GSMP Process Change Notification

PCN #	PCN Name	Effective Date
08-003	**Use of Specific Technical Characteristics Extension to Pass Product Specific Attributes**	**05-May-2008**

Background:

As the GDSN Network has expanded, so has the demand for additional product information, beyond the basic information for supply chain management like weight and size. The potential universe of these attributes is vast and typically product specific. It has been concluded by the Modular Item Work Group and others that managing all attribute requests through the current process of modifying the core trade item or adding extensions is not feasible and a more flexible means of managing data standards is required.

Proposed Changes:

The purpose of this change is to create a more flexible way to handle the management and passing of Product Specific Attributes, such as “Marketing Characteristics” information within the GDSN. Marketing Characteristic attributes are the distinguishing qualities that differentiate products for the purpose of sales, for example specifications or features (such as “maximum RPMs” for a drill or “number of spin cycles for a washer”).

This proposal will entail the following changes:

1. Enhance the GDSN BRG process to handle the application of Product Specific Attributes
2. Approve the Specific Technical Characteristics (STC) Extension as the means to pass these attributes in the GDSN
3. Enhance the GDD infrastructure to support modular data attributes and contextual applications

1. Enhance the GDSN BRG Process to Manage Product Specific Attributes

Today new attributes can only pass through GDSN when a new trade item and/or its extensions are released. FastTrack exists but only as a limited and temporary measure. This proposal creates a more robust organisation of product specific attributes based on the application of context. These attributes are to be passed using the existing Specific Technical Characteristics Extension already in the GDSN Item standard.

When new attributes are requested a decision will be made to classify them as either product specific or general. Product specific attributes will NOT be coded into the future release of the Item or an extension. Instead they will be documented in the GDD so that trading partners can pass them via STC. General attributes will continue to go into future maintenance releases of GDSN as they do today.

Therefore a decision criterion is needed to distinguish General versus Product Specific Attributes. The criteria are as follows:

i. The attribute, definition and/or list of acceptable code values must differ between product types.

ii. Attributes must not have complex relational rules. For example, a dependency between two attributes is acceptable but multiple dependencies (e.g. tax information classes) are not.

iii. The attribute must not be tightly linked to attributes currently in the trade item.

iv. Attribute must not be mandatory across multiple product classifications.

v. The attribute must describe a trade item not its packaging or life cycle.

A release schedule for PSA’s will be developed at a future date with the GDSN BRG and Architecture teams. It is expected that while these releases will not necessarily be tied to schema maintenance releases in order to take advantage of the enhanced speed to deployment. A release schedule will be determined by the GDSN Maintenance Release Team.

2. Approve the Specific Technical Characteristics (STC) Extension as the means to pass these attributes in the GDSN

The STC extension (note: STC will be renamed at a future time) will be used as the sole vehicle to pass these marketing type attributes within the GDSN network. The STC extension largely provides the same purpose as the AVP but provides more robust functionality. Additional functionality includes support of code lists, integers and measurements in addition to string values supported by AVP.

The content that shall be shared using the STC extension will be data standards but will not be contained in a coded schema. This allows for a more dynamic capability by replacing what would have been XML coded extensions in schema format with dynamic content passed via STC based on a the given context or application.

3. Enhance the GDD infrastructure to support modularity and contextual applications

When trading partners go to implement GDSN, they will now need to understand what business content and business rules apply in a given application or business scenario. In the past, these would have been evident as they would have been coded in a schema. This proposal will require a single source where all item content can be accessed and a means to communicate what content applies to a business scenario. The GDD today contains much of this information but will need to be revised to accommodate a more robust assignment of contexts such as product classification.

Additional Considerations:

This proposal itself will not automatically change the existing Trade Item or associated extensions although it is anticipated that it will generate change requests to remove attributes from these schemas. In the event that an attribute similar to the requested marketing characteristic attribute already exists in the core or extension schemas due to earlier development efforts, the goal will be to remove these from the schema during a major release as part of the change request. Before the major release, the existing attributes within the schema can be deprecated allowing for the use of Specific Technical Characteristics eligible attribute.

Relation to Context and Modular Item Proposals: This proposal leverages the context based design methodology currently being enhanced. It is anticipated that pending the approval of the Modular Item, that the infrastructure and process for this proposal will be expanded to handle all contexts and all attributes defined as context specific.

Rationale:

Over-time the Global Data Synchronisation Network has evolved from a means to send core attributes of an item to a means to send all attributes describing an item. As a result the volume of data that the trade item model is required to hold has increased dramatically. It has become apparent given the volume and variety of data required by the GDSN community to be passed that the current methodology of utilizing structured schemas to meet all data requirements is not scalable.

The use of a codified attribute and value solution for marketing specific attributes will alleviate the pressures placed on trade item schema development and better enable the ability to send item information specific to the product being passed. It will also hasten the ability to add certain attributes to the network without the need for large scale maintenance deployments.

Next Steps:

- Update of GSMP Methodology
- Section created in GDD to house marketing/variant attributes