a scale far beyond what humans could previously achieve.

1: DATA

Companies have access to more data about products, customers, processes, performance, competitors, and the overall marketplace than ever before. In-person sales professionals observe and listen to customers to learn their preferences; leveraged properly, large data sets can reveal customer preferences at scale.

Of course, data by itself is simply unrealized potential. E-commerce companies need to find key insights and present them in the context of the customer experience. Scaling that process requires an innovative solution.

2: NATURAL LANGUAGE GENERATION

Wordsmith, the natural language generation engine from Automated Insights, helps e-commerce managers turn data into product descriptions, category landing page copy, and highly individualized messages to customers.

Using Wordsmith, e-commerce professionals can upload manufacturer data and create highly targeted, variable, and compelling product descriptions. The platform allows a single writer to configure a template and then produce thousands or even millions of unique descriptions. Wordsmith empowers retailers to generate content on a scale that's never before been possible.

The platform works by capitalizing on the data that e-commerce companies already have about each product SKU. With Wordsmith, each product row in a product catalog can be transformed into a full product description. Even better, this platform allows you to create rule-based writing to vary the information pulled into your descriptions and the style in which the content is written. The process is automated, but the results are anything but robotic. Each description sounds like a human writer carefully crafted it by hand.

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The Benefits: Customer Engagement and Customer Data

BETTER ENGAGEMENT

Natural language generation gives product features a far more engaging, human voice. Wordsmith-generated content can:

- Compare products to others
- Change product descriptions as overall inventory changes.
- Highlight specific product features or promote certain products in light of changing seasons or sales goals.
- Describe products using a tone and style that is most appropriate for that brand.

In other words, natural language generation allows e-commerce sites to add human-level engagement on a previously unimaginable scale. Wordsmith gives e-commerce providers the power to tell real stories with their data.

MORE DATA

E-commerce companies value customer data for reasons far beyond product description creation. Compelling narratives offer customers a good reason to provide their data, since it tangibly results in a more helpful, personalized experience.

Thus, NLG technology can increase the number of customers willing to share their data, as well as the amount of data they are each willing to share. If customers know more data leads to better personalization, they will be willing to provide more of it when, for example, creating an account or signing up for a newsletter. This in turn can lead to even better personalization, which can lead to even more data collection in a positive feedback loop.

According to a [study](#) from Infosys, personalization influences purchasing for 86% of consumers - and 31% of consumers want shopping to get more personalized.

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The Path to
Evolved E-commerce

As e-commerce continues its rapid rise, the automation of product descriptions is the next step in driving efficiency and productivity. There's simply no other way for online retailers to get consistently engaging copy at the scale they need.

Advancing automation is a constant in many areas of e-commerce; now, product descriptions and customer communication can be automated as well. Companies that adapt this new technology today will be the best positioned to compete in the future.

About Automated Insights

Automated Insights (Ai) is the creator of Wordsmith, the world's first self-service natural language generation platform for the enterprise. Automated Insights empowers organizations to generate human-sounding narratives from data, making it easy to produce real-time, written analytics, personalized reports, and stories at scale. The Wordsmith platform is utilized by companies and partners, including the Associated Press, Cisco, MicroStrategy, NVIDIA, Tableau, TIBCO, and Qlik, in over 50 data-driven industries, such as business intelligence, financial services, ecommerce, sports and entertainment, and media.

Request a Wordsmith Demo.

Learn more at AutomatedInsights.com.

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