



Modular Item

The Modular Item project is within the last stage of the GSMP process in which all of the standards development steps of the requirements and proposed solution have completed. At the time of this communication, the Modular Item standard (solution) is being voted on to become a new GS1 (GDSN) standard. Assuming the successful completion of this vote, there will be a new Modular Item Data Model which will allow GDSN to pursue the execution of context in an effort to simplify change management in the network to support future expansion and growth. It is only once there is a completed standard that GDSN implementation can be considered.

Background

Modular item is a GDSN Board approved project that was launched in 2007 with the acknowledgement that it represented a significant effort which would be approached deliberately and methodically with the end goal in mind of a more efficient, effective, less costly network that could meet the growing needs of multi sectors and regional demands. This project is considered a key factor in improving the flexibility of the infrastructure of the GS1 Global Data Synchronisation Network (GDSN) and developing the means to facilitate future expansion of the network into other sectors. As GS1 GDSN, Inc. has been charged to ensure the health and well-being of the network, today and in the future, and given the GDSN focus on growth and adoption, the network must be able to accommodate the additional growth, volume and associated network complexities.

Since the launch of the Modular Item Workgroup in October 2007 GDSN and GSMP have made additional efforts to engage all stakeholders through the process which included a BSD 'strawman' review at the October 2008 GSMP event, followed by 4 public reviews spanning from July 2009 through February 2010.

Benefits / Risks

The current trade Item model is considered by most to be too rigid to facilitate change and the incorporation of new functionality quickly and efficiently. Working with community stakeholders including trading partners, data pools, GSMP and GDSN Inc, a standard has been developed to incorporate these key factors.

As GDSN expanded into new sectors it became apparent the many inefficiencies of how the current data sync model limits speed to market for critical changes for new industries. It was realized that some of the following capabilities needed improvement:



- The need to support regulatory compliance requirements (e.g., allergen information, material safety information), which many times have unique requirements or different implementations across different sectors and different geographies
- Product marketing information which includes business to consumer (B2C) information for retail or other promotional processes. This may also include the ability to send and retrieve information using new and upcoming technologies in the mobile communication areas.
- Information to support additional business applications such as product recall, hazardous materials or sustainability.

The proposed solution for Modular item eliminates some of these hurdles and creates opportunities from improvement over the current system architecture by taking a more context-sensitive approach to information sharing. This approach reduces the size of the “core” item attributes to solely those applicable to any trade item or service independent of the sector. Attributes that are not used within all business scenarios (e.g. different sectors or geopolitical regions) would be arranged and communicated in context sets (includes validations).

This allows:

- easier entry into new sectors or adjacent sectors, and geographies
- reduction of the time required to introduce new attributes or code values into the GDS network
- expansion of data content for regulatory compliance, product marketing info and to support additional business applications such as product recall, hazardous materials or sustainability.

While developing the Modular Item solution, the current install base and all stakeholders were considered. Steps were taken into account the cost of data pools and users to implement the new standard. Considerations were made to avoid disruption of current production systems and to ensure that the expectation of change does not slow nor deter GDSN expansion today.

Although the Modular Item solution is anticipated to have a impact on all stakeholders, every possible measure was taken to limit the impact on the current installed base. It is also intended that data pools will have the ability to “buffer” trading partners from significant impact.

Standard Approval vs. Implementation

GS1 GDSN, Inc. and GSMP follow the established GS1 processes to first develop the standard and then to implement into the network. These are two distinctly separate and purposefully decoupled processes:

- The development of the standard which is initiated with the submission of a change request, user group prioritisation, GDSN Board Approval to form a workgroup, Business Case Document (BCD), Business Requirements Analysis Document (BRAD) and Business Solutions Document (BSD).
- GDSN Implementation/Deployment is a process in which all standards awaiting deployment are assessed with all stakeholders (Global Registry, KATO, GDSN Certified Data Pools, Trading Partners, GSMP and Certification Agent) to determine readiness, timing, impact and overall effort. From this a deployment plan is established which includes development and pilot timing as well as Certification testing and beta and production deployment dates, all of which require GDSN Board approval as part of the annual GDSN Roadmap.

While preliminary discussions occur prior to the completion of standards development, only once the GSMP process concludes and a standard is complete can formal deployment discussions and planning occur. Planning begins with the GDSN Operational and Technology Group (formerly GDSN Architecture team), the GDSN User Group, and then with the GDSN DP and Certification Sub-Committees and ultimately the GDSN Board who approves all GR / KATO development, GDSN releases and Certification events.

Voting and Next Steps

Implementation discussions will begin ONLY if the Modular Item standard is approved. This next step, which is the implementation planning process will involve users, data pools, GSMP, GDSN, Inc (GDSN Board, DP Sub Committee, Certification Committee), and the GDSN Operational and Technology Group (previously Architecture Group). Implementation plans will include Pilot Planning and scheduling from which Deployment planning will then be determined. GS1 GDSN, Inc. and GSMP are committed to working with the entire GDSN community in all sectors and geographies to determine a reasonable implementation plan