The Global Language of Business

Executive Q&A

With Mike Mazur
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With contributions from Joseph DeGraff, Manager, Trade Identification Numbering System (TINS) Tool, Pfizer Inc.

Q: What are some key efforts within your company related to product data management, data quality and completeness that directly impact your company?

A: Having systems, processes and a culture focused on clean data is foundational for the manufacturing and distribution of our products. To that end, Pfizer launched a Master Data Initiative to continually improve how we manage our master data across multiple systems and geographies. This includes creating a "Single-Entry" system for the initial creation of global data. The guiding principle is data will be manually entered one time at the point of creation, and that data will be electronically supplied to all other systems.

Q: What pain points are your company experiencing with regard to standards implementation?

A: Decentralization of master data has been a key area of focus within our organization, leading to efforts to centralize key data attributors (e.g. Global Company Prefixes) from the local markets. There is a perception that implementing a new standard or business process means more work. It is human nature to resist change, so as we rework how we create and manage master data, we continue to communicate and educate colleagues on the need to transition to and implement these new requirements. Converting the standards to internal documentation and procedures, offering training, modifying existing systems and processes, and updating existing data to follow the new standards will take time, labor and money – so the understanding and justification must be clearly communicated for it to be successful.

Q: What current healthcare opportunities do you feel could be best served by the adoption and use of unique location identifiers?

A: The healthcare industry has been planning for a number of years to leverage GS1's data share standard, Electronic Product Code Information Services (EPCIS), for serialized data exchange as required by the Drug Supply Chain Security Act (DSCSA)* in 2023. Instead of using a trading partner's state license DUN, HIN, DEA or some other unique identifier, EPCIS requires the use of a Global Location Number (GLN) to identify the multiple locations embedded in an EPCIS file, which includes the entities transferring/receiving ownership, ship from and ship to locations, as well as locations where the commissioning and aggregation events took place. GLNs will be foundational for upcoming serialized data exchange requirements.

Q: Beyond meeting regulatory requirements, what benefits has your company gained from further use of the GS1 Standards?

A: Our company is global, operating in over 125 markets. Having global standards is critical to optimizing our internal systems and processes, which helps reduce risk, minimize cost, and ensure that patients have safe, efficient, and affordable access to our products and vaccines.

Q: What roles do you see GS1 Standards playing in healthcare in a post COVID-19 environment?

A: Our company, like many others, has been at the forefront of the response. GS1 standards have played a critical role in enabling the efficient movement of product from our global manufacturing and distribution sites directly to dispensing and vaccination clinics. Without the ability to identify our products (through Global Trade Item Numbers), capture the data, and share it with downstream trading partners (through Electronic Data Interchange), our ability to respond would have been slowed considerably. As we come out of the pandemic, the role GS1 Standards play in healthcare will be even more important, both to improve future pandemic responses and, secondly, to continue to improve on healthcare delivery.

*For information about the act, see the 2013 Drug Supply Chain Security Act
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