



Implementing Global Data Synchronisation (GDS)

A guide to help suppliers successfully implement GDS

GDS is a major advance in the supply chain process. To help you get started, this document outlines a simple six step approach to implementing GDS, from planning through to continuously synchronising product information with your retailers.



Introduction



Global Data Synchronisation (GDS) is not just a new technology; it is a major advance in the supply chain process.

GDS streamlines the labour-intensive, error-prone form filling process that is currently used to share product information between suppliers and retailers, and replaces it with an automated, industry-wide approach.

As a supplier, in order to gain maximum benefit from GDS it is important you understand how it will impact your current business processes and operations. Once you have made the decision to adopt GDS, you should take time to understand the approach you will take and to plan an effective implementation of GDS in your business.

Do you know who is responsible for the correct product information being shared between the supplier and the retailer? It is the owner of the product information. That's you, the supplier.

To help you get started, this document outlines a simple six step approach to implementing GDS.



Step 1: Establish a core business implementation team

You need to get commitment from senior management for your data synchronisation strategy. This commitment should be communicated to your retailers and internally in order to get buy-in throughout the company.

Product information, and the ownership of it, is often spread across various departments, for example, supply chain, logistics, marketing, sales, finance etc. Your GDS team should include people from each of these departments, as well as the technical resources who will look after the day-to-day functionality.

"The number one thing that we advise people starting a data synchronisation program is that this is a business project, this is not an IT project, so you need to get your business leaders engaged."

Marianne Timmons,
Director of B-to-B,
Wegmans Food Markets

About GS1 UK

GS1 UK adds value to members' business by delivering and supporting the adoption of cross sector, global supply chain standards. Using GS1 standards for bar coding, electronic business messaging, data synchronisation and, through the EPCglobal Network, Radio Frequency Identification, members can enhance product visibility, reduce costs, increase stock availability and improve customer safety.



Step 2: Gather implementation information

You need to know which of your retailers are using or are likely to use GDS. GS1 UK can update you on the latest position of UK retailers and how they are progressing with their GDS adoption plans.

You should also gather all the required information and documents that will help you implement GDS successfully, many of which are identified throughout this guide.

Your team should clearly understand the background to GDS and how to implement it successfully. To help achieve this GS1 UK can provide full GDS training, either on-site or online. Full details of the GS1 UK training courses are available at www.gs1uk.org/training

Step 3: Choose a GDSN- certified data pool

A data pool provides the mechanism for suppliers and retailers to share product information with each other using standard data and messages.

Suppliers use a data pool to ensure that their product information, and all changes to this information, is available in a single, central location which can be accessed by multiple retailers, locally and globally.

Retailers use a data pool so that they can retrieve all product information from their suppliers from a single source, safe in the knowledge that it is accurate, consistent and current.

To ensure a data pool meets the latest GDSN (Global Data Synchronisation Network) standards, it must be GDSN-certified. Certification takes place on a regular basis, and a list of current GDSN-certified data pools is always available at www.gs1.org/docs/gdsn/gdsn_certified_data_pools.pdf



Step 4: Prepare your data

This is the most important step, and depending on the number of product lines you have, can be the most time consuming step. However, it is a one-off process and ensuring that the product information you use is accurate is essential to a successful data synchronisation programme. Indeed, good quality data – data that is complete, consistent, accurate and compliant with the latest GDS industry standards – is essential to collaborative commerce between you and your retailers.

There are four stages you need to go through to ensure your data is ready for GDS. These are explained overleaf.



The four stages of data preparation



A: Data location

Information about your products can be held in a number of places within your organisation. Finding this information and storing it in one place will make life easier in the long run. This is why your GDS team must include representatives of all relevant departments.

It is also important that you have an internal data governance process so that the right people in the business are approving the relevant information before the data is published to your retailers.

B: Data preparation

In order to prepare your data for GDS you need to understand your retailers' GDS data requirements. These are a subset of the agreed GDS standards and can be obtained from the retailer or your data pool provider. For example, GS1 UK provides supplier handbooks that detail the specific data requirements for each retailer that has adopted GDS.

Understanding these requirements will help you to collate the information you need within your business in order to start delivering data to your retailer using GDS.

C: Data checking

Clearly, to derive the benefits of GDS it is paramount that your product data is accurate. GDS relies on the supplier's version of the product data to drive supply chain systems. Publishing inaccurate data prevents you and your retailers from gaining the true value of GDS. Therefore it is essential that you check the accuracy of your data, ensuring:

- You know when to change the product code by following the GTIN (Global Trade Identification Number) allocation rules when creating a new item or a variant to an existing item. These rules are explained at www.gs1.org/gtinrules/index.php
- The product dimension data is accurate and consistent with the global packaging and measuring guidelines. These guidelines are available at www.gs1.org/docs/gsmg/gdsn/GDSN_Package_Measurement_Rules_i1.4.pdf
- You review the Global Product Classification schema to ensure you have classified your products to the industry standards. The schema is available at <http://gpcbrowser.gs1.org/>
- You review the GDS validation rules which will help you with logic checks on the data you have coded. These validation rules can be found at www.gs1.org/docs/gsmg/gdsn/GDSN_Validation_Rules.xls

D: Data alignment

GDS is not only used to synchronise new product line information, but as the complete information file for all your products.

This means that you must review your complete product information files so that they are GDS compliant and ready for synchronisation, thus ensuring your retailers have the same version of the product information in their systems. Furthermore, once you make a change to any of your products, this change is then automatically made available to all your retailers.

The GS1 UK Data Synchronisation Group has produced a detailed guide to show how the GDS data alignment process works for UK retailers and suppliers. This can be found on the GS1 UK website at www.gs1uk.org/standards/data_synchronisation_group.asp





Step 5: Synchronise your data

Once you are satisfied your data is clean and accurate then it is time to upload it into your chosen GDSN-certified data pool. Your data pool provider should help you to do this and explain the simple steps you need to follow.

At this stage it is important that you talk to your retailers and establish a relationship with the appropriate person in the retailer with whom you are about to synchronise data. Initially, synchronise a single product item and ensure it works.

Once you have successfully completed this you can synchronise all your product lines with your retailer, and roll out your products to other retailers who are also using GDS.

Congratulations, you are now successfully using GDS!

Step 6: Maintain your data

Having successfully implemented GDS there is one important step you must not forget; you must maintain your product data.

When product specifications change you must ensure the product information stored in your data pool is updated. This ensures all the retailers who have previously subscribed to that product will automatically receive notification of the updated product information.

Whilst carrying out these six steps you may identify a number of process changes within your company that could help improve efficiency. By having the relevant departments already working together in your GDS project team you will be in a position to easily implement these process changes to support GDS.

"GDS gives you the opportunity to truly share data with your trading partners, so that when you're generating your business documents and your other electronic commerce documents, you're actually sharing the same database: you use the same data. The process works because everyone is looking at the same facts, and you don't have confusion about what documents mean or what they're discussing."

**Chrystopher VanTine,
Product Manager,
Worldwide Data Pool
Synchronisation, GXS**

For more information

GS1 UK can provide support, training and consulting services for the successful implementation of GDS in your business.

For more information please visit www.gs1uk.org or contact our Service Team on **0808 178 8799** or by email at info@gs1uk.org





Staple Court, 11 Staple Inn Buildings
London WC1V 7QH
T +44 (0)20 7092 3500
F +44 (0)20 7681 2290
E info@gs1uk.org
Service Team (Freefone) 0808 178 8799
www.gs1uk.org