



Executive Q&A

With Carl Gomberg

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

A: Robust and accurate data is critical in enabling our member hospitals and health systems to reduce costs and realize operational efficiencies. Put simply: it is impossible to achieve good outcomes from bad data. We're continually improving our technology systems by seeking out high-quality data from trustworthy sources and developing better ways to fortify and manage product data internally. Members who have worked with us to adopt GS1 Standards have reduced mis-shipments and procurement expenses and will reap the additional benefits of standards as they become more widely used across the industry.

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

A: Partners across the supply chain use proprietary identifiers for companies and delivery locations—providers use Location IDs, suppliers use Account Numbers, Premier uses Entity Codes. With the GS1 Global Location Numbers (GLNs), we can use a single number as a "Rosetta stone" leveraged by all parties to eliminate confusion and help ensure accuracy. Adoption of the GLN has allowed Premier to more accurately track medical device sales to our members. Global Trade Item Numbers (GTINs) used as Unique Device Identifiers (UDI) are also on the cusp of providing the same benefits.

Q: What pain points do you see impeding the adoption of standards in the industry?

A: Many of the data sources we work with today are either robust or accurate, but rarely both. Even if the data was perfect and loaded into ERP, EHR and billing systems by healthcare providers, there is limited interoperability. The systems talk to each other, but GTIN and UDI haven't been added to their vocabulary yet. We have it in our power to leverage GS1 Standards and UDI to revolutionize the healthcare supply chain and improve clinical safety, but it will require a collective effort across the industry to ensure we have the data and capabilities required to succeed.

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

A: There is incredible potential in the expansion and use of GS1 Standards to mitigate many of the issues that came to light in the early days of the pandemic. GLNs can be used to track the dispersal of products across the entire supply chain, allowing us to quickly locate and transfer or redirect personal protective equipment (PPE) to critical areas most in need. Production Information (PI) stored in GS1-128 barcodes can help us track device expiration dates and lot/serial numbers to prevent the use of expired, recalled and counterfeit product. Manufacturing attributes stored in the Global Data Synchronization Network (GDSN) can be leveraged to facilitate geographically diverse, multi-sourcing strategies and prevent supply chain interruptions that occur when we put "all of our eggs in one basket." The next interruption could be just around the corner, caused by a massive hurricane or another unexpected crisis. It's never been more important to safeguard our supply chain against unexpected pressures, and GS1 Standards are a valuable tool in that effort.