Executive Q&A

With James Williams, Senior Vice President for Business Systems and Data Governance of Georgia-Pacific and Member of the Foodservice GS1 US Standards Initiative Executive Leadership Committee

Q. How has your company's participation in the Foodservice GS1 US Standards Initiative helped with strategic objectives identified by your organization and your own adoption and use of GS1 Standards?

A. Being an active participant of the Foodservice GS1 US Standards Initiative has enabled Georgia-Pacific to advance the customer experience with our retailer and distributor partners. Incorporating these standards into our everyday data management processes helps make the customer journey easier, faster, and more efficient. As a company that strives to become a preferred partner by creating cycles of mutual benefit with our partners and customers, we have found that enabling strong data standards not only improves the customer experience, it has also enabled our internal processes to run more efficiently.

Q. What are some key efforts within Georgia-Pacific related to product data management, data quality, and rich product information that directly impact the consumer experience?

A. While Georgia-Pacific already adopted a centralized data management structure, we continue to identify opportunities within the end-to-end new product setup process to centralize ownership and maintenance of data. In 2021, we applied this structure to our supply chain planning data, which has further improved data quality and minimized production issues.

Master data training: The data governance team continues its efforts in training the organization on the importance of good product data. Our focus this year was to reconnect with the Category and Brand teams on the importance of GS1 Standards, and the challenges stemming from not following those standards. Arming these teams with expanded knowledge has allowed them to make better product decisions upfront.

Transforming our content syndication processes: Content syndication ensures our product data is accurate for direct transactions between Georgia-Pacific and a retailer/distributor. Updated content is also imperative as it is used by our end user consumers and customers who purchase Georgia-Pacific products from a retailer or distributor through their respective system or online marketplace. Today, we publish data a variety of ways and some are more labor intensive than others. We're working on an initiative that will allow Georgia-Pacific to aggregate data, transform it to defined customer requirements, and syndicate it to our customer's preferred format systematically – eliminating the offline excel spreadsheets.

Q. What are the key areas of focus for your organization to enable efficiencies? How are you leveraging unique identification to help order accuracy, shipping/receiving, inventory management, and other operational improvements?

A. Moving from a functional or departmental view of work to an integrated process-centric view, has helped Georgia-Pacific enable data governance which supports our shipping/receiving and inventory programs. While we will continue to monitor data quality through post setup audits, we've focused our efforts on the end-to-end process and look for ways we can correct at the source. Georgia-Pacific's Consumer Products Group has developed a community of business process leads who work together to drive process consistency, evaluate impact of process/system changes, and promote governance.

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

A. By incorporating GS1 Standards and applying strategic governance over an efficient master data platform, Georgia-Pacific has been able to reduce labor and transportation costs and improve inventory management.

Q. How does enhanced traceability help you as a manufacturer/distributor/operator protect your brand and mitigate risk?

A. As we work to become the preferred supplier, being able to support enhanced traceability provides our customer partners with the assurance that they'll be able to easily track a product within our supply chain more efficiently. The quicker the manufacturer/distributor/operator can identify the source of the issue, the quicker we can work together on a resolution. In a post COVID environment, where companies have experienced resource constraints and supply chain hurdles, time is of the essence.

Q. What role(s) do you see GS1 Standards playing in the industry in a post COVID 19 environment?

A. In a post COVID 19 environment, GS1 Standards will play a key role in enabling further traceability and operational efficiency. As industry standards evolve based on new COVID / health requirements, customers and manufacturers will need to adapt, and adopting GS1 standards will make that transition smoother. Also, as more consumers make their purchases online, the need for more accurate and timely product information is critical.