MEDICAL DEVICE PRODUCT CROSS REFERENCE Q & A

Creating an online product search/cross reference tool for medical devices can be a challenge. Here are some of the questions we've tackled in creating simple, easy-to-use product cross reference tools for our clients.

Q: I need a fully searchable and browsable online catalog. How should I organize it to provide the best experience to our users?

Q: Our competitors all have different codes corresponding to different features of a product. No one wants to look at 20 columns in their search results—how do we present this information in an easily digestible way?

Browsing an Online Catalog

A: We found that drop down menus were the simplest way to get users to the information they were looking for quickly. For people used to using filters in Excel, drop down menus are intuitive and easy. Depending on the product type selected, there could be sub-menus that would appear to further refine the search. For example, there may be many criteria by which to search for Product A, but not many substantial differentiating criteria for Product B. If the user selects Product A from the main product drop down menu, then a sub-menu consisting of several categories to refine the search appears. When Product B is selected from the main product drop down menu, the user may simply be brought directly to the Product B results.

Handling Competitive Codes

A: Color-coding in the search results allows the user to quickly see the codes that the competition uses to classify different features even when placed into one column.

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Q: We have thousands of products. How do we ensure accuracy?

Q: How do we make sure our users understand what our categories really mean?

Q: We have two product lines that correspond to each other and we want our customers to be able to look up SKUs in both lines, but we only want SKUs and cross-reference information to display for line A. How do we do that?

Ensuring Accuracy

A: Check, double-check, and check again. We take the time to test our product search tools and catalog lookup tools to make sure that information is accurate. For example, when testing one tool, it didn't take long for us to notice that some product SKUs had been duplicated, some even showed up 3 or 4 times! We then knew what to look for in the source file to correct the issue.

Category Meanings

A: We added info rollover buttons to the top of each category column. These "tool tip" rollovers help describe what's in the column—whether it's a measurement, a material, or a quantity. It helps the customer more accurately make their cross-reference comparison.

Handling Multiple Product Lines

A: Keep the two product lines in separate columns in your database (A and B), matched by cross-reference. The search results parameters can then be set to only display results from column A.

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Database Tricks

Q: Our company has two lines of the same type of product where one SKU in line A crosses with two different SKUs in line B. The competitive crosses for the SKU in line B are different than those for line A.

A: We've used HTML code in a few places in a base Excel file in order to interface with a cross-reference search tool. Mostly, we've used the "&trade" code to make trademarks appear properly in the results. We realized we could use this trick to force the tool to display the correct SKU results based on the cross reference entered. We've added a " " (non-breaking space) after a duplicate line A SKU, and it was as if the duplicate had become a separate SKU. The result is that if a user enters a competitive SKU that crosses with line B but not line A, the correct product line will display in the results. When the user enters a SKU that crosses with line A, the added space is invisible in the results.

Find out more about our cross-reference search tool process at:

www.thematchstickgroup.com/crossref

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