

# 'Connected Partners' at Walmart

Mass merchant is bringing 11 partners on board as it relaunches its content provider program

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By Patrycja Malinowska

Walmart is changing the way it works with digital content providers by choosing 11 partners to ally with on a priority level, the Path to Purchase Institute learned in September.

These content providers – third parties that scale and optimize content from suppliers to retailers – will be investing in Walmart by maintaining a presence in a Walmart office (Bentonville, Arkansas; San Bruno, California; or Hoboken, New Jersey) that will help them ensure that technical issues and business priorities are addressed efficiently and effectively.

Digital content has become increasingly important as customers have moved away from shopping via a single source. Content present on an item page influences not only online discoverability and sales, but also voice commerce, VR shopping, list recommendations and in-store purchases. Yet suppliers remain challenged by the fact that there is not a single standard of product attributes and content type required across all retailers, and third-party content providers aren't always fully aware of retailers' evolving priorities and processes.

With feedback from more than 650 suppliers and an extensive selection process, Walmart vetted 11 "Connected Content Partners" that it will work with to eliminate inconsistencies while improving quality and effectiveness. The partners will have direct contact with the merchandising teams and unprecedented access to Walmart's systems, allowing them to help with content strategy, facilitate conversations with merchants, and quickly make updates and fix content errors – all while driving cost efficiencies.

As part of their contracts with Walmart, the partners must provide transparency in their rate cards, drive measurable results and complete a formal review every six months.

The partners are grouped under four categories:

- Syndication partners map and integrate existing brand content to many retailers: Boston-based **Salsify** and San Francisco-based **Content Analytics**.
- Enrichment partners create and manage content for suppliers by category: Chicago-based **Nielsen Brandbank**; Chicago-based **Gladson**; Hauppauge, New York-based **SMSB Consulting Group**; Fayetteville, Arkansas-based **WhyteSpyder**; Hollywood, Florida-based **OneKreate**; and San Francisco-based **CNET Content Solutions**.
- Rich media partners create and host rich media including video, comparison charts and 360-degree tours: Rogers, Arkansas-based **RichContext** and New York-based **WebCollage** (a fully owned subsidiary of Gladson).

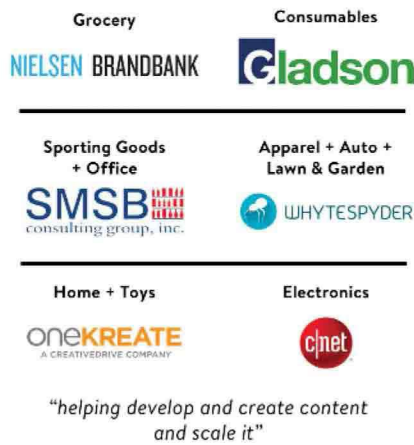
## Connected Content Partners

### Syndication



"driving scale and efficiencies through sending us existing supplier content"

### Enrichment



### Rich Media



"enabling rich media brand assets on Walmart.com"

### User Generated Content



"activating user generated content and expanding customer experience while ensuring DRM"



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- User-generated content partners provide and manage rights to user-generated content: RichContext, New York-based **Olapic** and Austin-based **Bazaarvoice**.

"Through the reimagination of the content partner program at Walmart, we believe the Connected Content Partners will be the perfect harmonization of three distinct ecosystems: retailer, supplier and content," Frank Ogura, senior staff product manager at Walmart Labs, told P2PI. "Since content powers the story of a product; it needs to be integrated wherever the product travels."

Walmart will officially relaunch the program in early January. At this point, switching to one of Walmart's content providers is not a requirement, just an option.

Walmart is also making significant changes to its content studio service provider program, refocusing on private-label suppliers that needed an avenue to product content and standardizing them under one style guide.

Sister chain Sam's Club and subsidiary Jet.com continue to manage a separate product catalog and are not included in the relaunch.

The move comes after Walmart did some initial heavy lifting to drive scale in its online assortment by filling in gaps left by items that were completely missing product pages. As the retailer continues improving content, it's zeroing in on quality and effectiveness.

The retailer's content plan for next year includes a partnership with BuzzFeed's Tasty that will bring some of the latter's content and inspiration to Walmart.com. **SM**

## Fast Answers

- **As a supplier using a content provider, do I need to move to one of these partners?** No. All partners will keep their API access to Walmart's catalog and can continue to use supplier credentials to submit.
- **So, why use one of these partners?** Aside from having an onsite presence to help navigate the intricacies of digital commerce, they will be ranked in Walmart's catalog as a trusted source of content and will be able to provide clear direction on Walmart's priorities.
- **What is a syndication partner vs. enrichment partner?** A syndication partner syndicates/sends Walmart (and other retailers) content that exists under the brand(s) to lower the cost of managing it internally and mapping it to the retailers' requirements. An enrichment provider creates and manages content that is differentiated from brand content – i.e., Walmart-specific content created across item setup, content enrichment and rich media.
- **Why is rich media separate?** Rich media partners have the capacity to create enhanced experiences (such as shoppable modules) regardless of a specific category expertise.

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