

Case Studies



Hershey's hits the sweet spot with accurate data

The Hershey Company is the largest North American manufacturer of quality chocolate and non-chocolate confectionery products, with revenues of nearly \$5 billion. With dozens of brands being sold in more than two million retail outlets in North America and other locations worldwide, accurate product information is a critical ingredient to successful trading relationships.

In his role as Program Manager, Customer Services and Planning, Rob Hoffman improves customer satisfaction through ongoing improvements to business processes. In response to requests to validate their dimensional data, an initiative was launched to review the procedures within Hershey that are used to create, manage, and maintain product dimensional information. Upon receiving commitment from Senior Management, the activity began with a high-level assessment of existing product data. Two primary issues were identified. The first involved transposed height and depth dimensions at the case level, and the second issue included multi-packs that were not being measured consistently.

Both issues resulted from an improper interpretation of the GDSN Package Measurement Rules. Rob realized that education was going to be an integral component of his data accuracy improvement plan, and turned to GS1 US for assistance. The audience he assembled for training at Hershey's location represented a deep cross section of the company that included representatives from Marketing, Sales, and Manufacturing, Distribution, eCommerce, and Customer Service.

"GS1 US developed an educational program tailored to our needs, delivered it to our location, and focused on real world issues." Rob said. "The program focused on explaining the package measurement rules and their application to our products. We also had the opportunity to utilize our newly acquired skills during a practical hands-on measurement session. GS1 US customized our training to include a review of the GTIN Allocation Rules. It was a great opportunity to expose multiple departments to the impact that in accurate data can have on an organization's operational efficiency."

With training complete, Rob initiated the next phase of the plan. Enter Pat Higgins, a Distribution Operations Analyst who set up shop in a Hershey's distribution center and began work on a comprehensive verification of product dimensional data. It did not take long for Pat to realize that creating thousands of data records manually was going to be inefficient. Rob called GS1 US for advice, resulting in the purchase of the GS1 US measurement database that interfaces directly with the bar code scanner, and measurement equipment, eliminating potential data keying errors and significantly reducing the time required to create a repository of data. Pat was impressed with the assistance he received from GS1 US, and said.

"GS1 US worked closely with me until I was comfortable running the software, and continued to provide ongoing support when I needed to modify the database to meet our specific needs."

During the next phase of the project, Rob focused his activities on the longer-term aspects, including the development and implementation of internal controls and processes designed to ensure the data remains accurate. Central to this activity is an audit process that focuses on three key areas; the first area addresses any reported customer concerns, the second includes any new item introductions, and the third includes a subset of existing products so that over time, all Hershey items are verified on an ongoing basis.

"Auditing our products on a constant basis will confirm that the process changes that have been implemented are providing accurate product dimensional data to our trading partners." Rob said.

Rob is currently developing metrics that monitor the overall data accuracy process to track performance improvements derived from the data accuracy improvement program. While Hershey's is in the early stages of their data accuracy initiative they have started to recognize savings in their supply-chain, and have eliminated, in some cases, the shipment of product samples for data accuracy verification, by the customer.

Rob ended by stating, "GS1 US has been a tremendous resource to our data accuracy improvement efforts, and continues to support us as we continue to execute our data accuracy strategy. The changes that we are putting into place will provide long term benefits to both Hershey and our customers"