



RSS Frequently Asked Questions

Last Updated: 07 June 2006

RSS Sunrise 2010

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| What does the RSS acronym represent? | Reduced Space Symbology |
| What did the GS1 Board endorse as it relates to RSS? | The GS1 Board endorsed an RSS adoption proposal from a Board appointed Task Force that can be summarized as "RSS bar codes and GS1 Application Identifiers shall be available in all trade item scanning systems beginning Jan 1, 2010." |
| Will EAN/UPC bar codes be replaced by RSS? | Not always, as it will be left to the brand owner (party responsible for specifying package design) to decide. If no new data is required and the package has adequate space for a full EAN/UPC symbol, then there is no need to change unless the brand owner wants to recover package space for consumer communication. If the package is large enough to print a full size EAN/UPC symbol and all that is required in the bar code is GTIN-12 or 13 then EAN/UPC remains an appropriate solution. This allows the brand owner to switch when graphics are being revised for other reasons and therefore can be made with little or no increased cost |
| When will be RSS be used? | RSS is already used today in the healthcare industry but the adoption date allows its use on any trade item beginning Jan 1, 2010 and this includes retail Point-of-Sale (wherever trade items are scanned). With the decision announced, GS1 Work Groups will form to develop, test, and standardize the best way to use it by "use case" or application. |
| Do I have to wait until Jan 1, 2010 to use RSS? | Not always. Where RSS is being used today (healthcare or other items not scanned at retail POS), it remains appropriate for use today. There is no need to delay current implementation of current global application standards that exist. |
| RSS can carry GTIN-14 & additional data, but these are not used today at retail POS. Are these approved for use at retail POS in 2010? | Not yet. Use of GTIN-14 or additional information (such as serial numbers, lot numbers, expiration dates) will be approved when individual business cases are validated Rationale: Inevitable investments in new internal systems must be built on business cases that RSS enables. |
| There is a complementary 2D bar code called Composite Component that can be used with RSS. Is this a part of the RSS Sunrise decision. | No. |
| Will RSS be used to carry the SSCC used on logistics units? | No. The Task Force did not recommend this as they felt the current GS1-128 bar code met the need (carries the additional data just like RSS and SSCCs are not scanned at retail POS) and because EPC would evolve quickly here. |
| Will RSS be used in logistics? | Yes, but only on trade items. For example, many large items (Televisions) will be scanned during transport and at retail. Also many retailers scan trade items as they move from distribution centers to store sortation. Finally, other sectors such as healthcare are already using RSS on trade items scanned in logistic phases. |



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RSS Comparisons to EAN/UPC

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| Is RSS harder to print and scan than EAN/UPC? | No. Printing and scanning both bar codes is very much the same. |
| Does RSS provide the accuracy and performance of EAN/UPC? | Yes. Major scanner OEMs on the BarCodes & Identification Technology Group (formerly called Global Symbology Committee) assisted in providing side-by-side evaluations to validate RSS will meet or exceed the performance of EAN/UPC. |
| Is it true RSS is smaller than EAN/UPC? | Yes, RSS is over 50% smaller than EAN/UPC so it can be used for smaller or hard to mark products. |
| Can RSS and EAN/UPC carry GTIN-14? | Yes. RSS can carry all GTIN-14 where EAN/UPC cannot |
| Can RSS and EAN/UPC carry additional information like serial or lot numbers? | RSS Expanded can be scanned at retail Point-of-Sale (POS) and hold data in addition to GTIN (e.g. serial, batch, expiry date) where EAN/UPC cannot. |
| Are RSS bars and spaces smaller than EAN/UPC? | No, RSS and EAN/UPC must be printed at the same target size and range of sizes because the scanner optics have been designed per these specifications for over 35 years and so printing quality can be maintained. . |
| If the bars and spaces are the same, then why is RSS smaller? | When RSS was designed, the "symbologists" of the GS1 BarCodes & Identification Technology Group (formerly called Global Symbology Committee) had 25 years of evolution to tap and without getting too techy, they figured out a way to make it smaller. If you want to get techy, well, then you better look into the specifications. They are available in GS1 General Specifications Section 5.5 available from GS1 Member Organizations (MO). To contact your local MO, visit http://www.gs1.org/contact/worldwide.php |



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RSS & EPC

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| <p>With EPC on the horizon, why adopt RSS now?</p> | <p>RSS and EPC make a new horizon of product information visible in the supply chain for increased collaboration between trading partners. EPC brings a step change in functionality, full visibility of goods in the supply chain, that is already being leveraged by many companies. RSS is a simple solution for trading partners who look for more advanced information sharing and cannot justify the additional investment. RSS provides a good migration path to EPC for those companies in the near future.</p> |
| <p>How are RSS and EPC the same and how are they different?</p> | <p>In some ways RSS and EPC are the same. They can both be used at retail point-of-sale if the equipment is in place. They can both carry information beyond GTIN like serial numbers. In other ways, RSS and EPC are different. EPC does not require an operator to scan the bar code, can be read many tags all at once, and some tags can be rewritten. RSS costs less to mark, is supported by the majority of scanner hardware today, and can be incorporated into PLU stickers on produce. In summary, the main thing they share is their ability to provide more product information to the supply chain and while both will co-exist, the choice between them will be made based on what is best for the application.</p> |
| <p>Which costs less, RSS or EPC?</p> | <p>RSS, as any bar code, is cheaper to apply to a product than an RFID tag, but two important factors must be considered. First, EPC tag costs are decreasing rapidly. Second and most importantly, cost is only half of the story. The opposite side of cost is benefit so they cannot be considered separately. The cost to benefit analysis between RSS and EPC depends on what the business requirements are as EPC can do some things that bar codes will never be able to do. For example with a bar code you can scan what comes in and out to determine inventory levels, but with RFID you have the potential for real-time inventory views through the reading multiple tags at once.</p> |
| <p>Do RSS and EPC complement each other?</p> | <p>Yes. RSS and EPC are natural partners because both can carry more information about products. RSS will enable retailers to move from identifying fresh food using commodity codes to using vendor-based identification (GTIN). RSS, like EPC, can carry serial numbers to give trading partners product visibility at the next level (individual items). RSS can also serve as a backup to the EPC Tag just as the text below the bar code acts as a back-up to bar codes. On other important factor to consider is RSS gives brand owners an alternative to move from the small EAN-8 bar code that is not EPC compatible.</p> |



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RSS Technology

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| <p>Are there different kinds of RSS Symbols?</p> | <p>Yes, there are 7 different bar code "symbols" in the RSS "family". Four, RSS-14, RSS-14 Stacked Omni, RSS Expanded, and RSS Expanded Stacked were designed specifically to work at retail POS (omni-directional "slot" scanners). The remaining three, RSS-14 truncated, RSS-14 Stacked, and RSS Limited, will not work at retail POS and were designed for very, very small products.</p> |
| <p>Why are there four different kinds of RSS bar codes to work at retail POS?</p> | <p>RSS-14 and RSS-14 Stacked Omni are the smallest, but can only carry GTIN. RSS-14 is wider and shorter and RSS-14 Stacked Omni is tall and narrow. This means the choice between the two can be made depending on how the package design wants to make space available for the bar code. RSS Expanded and RSS Expanded Stacked are larger but can carry up to 74 numeric or 41 alphanumeric data characters in a single row or up to 11 stacked rows. They can carry a SGTIN (GTIN + Serial Number) in about the same space as an EAN/UPC bar code.</p> |
| <p>Where can I find out some basic information about RSS?</p> | <p>The GS1 BarCodes website contains this information: http://www.gs1.org/productssolutions/barcodes/</p> |
| <p>Where can I find detailed technical specification about RSS?</p> | <p>The GS1 General Specifications Section 5.5 contains RSS technical specifications. RSS Specifications are in the final approval process in ISO/IEC SC31. Publication is expected by September 2006.</p> |
| <p>What data does RSS-14 contain?</p> | <p>RSS-14 can contain any of the 4 GTIN types: GTIN 8, 12, 13, or 14. RSS-14 actually stores 13 digits, calculates the check digit, and implicitly contains the application Identifier "01". Upon decoding, software can deliver the actual GTIN format required by an application.</p> |
| <p>Doesn't RSS Expanded always require an application to manage all the data it contains?</p> | <p>No, the advantage of Application Identifiers is that data is used only where it is required. System software will deliver only the data required in an application. This is an important point that enables applications requiring additional data to be installed as users are ready.</p> |



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Application Identifier System

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| What is the Application Identifier (AI) System referred to in the adoption? | The GS1 Application Identifier System is a set of data elements that are specifically designed for use inside bar codes and tags. There are a little over 100 of them. About 10 of them are called "keys" because they are used to look up or register information. The rest are attributes of the keys like serial numbers, lot numbers, expiration dates, weights, and measures. |
| What GS1 carriers can carry AIs? | Bar Codes: RSS, GS1-128, Composite Component, and Datamatrix. RFID: EPC. |
| Why not use one of the other bar codes at retail Point-of-Sale to carry the additional AIs? | RSS is the only bar code that carries AIs that was specially designed to work with omni-directional scanners at retail Point-of-Sale (POS). |
| Where can I find more information on the Application Identifier System? | http://www.gs1.org/productssolutions/barcodes/technical/application_identifiers.html or contact your GS1 Member Organization (MO). The definitions are found in GS1 General Specifications Section 3 available from your local GS1 MO. To contact your local MO, visit http://www.gs1.org/contact/worldwide.php |
| Is the GS1 Application Identifier System ISO-recognized? | Yes, see ISO/IEC JTC1 SC31 15418. |



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Next Steps for Retailers

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| Step 1: Appoint RSS Point-of-Contact/Leader | The first step is to appoint someone to lead an RSS Program and add their name as a Point-of-Contact with GS1 by emailing RSS2010@gs1.org with their contact information |
| Step 2: Raise Awareness | Start by reading the Press Release on Adoption and the information at GS1 Bar Codes Web site, speak to your local GS1 Member Organization (to contact your local MO, visit http://www.gs1.org/contact/worldwide.php), then deliver a briefing to Senior Management to confirm your role (Step 1) and your next Steps (Steps 3-6) |
| Step 3: Assess Current Situation | Look across your operations to assess the current state of readiness. You want to work with your vendors in this assessment as there are variables. For example, you may have an "RSS Capable Scanner" that has not been activated or a scanner that can simply be upgraded where no new hardware is required. You also need to look at all systems related to possible areas of deployment including meat and produce scale/printers, self check-out lanes, portable data collection equipment, and price-look-up stands. If your equipment is not ready or upgradeable, see where you are in the life-cycle of the equipment so you can advise management of what to specify before purchase orders for new systems are firmed up. |
| Step 4: Develop Internal Priorities for Deployment | Your company will look to use RSS where it makes the most sense first and it appears the first area will be produce and meat but look into this a little further as you may find specific priorities. For example, in the USA many retailers are looking to RSS for a near term solution to their coupon systems. |
| Step 5: Work with a GS1 member Organization (MO) to develop a solid RSS Implementation Plan | In the coming months, GS1 will develop a Retailer Implementation Guide so stay tuned and contact your local GS1 Member Organization. To contact your local MO, visit http://www.gs1.org/contact/worldwide.php Remember the first priority is to know of any area where a buying decision for hardware or software might be impacted by RSS adoption as these purchases are meant to last for years. |
| Step 6: Work with/follow GS1 Work Groups | Stay tuned to the GS1 BarCodes Web site in the RSS Section to see where and when standards development or pilot activities begin. To be sure, let GS1 know you are your company's' contact (Step 1) to be notified automatically when a Work Group is formed. |