



Introduction

The Stock In The Channel database is rebuilt each night using data-feeds supplied by over 160 UK (350+ across our entire network) trade suppliers of IT Hardware & Software, Telecoms, EOS, Consumer Electronics and Office Products.

During our overnight process we use Manufacturer SKU and Brand Name to match products from multiple suppliers together to avoid duplication. We then match the entire catalogue with product content and category structure held by our data partners.

Where we find a direct match between the distributor data and that held by our data partners, we import the available product content, which is then presented to Stock In The Channel users from the following morning. Distributor products that do not get matched will be presented with the content received from the Distributors and will be displayed as "Uncategorised".

It's still important for distributors to submit as much product content as they are able to so that any unmatched items are still presented well to our users.

File Types and Transfer Methods

All distributors work differently so our system has been designed to be able to import content in a large variety of different file formats and be as flexible as we can sensibly make it.

Files can be transferred via FTP (push or pull) or HTML download and we support most commonly used file types including txt, xlsx, csv, tsv & xml.

Product and stock files (if separate) must be of the same file type, however, price files can be different. We are also able to accept archives containing files in the above file formats.

Our preference is to collect unzipped CSV files from your FTP Site. If you don't have an FTP of your own, we can setup a secure folder and give you access to our FTP so that you can push your files to us instead.

Once we agree a method, location, format and file name, these values should remain static. Changing the way that you name, format or where you deposit the files without telling us, will result in a failed import and your product data, stock or client prices will soon become out of date in our system.

Each distributor can use up to three different types of files for different purposes. These are: **product files** (Unique per distributor), **Stock Files** (Unique per distributor) and **price files** (As many as you wish – Can be a single price for all resellers, band prices - one per client, or a combination of price bands and client specific).

Notes:

- Whilst Products and Stock are normally publicly visible, only resellers that you approve to see pricing and assign to a feed will be able to see your prices within Stock In The Channel
- Product files can also be used as stock and/or price files if you wish to keep things simple.
- For file transfer purposes each distributor is either push or pull. It is not possible to push us your product file and expect us to pull your stock or price file



Product File (Master File)

Stock In The Channel use nightly processing to import “**Product Files**”.

Products added and deleted from your product file during the day will only be reflected on Stock In The Channel from the following morning. The same applies to additional information that you add to your file such as image links, descriptions etc.

Only stock & prices get updated within our system during the day.

Each distributor listing on Stock In The Channel must nominate one file as a master product file and only products that are on this file will be visible to clients.

If your Product file is also acting as a “Stock File” then all the values for “Stock File” should also be included.

If your Product file is also acting as a Price file, then the appropriate Price file values should also be included.

Distributor SKU must be a unique value on your Product File. Any Distributor SKU that is not unique will be ignored and the product will not be listed. If you don't use internal part numbers, we can use the MFR SKU from your file instead, but this also then needs to be a unique value.

Only products that appear on your “Product File” will be imported to Stock In The Channel. Even if an item not included on the product file is on a client “Price File” it will still not be visible even to the client that “owns” the “Price File”

If you have products that are only available to specific customers, this is handled by our “Restricted Catalogue” functionality and these items should still be included on your “Product File” accompanied by a flag to indicate they are restricted access SKUs

These are the fields that **must** be included in your product file

- Distributor Part no. (Manufacturer SKU will be used if not supplied and this Value must be unique within your file)
- Manufacturer Part no.
- Brand Name
- Product Name (100 characters max – Including brand name which we will prefix)
- Stock Level* (unless your Stock is being supplied on a separate file)
- Price* (Currency subject to site) (unless your Price is being supplied on a separate file(s))

The above are the minimum requirements for our system to be able to import your products. We will always attempt to match your products (using the Brand and Manufacturer SKU) with content held by our data partners but if we don't find a matching item your product will then be listed only with the content we have gathered from your feed and any other Distributor feeds offering the same item.



Additional Data (Product File)

We are able to import a lot more detail about your products from your “Product File” if you make this available, see all available additional “Product Details Fields” below:

These are the additional fields we are able to import. Please supply data for all that you are able.

- RRP (Currency subject to site)
- Product description Short (Max 500 characters, plain text only)
- Product description Long (No Limit and HTML is accepted)
- Technical Specifications (No Limit – see notes further on in document)
- RRP (Recommended Resale Price)
- EAN / Barcode
- UNSPC Code
- Category
- Sub Category
- Image (Main) URL (no watermarks)
- Image (Extra 1) URL (no watermarks)
- Image (Extra 2) URL (no watermarks)
- PDF Data-sheets URL – (Vendor branded or unbranded only)
- Net Weight (Numbers only. Please advise the UOM in header if possible)
- Gross Weight
- Plastics Weight
- Cardboard Weight
- Size - Height (Use numbers only values are assumed to be “CM” unless advised otherwise)
- Size - Width (Use numbers only values are assumed to be “CM” unless advised otherwise)
- Size - Depth (Use numbers only values are assumed to be “CM” unless advised otherwise)
- Condition 1,2,3,4 (Eg New / Refurbished / Box Open, etc)
- Classification Code (Special Use - see restricted catalogue and other Examples below)
- Product Type 1,2,3,4 (Special Use)
- Pack Size
- Contract Name
- Contract Sales Price
- Extra Freight Flag
- Extra Freight Value
- Country of Origin
- Tax Exempt Flag

Special Fields for Compatible Product (Important for toner and ink to map to our configurator – currently UK Only)

- OEM Brand name - Compatible to Manufacturer (Used for refurbished / compatible products)
- OEM SKU - Compatible to SKU (Used for refurbished / Compatible products)

Special Fields for Office Products

- Office Products Category ID (UK-Boss / AU-Office National)
- Spicers category ID (UK only)



Stock Files

Stock In The Channel checks “**Stock Files**” hourly for changes.

We download the file nominated as your stock file and compare the checksum of the file with the file we last imported. If the checksum has changed, we will import the new stock values.

Many distributors produce a separate file for stock level. This can be less taxing on your system (and ours) compared to producing a file which includes all the product details every hour. It also means that your Product File doesn't need to come from the same system as your Stock File and may allow you to provide better content in your Product File and include values that you don't have in your stock control system.

Alternatively, the “Product File” can also act as your stock file, however its important to remember that only the stock values will be imported during the daytime.

Whichever option you decide to go with, Please update your designated Stock File as often as possible.

We will import Stock from your designated Stock File every hour

This file only needs to include:

- Distributor SKU (must be unique unless using option 2 below)
- Stock Qty
- Stock ETA (Optional)
- Stock Lead Time (optional)
- Warehouse Identifier (Only needed for option 2 below)

Any other fields or columns on your Stock File will be ignored during a stock import.

Stock Location

We are able to display stock held in different warehouses separately. The basic search result would display a consolidated Stock value (A sum of all the warehouses stock levels) and an icon would be displayed next to this indicating that a breakdown of Stock by location is available and this is then displayed when you hover over the icon

This is particularly useful for resellers that need fast access to stock or want to come and collect or perhaps are serviced from a specific warehouse or depot by your company.

To be able to utilise this feature, your designated “Stock file” needs to contain separate stock values for each warehouse. If you Stock file doesn't include headers, or the headers are not clear, you should notify us of the warehouse names or geographical location so that we can include this during the setup of your Stock feed.



Multiple Warehouses (Stock Files)

If you have multiple “**Stock Locations**”, you can either.

1. Use separate columns for each warehouse to contain stock Qty, (ETA & Lead Time if provided) and head the columns with the warehouse name identifier.
2. Provide a column for Warehouse Identifier – under this methodology you would list the same Distributor SKU multiple times with different warehouse Identifiers and the relevant stock levels.

Please Note: option 2 above is only available when using a separate file for Products and Stock.

If your file contains abbreviated codes for your various Warehouses, please also provide a list so that we can setup your warehouses in a user friendly way within our system.

Price File(s)

We automatically import “Price Files” once a day early in the morning.

Our system provides users with a method for importing all their Suppliers prices on demand via our interface.

You can have as many price files in our system as you need to support different price models for your clients. These may be individual “Price Files” per client or it could be a series of price tiers to which you assign multiple clients.

These files only need to include:

- Distributor SKU (Must be Unique)
- Unit Price

Any other fields or columns on your price file(s) are ignored during a price import.

Please Note: If you become aware of a problem with your pricing or need to notify us of a global change in your prices please contact our support team and we can trigger a new import of all your price files on demand.

For distributors that are “participating” and using the Stock In The Channel distributor interface to manage price files, it’s possible to assign multiple resellers to a single price list within our system.

Distributors that work on “price bands” get a major benefit from this system as they only need to produce and supply as many price files as they have price bands.



Default Price Account (Price Files)

A default “Price File” must be configured during setup for all distributors even if this price file is never assigned to a reseller. This will be used as a Template so that future price files that are created in our system will be simpler to setup, it is assumed that the column containing the “Distributor SKU” and “Client Price” will always be the same as the default “Price Account”

This feed will also be used to help Stock In The Channel generate a guide trade price. For this reason, it’s recommended that you don’t supply your lowest price as the default price account. Guide trade prices are displayed only for products where we have at least 3 different suppliers

Resellers using Stock In The Channel will only see pricing from the Price File they are assigned to. If an item is missing from your Price File but is included on your Product File, clients assigned to this price file will see “NA” in the price column within Stock In The Channel and will not be able to export this product to their ecommerce or other systems.

Note: If you only have a single Price File (i.e. You sell to every client at the same price) this is fine also. We have the option for you to either “Auto Approve” new reseller requests to See pricing and automatically assign them to your “Default Price Account” or to allow you to manage this via the Distributors interface.

Restricted Catalogue

If you have parts of your catalogue that are tagged as Restricted Catalogue during Product Import, these will only be visible to resellers that have a price for the item on their nominated price feed. All resellers that don’t have these products on their price feed will not see the products at all.

Please refer to the related sections of this document under Product Files and Price Files for further details of how to manage restricted catalogue Items

Product Condition

If you have a condition value for your products, this can be included, and we will map it to our own condition types. This field is not yet being actively used within Stock In The Channel although we do plan to introduce it in the future. Until then, it is assumed that all products you upload are new, unopened OEM products in pristine packaging.

If the actual condition is different to this then the product title should contain details of the condition and the MFR SKU and distributor SKU should be different from the pristine / OEM version of the product following the same logic as for refurbished products.



Refurbished, Compatible or Damaged Box (etc.)

If you are listing products that are not new retail-packaged or genuine branded:

- These **must** use a different MFR SKU - (example: append "RE" to the end of the genuine products code for refurbished so C8061X could become C8061X-RE)
- Any product that is not new or genuine must be clearly described in the product title and preferably the description as refurbished etc.
- If you are listing own-brand toner or ink, the brand name should not be that of the OEM. For example, you may state in your product title and description that a remanufactured toner product is "For use in a HP LaserJet XXXX". You should not list the brand name as HP and instead would use your own compatible Brand Name in the Brand Column for these items.
- Product titles and MFR SKU are included in the fields we use to build our search cache, so your product is still going to be found by clients actively looking for the OEM products

Product specifications

If you have product specifications we would like to receive them. Plain text or HTML formatted text can be used but if supported and for the best presentation we prefer these to be submitted as a table using HTML formatting. **An example of how you could present this data is included Below**

```
<table class="generic">
<tr><th colspan="2" class="text-left">In case you need a group heading</th></tr>
<tr><td>Feature Name</td><td>Feature value</td></tr>
</table>
```



Notes:

- **File names and column orders** must remain the same every day/hour on all files. It is advisable to avoid using dates in your file names as the name of your file needs to remain static.
- **If you need to change the column order of your files**, please tell us about it so that we can remap your files.
- **Preferred file format** is CSV, but we can also work with any common file types such as TXT, XLS, XML etc.
- **Distributor SKU MUST be unique** on each file as this is the field used to connect product files to “stock” and “price” files. If a distributor SKU appears more than once on a stock or price file, Stock In The Channel doesn’t know which stock or price to display so instead will not display the products at all.
- The use of certain characters in a CSV file can invalidate the file. Special characters such as **quotations** or **commas** need to be escaped correctly.
- For more information on creating a valid CSV file please follow this link: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comma-separated_values#Basic_rules_and_examples
- If providing product **dimensions and weight** on your feed, please do not include the Unit of measure in suffix Kg or cm and simply state the values. It is assumed that the values are KG and CM but if different, please indicate the UOM in the header row of your file or notify us directly. We are able to import all weight in any format and convert to the locally used unit of measure
- **Other file transfer methods** such as http download are also possible. This document is not an exhaustive description of the available options. If you have a different method that you prefer, please contact us to see if we can support your requirements.
- **Can I email my feed to you?** We prefer to utilise an (S)FTP solution for feed pick up or delivery. FTP is convenient and easy. If you are a small business and don’t have automated systems it’s very quick and easy to get you setup with FTP access to deliver a file to our Server and not very technical. If you absolutely want to email a feed to us, we will provide an address for this to be sent to but it will be hard for us to Automate the interface for you to be able to add multiple price files. Please talk to you account manager if this is an issue for you.
- **Restricted products by reseller.**
This is becoming a more common requirement (examples include the MS surface Tablet range and many Apple products which are only available to specified resellers in most markets). To handle this, we can import an extra value from distributor’s product feeds that can mark products as restricted catalogue lines. To utilise this functionality, you will need to advise us of a dedicated value (or multiple values) within a specified field on your “default product file” that indicates the products that need to be tagged as restricted visibility / supply. This could indeed be the brand “Apple” within the Brand column so doesn’t need to be difficult or require a rewrite of your feed management systems. If you need this function, let’s talk!!