



## Executive Q&A

With Todd Baker, Sr. Manager, North American Merchandising, Gordon Food Service  
Member of the Foodservice GS1 US Standards Initiative Executive Leadership Committee



**Q: The Foodservice GS1 US Standards Initiative has helped to drive real change across the industry, what benefits has Gordon Food Service seen?**

A: In today's online information-enabled marketplace, the need for rich, accurate and complete product data is more important than ever. This initiative facilitates the efficient exchange of product information between suppliers, distributors, and customers. With our recent GDSN<sup>®</sup> engagement, we now have easy access to core, nutrition and marketing information as well as images, all of which we provide to our customers via our online tools. And when our customers benefit, we benefit. We've experienced significant efficiencies in our new item sourcing and setup processes and in our ability to capture and maintain nutrition information and images.

**Q: Looking back, how has this changed the way you've done business internally? With your trading partners?**

A: We developed a GDSN-integrated new item setup application. When an item is published to us via GDSN and passes our core validations, it's available to list with minimal effort. It's more efficient and it reduces errors and delays that were inherent in the old spreadsheet-email-rekey process. As we data sync (match) our items with vendor's publications, we're able to automate maintenance of several key product attributes so that when a vendor changes an item in GDSN, it flows directly into our backend system providing customers the most current and accurate information possible. Publishing via GDSN is now a business requirement for all Gordon Food Service's non-proprietary vendors. GDSN Compliance is also a key metric in our vendor score carding.

**Q: What's still a pain point when it comes to standards? What keeps you up at night?**

A: While still in the early stages of our U.S. engagement, we have several ongoing "nightmares", the most daunting being the current foodservice attributes defined for use do not include all of the information we need to run our business. Our requirement for additional attributes continues to be a pain point for many of our suppliers, especially those who've built costly integrations to GDSN. Coupled with vendors who don't pay attention to CIC Review messages, the result is an abundance of published data that fails validations and is unusable.

Additionally, while we have several GS1-certified GDSN data pools with varying price structures, it can sometimes become challenging to extend the use of the GDSN. We would like vendors to publish *all* items we could potentially buy, as this is key to finding the products our customers are looking for and having the detailed product information available when we need it. This is at times a challenge for some vendors as additional costs may be incurred, which changes the dynamic of the conversation needed to extend the use of the Network.

**Q: How can you leverage these benefits to drive your company's innovation forward?**

A: Today's consumers expect accurate and detailed product information to be easily accessible, whether they're shopping online or dining out. This "information craze" is driving the foodservice industry—all industries actually—to invest in processes and technology to efficiently capture, retain and present product information in myriad ways. It won't matter if the consumer uses a computer, a tablet, a smartphone, or calls customer service, the information they're looking for must be readily available. The Foodservice Initiative is a cornerstone to our ability to meet these customer expectations.