

# Rats Nest vs Digital Fluidity:

Easy Choice when done through the process of incrementalism.

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The adaptation of technology as a means of automating or in some manner reducing manual labor / activity is something that has benefited businesses both in (1) expediting the delivery of products to market yielding higher revenue / margins, and (2) enabling its agility to respond appropriately to changing market conditions. This is what is referred to as the **Digital Fluidity** of the **Mind to Market** process of Retail.

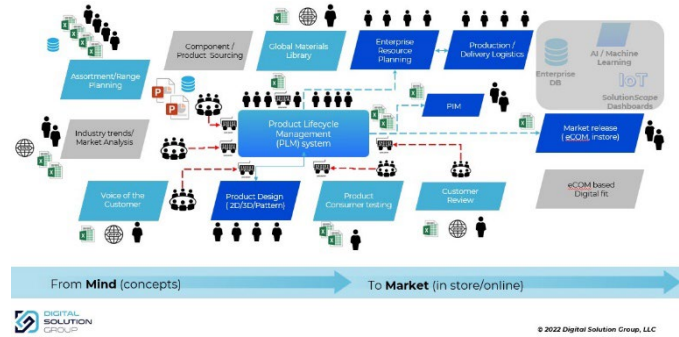
When I led the effort to introduce enterprise level PLM to the Retail Market back in 2002 it was done to enable Retail businesses to centralize all information about the products they were offering to market. It included a range of digital libraries and functions that spanned Seasonal definition, Line Planning, Product Design / Development, Sourcing, Testing.

However, it was **never intended** to support all of the **Mind (concept) to Market (consumer)** process that includes Industry Trends / Market Analysis or full fledged Assortment / Range Planning or Voice of the Customer or Logistics, ERP, eCommerce, Digital Fit, and the list goes on.

The technological and business process adoption of PLM took much of the retail industry *over a decade to actualize*; while claiming (rightly so) financial cost savings, increased revenue, improved margins, and greater speed to market.

But for many (*maybe your company*) the adoption of technology to automate and streamline the **complete** Mind to Market process through Digital Fluidity has stopped or slowed to a crawl. Upgrades of systems and a “business as usual” mindset has caused some to pat themselves on the back for their past achievements and (in doing so) come to a standstill.

When one takes a look at the full business process / systems used to execute the **complete** Mind to Market process of these successful PLM adopters you will see a **Rats Nest** of manual activity and disconnected systems. Excel spreadsheets, PowerPoints, group meetings, manual data entry, and end of day data uploads that drain time, stymie creativity, cost money, and drastically reduce agility in a highly volatile market.



PLM has enabled the hub, a centralization of product data, and indeed “one version of the truth”, but it has not “solutionized” the **Mind to Market process** that the retail industry **must** execute on a day-to-day, hour-by-hour basis.

The value of centralizing data and processes in PLM **needs to be digitally extended** to those systems and processes that support execution from Mind to Market.

It is not good enough to have;

- the **Assortment / Range Planning** feed PLM through manual data entry following *exhaustive* meetings that are captured in PowerPoint presentations that never find their way to fully messaging what Products, features, messaging, or colors are key to a Season’s line profile / success; (*affecting revenue and margins*);
- the **Voice of the Customer** “application” require scheduling of untimely meetings to determine the adjustments necessary on Design options, color choices, and key sell-through metrics that will be entered using “*state of the art, ergonomic*” keyboards; (*delaying time to market; affecting revenue and margins*);
- the PLM system feed an **ERP** or **Logistics** system with Product Specification data in nightly runs of the most primitive data with no means of returning vital sell-through information critical to making line adjustments; (*affecting revenue and margins*);
- and the list goes on, and on, and on – but it has become organizational white noise; to be ignored as it “is what it is”;

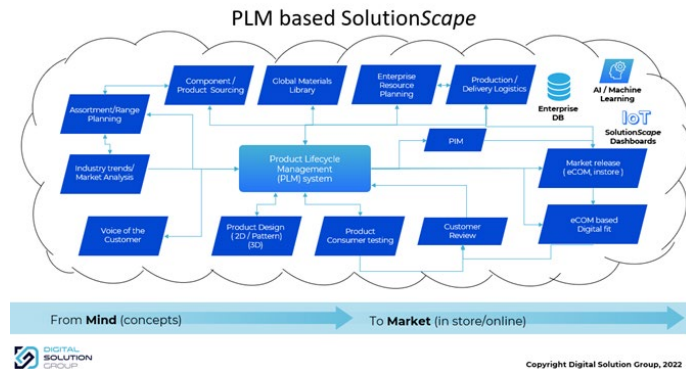
This **Rats Nest** of manual / semi-automated processes was **never the vision** when PLM was introduced into the Retail industry. PLM was always intended to be the beginning of the digital transformation. Retail needed a **hub of information** that supported a base level of functionality so that all other niche systems would have a **place to integrate** based on a methodically defined ASIS → TOBE process evolution.

This digital transformation was also **never intended to be performed all at once**; equivalent to the proverbial Big Bang. It was always intended to be executed in an incremental process. The digital transformation of Retail required the formation of a strategy and tactical plan that applied **incrementalism** as its approach for execution.

**Incrementalism** is defined (by Oxford Dictionary) as the “*belief in or advocacy of change by degrees; gradualism*”.

Digital transformation of the Retail **Mind to Market** process through incrementalism is the only way to achieve true digital fluidity; formalizing the connectivity of all systems; pulsing data from system to system, triggered by predefined events and having all of the data richness needed to support the receiving system's operations.

By establishing digital fluidity of the **Mind to Market** process in an incremental manner, it also evolves a basis of data and process flow that can be analyzed using AI and Machine Learning to bring **insights to light**; furthering the understanding necessary to perform *decisioning* in the always changing marketplace of Retail.



Rats' nests are good for rats, but **digital fluidity** is critical for brands and retailers to succeed in the rat race of Retail. Connect with [Digital Solution Group](http://www.digitalsolutiongroup.net/) to identify how you can begin untangling the rats' nests in your organization's **Mind to Market** process.