



Executive Q&A

with Andrew Weingarth, director of data operations and data strategy, of Foodbuy, the procurement organization for Compass Group North America. Member of the Foodservice GS1 US Standards Initiative Executive Leadership Committee.



Q: This year, 2020, has been quite unique. What can you tell us about your current product data management to meet the needs of your customers?

A: When we started our data governance journey to support the customer's need for extended product information, we didn't have to start from scratch to implement process and standards; we already had those in place. One of the key differences is that now we have cross-functional alignment on what types of quality data we need to be receiving: images, allergens, nutritionals, marketing information. Exchanging this data through GDSN is a key part of our process to ensuring data accuracy and completeness. As a result of the pandemic, Compass Group saw an increase in the need for mobile ordering solutions, which continues to drive the need for digital content. This has led Foodbuy, as the procurement organization for Compass Group, to begin revising its information and image requirements. We are also moving forward with the implementation of a Master Data Management and Product Information Management (MDM/PIM) solution to consolidate product information collection and maintenance. We see data as a commodity that leads to more informed purchasing decisions.

Q: What quantifiable benefits have you seen as a result of leveraging GS1 Standards in your operations?

A: Leveraging standardized data enables us to have better data insights and analytics to evaluate product portfolios of our manufacturing partners and enhance our relationship to maximize mutual benefits. With more standardized operations, we're ensuring that we've got the right data in place but then also using intelligence, so that we can go negotiate future contracts by understanding trends in the marketplace. Now we can track spend and identify conversion opportunities. And these are just a few ways we are able to prove value.

Q: What are some best practices that companies in the foodservice industry can take to improve efficiencies?

A: First, for long term supply chain optimization, it's essential to focus on standardized data. Processes are much more efficient when partners are leveraging GS1 Standards to identify products and locations and exchange attribute data. We have found that putting controls on the data, such as assigning data stewards, helps to improve efficiency, and preserve quality. In the short term, I would recommend businesses emphasize visibility into spend. You can identify potential savings for your company. For example, when you receive the entire product list from the supplier, not just what you're ordering, you can enable automation to streamline efficiencies like electronic invoice feeds from distributors that are linking to the catalog of products.

Q: How has your participation in the Foodservice GS1 US Standards Initiative helped you improve the consumer experience?

A: Participating in the Initiative means that Compass Group can be part of a bigger voice that helps to address foodservice industry challenges and also acts as a voice for many of our trader partners. In past workgroup participation, we were able to identify product data attribute requirements that we felt were reflective of what our trading partners were telling us. We are proud of this type of collaboration that can drive improvements in the foodservice supply chain and ultimately help industry to meet the demands of the consumer.