OpenGlobal Virtuemart Product Feeds

Instruction Manual

Introduction

This Joomla! component makes it easy to provide CSV datafeeds of all of your Virtuemart products for various external companies.

The software comes preloaded with product datafeed configuration for

- Affiliate Window
- Channel Advisor
- Ciao
- Ebay
- Edirectory
- Google Base / Google Products
- Paid on Results
- Play Trade
- PriceGrabber
- PriceRunner
- ShareASale
- Shopping.com
- Shopzilla
- WebGains

And you can configure your own bespoke product feeds very easily.

The datafeeds can be password protected so that only recognised third parties can access them.

Please note that some of the preconfigured datafeeds will not work "out of the box" because they require you to categorise your products against a strict taxonomy.

Installation

The OpenGlobal Virtuemart Product Feeds component installs in exactly the same way as any other Joomla! Component . Simply log into the Joomla! administrative control panel as an Administrator (not "Manager") and go to Extensions > Install/Uninstall.

Upload and install the package by locating the package on your computer and clicking "Upload File & Install".

As long as there are no errors, The component is now installed and can be access from the Components menu under "Product Feeds".

Product Feeds Manager

The opening screen of the Product Feeds Manager shows all of the available product feeds, showing the package product feed configurations when first installed.

You can create a new bespoke configuration by clicking on the "New" button in the top right hand corner of the screen, or you can edit an existing configuration either by clicking on its name, or checking the box next to the name and clicking the "Edit" button in the top right hand corner.

Any product feeds that are published will have the product feed URL displayed next to them in the Product Feed Manager list. This is where the third party/application can download the datafeed from.

Creating a New Product Feed Configuration

From the Product Feeds Manager, click on the "New" button.

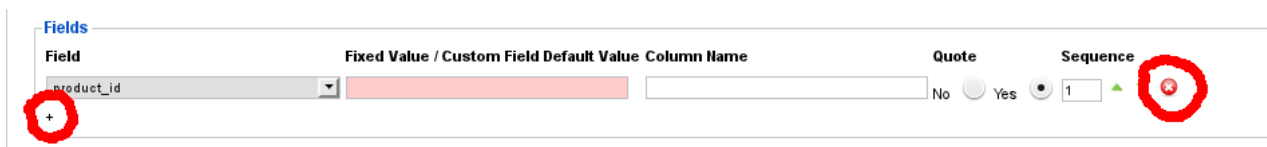The "Feed" options contain the settings that apply to the whole product feed.

Feed Name	The name of the product feed you are creating. It is suggested that you use the name of the company or application that the product feed is for.
Virtuemart Database Table Prefix	The prefix used on the Virtuemart tables, the default is vm and this MUST match the same setting in Virtuemart otherwise it will not be possible to access the product data.
Field Separator	This is the character(s) that will separate the fields in the product feed. eg. For CSV this will be a comma ','. If you have trouble entering a <TAB> character for tab-delimited files, you can use '\t'.
Field Quote	This is the character(s) that will quote each of the fields in the product feed. This is usually a double quote, '"', or empty.
Escape Field Quote	If a Field Quote is used, there needs to be some way of escaping those charater(s) if they appear within the data itself. The Escape Field Quote character(s) will replace any occurrence of the Field Quote character(s) in the data. This is usually two double quotes, '""', or a backslash and double quote, '\"'.
Convert newlines to	Some applications will not allow newlines in the feed except to terminate the end of each product entry. If newlines are permitted, this should be '\n', if they are not permitted, you can leave it blank to simply strip them out, or enter new text to replace new lines with something else appropriate. eg. ' '.
Show header row	This option defines whether a header row will be added to the

	top of the product feed giving the column names for each field.
Password	Enter a password here to prevent unauthorised users from accessing the product feed.
Single category per product	Virtuemart allows products to belong to multiple categories. By selecting "No", any products which are assigned to multiple categories will be duplicated, once for each category it is in. By selecting "Yes", each product will only appear in the product feed once and will be assigned the first of its categories selected from the database.
Exclude out of stock products	Whether the feed should only include in-stock products.
Currency	Choose the currency that prices should be converted to. If you only use one currency, leave this as "Original". This is a very intensive process and converting the native currency to the same native currency is wasteful. "Original" performs no exchange rate calculation.

Please note that only the convertECB module is supported for price conversions. |
| Published | Whether the product feed is published and available to external users. |

Clicking on the "+" in the Fields options adds more fields to the product feed. Fields can be removed by clicking on the red cross at the far right of each field line entry.

| Field | The database field to use for this column in the product feed. The fields are grouped by their appropriate database tables and there are some special options at the end of the list.

Full Category Taxonomy	The Category > category_name option will only display the immediate category (eg. London). This option displays the full path to the category (eg. World > Europe > UK > London).
Calculated Price	This calculates the price including	

		any tax defined for each product.
	Product URL	The complete URL to the product. You can add extra URL parameters in the "Fixed Value / Custom Field Default Value / Product URL extra parameters" textbox. The extra parameters must begin with an '&'.
	Product Image URL	The complete URL to the main image (Product > product_full_image only displays the filename).
	Product Thumb URL	The complete URL to the thumbnail of the main image (Product > product_thumb_image only displays the filename).
	Created Time	The timestamp of when the product was added to the database (Product > cdata is only a Unix timestamp).
	Modified Time	The timestamp of when the product was last modified (Product > mdata is only a Unix timestamp).
	Fixed Value	A fixed text value which is identical for every product and should be specified in the "Fixed Value / Custom Field Default Value / Product URL extra parameters" textbox.
Fixed Value / Custom Field Default Value	If the field selected is "Fixed Value", this is where the fixed value will be entered. If the field selected is one of the Custom fields (see Custom Fields), you can add a default value for any products which have not been assigned a value of the custom field. If a default value is not specified, any products which do not have a value assigned for this custom field will not be present in the product feed. If any other fields are selected, this textbox will not be editable.	
Column Name	This is the name of the column which will appear in the header row of the product feed if the header row is shown.	
Quote	Even if a Field Quote value has been specified for the product	

	feed as a whole, some fields may be prevented from using the Field Quote (sometimes the price field or other numeric fields are not allowed to be quoted) by selecting "No".
Strip HTML	Some fields will contain HTML code which is unacceptable in some product feed formats. If HTML is not permitted, set this option to "Yes" and it will strip out all HTML from this field.
Sequence	The sequence that the fields should appear in the product feed. You can move fields up and down the sequence using the green up and down arrows as appropriate.

Once the product feed settings are complete, click the "Save" button in the top right hand corner of the screen and this will save the product feed. If the product feed has been published, the feed can be accessed from the address displayed next to the product feed on the Product Feeds Manager.

6		Ciao		✖
1		Google Base	/index.php?option=com_ogvmproductfeeds&format=raw&id=1&password=	✔
3		PriceGrabber		✖

Using the Preconfigured Product Feeds

There are preconfigured product feeds for

- Affiliate Window
- Channel Advisor
- Ciao
- Ebay
- Edirectory
- Google Base / Google Products
- Paid on Results
- Play Trade
- PriceGrabber
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However, most of these will not work straight out of the box because you may need to set up Custom Fields.

Custom Fields / Product Types

In order to add custom fields to products, Virtuemart has the "Product Types" functionality.

This functionality adds a new tab to the far right hand side of the product editing screen in Virtuemart. This new tab is called the "Product Type". Under this Product Type (or tab) are Parameters which you can then use in your product feeds.

So you have a new Product Type, with one or more Parameters, each with selectable values.

To set this up, go to your Virtuemart control panel and under "Products" select "Add Product Type". Give the Product Type a name, such as "Product Feed Categories", make sure it is marked as Published and save it by clicking the "Save" button in the top right hand corner.

Under the Parameters column, click on "Show" for the Product Type you just created.

You now need to add a parameter for each field which requires a custom field. So click the "New" button. Specify a "Parameter Name" for the first field, which will be the name as it appears in the database (so no spaces allowed). For example, for the Google Base feed, a category custom field is required, so you could call this parameter Google_Category, and then give it a label of "Google Category".

Set the "Parameter Type" to "Text" or "Short Text" and then enter all of the Google categories (or other custom field values for other feeds) separated by a semi colon ';' into the "Possible Values" field.

Product Type: Product Feed Categories

Note: It should be noted that the "Possible Values" field is limited to to 255 characters, which, in most cases, isn't long enough. The only way to increase the length is by manually increasing the field length in the database. To do this, go to the #__vm_product_type_parameter table (where #_ is your table prefix, usually "jos_", and vm is your Virtuemart table prefix) and change the parameter_values field from varchar(255) to a bigger value (such as varchar(1023), varchar(4095), etc). Or change it to type "text" if you really have a lot of possible values to add.

Once you've entered all of the values that you might want to use, save the Parameter by clicking on the "Save" button in the top right hand corner.

You can repeat this to create field → value sets for each of the custom fields required for your product feeds.

When you have added all of the Parameters, click on "List Products" from the Products menu. Select the top product by ticking the checkbox and then click the "Add Product Type" at the top of the screen.

Select the Product Type that you just created (Product Feed Categories) from the dropdown list and click the "Save" button in the top right hand corner of the screen.

Unfortunately, you will need to go through and repeat this process of adding the new (Product Feed Categories) Product Type to each product one by one.

Once you have done this, you can now go into each product (one by one) and assign the values for the Parameter fields. When you click on the product name to edit the product details, there is now a new tab on the far right hand side, called Product Feed Categories (if you called it that). Under this tab is a list of all of the Parameters that you created which dropdown lists so that you can select the appropriate values for this product.

Select the appropriate values, save the product and then repeat for all of the other products.

If there is a default value for any of the Parameters which most of the products fit into, you can leave these products out and just assign a default value in the product field itself.

Once you have completed this process, you can now update the Product Feed settings. So, Go back to the Product Feed Manager and click on the feed you want to set up. The field(s) which needs configuring will typically be set to "Fixed Value" with a fixed value something like "Create a new product type for this field, use the Google taxonomy". You can now change this field to the appropriate Custom Field which will now have appeared in the dropdown list, and you can change

the Fixed Value to an appropriate default value (if there is one) or just leave it blank.

Troubleshooting

Product feed contains no products

Some of the pre-configured product feed formats contain a Manufacturer > mf_name field. If you have not configured your Virtuemart installation to use "Manufacturers", this will result in an empty product feed.

You should either create a default Manufacturer in Virtuemart and assign all of the products to this Manufacturer, or change this field in your product feeds to a Fixed Value.

I can download the product feed, but some other companies can't

This is a problem where a SEF URL component such as sh404SEF is installed and is redirecting the product feed URLs to search engine friendly equivalents. This is fine for your browser when you download it, and is fine for most automated software run by the external companies. However, some of these companies (such as PriceGrabber) are running less sophisticated software which does not understand URL redirects.

To get around this problem, simply configure your SEF URL component to skip the OpenGlobal Virtuemart Product Feeds component.

Clicking the save button takes me back to the Joomla Control Panel and nothing is saved

This has been seen on web servers with strict mod_security or Suhosin settings which are blocking the configuration form for feeds with long configurations. This may be due to the form length, or number of fields. You will either need to increase your mod_security/Suhosin settings to accommodate the long configurations, or remove some columns from your feed.