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Issue No. 13 · July 2005

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EAN **net**

EANnet – Helping business do business Upcoming Seminars Bar codes made simple

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The Importance of **Quality** (and Contact)

Recently we completed our bi-annual service quality survey. Thanks to all of you who participated in the survey, over the phone or online!

Such surveys are invaluable for organisations like GS1 New Zealand. We have around 4,500 member companies ranging from very small businesses that simply want bar codes on products to be sold at retail, to large multinational retailers and manufacturers. We need guidance on how we are doing, where we need to improve and on the issues that niggle you.

So what did the survey reveal? I'll report on three key results.

First, GS1 New Zealand scored an overall service quality rating of 6.1 out of 9 (1 = extremely dissatisfied, 9 = extremely satisfied). Second, the survey confirmed that contact counts. If you recently had personal contact with GS1 New Zealand staff (usually in the "field" or at seminars), your satisfaction level was likely to be much higher than otherwise (6.57 out of 9). Third, our verification service rated very highly as did our free-calling technical support line. On the other hand, you did not rate highly our ability to bill membership fees accurately and seamlessly.

The overall score, while not abysmal, is by no means stellar. What drove that score? Many of you mentioned the adjustment in membership fees last year as significant to your rating. This adjustment was necessary to fund "up front" expenditure on infrastructure for the launch of data synchronisation services (EANnet) in New Zealand and also on standards development for the Electronic Product Code (EPC), sometimes referred to as the "next generation bar code". The rollout of these services to the wider membership may be a couple of years away but investment is required now.



SCAN magazine is produced quarterly for the benefit of GS1 New Zealand members. It has a circulation of approximately 5,700 readers throughout the country as well as 101 GS1 member organisations worldwide.

SCAN reaches decision-makers in a wide range of industry sectors including grocery, FMCG, healthcare, logistics, manufacturing, retailing, wholesaling and transport. Our readership includes chief executives, sales and marketing managers, account managers, brand and product managers, IT personnel, operations managers, production managers, logistics and supply chain personnel, bar coding staff and packaging coordinators.

In addition, GS1 New Zealand, in effect, halved the up-front membership fee to new members whose annual turnover is less than \$1m. This got the organisation a lot of kudos in some media, such as FMCG Magazine. However, it also obviously grated with those of you who had joined in earlier years or who are large companies that had previously paid only \$324 (plus gst) per year regardless of turnover or use of GS1 New Zealand's resources.

So, what is our take-out from the service quality survey? We need to ensure that we continue to deliver value to all members regardless of size and to factor in the particular needs of small members.

Clearly, there is also a challenge for us to ensure that GS1 New Zealand staff make contact with all of you and answer any questions on making best use of the GS1 system. (Here, we need to remember that we have a team of just five outbound staff and a large membership base).

GS1 New Zealand also encourages you to take up the opportunities offered as part of your membership, which include 10 free verifications per year; one free attendance at the Bar Code Foundation Course and unlimited 0800 technical support. We, in turn, will also focus on improvement in our core membership processes (including billing), rest assured!

Thanks again for your participation in the survey. We look forward to delivering on your expectations.

Dr Peter Stevens CHIEF EXECUTIVE

For editorial or advertising enquiries:

Please contact Andrea Fleming on 04 494 1062 or andrea.fleming@gs1nz.org. Advertising rates are on our website at www.gs1nz.org/advertising.

For copies of SCAN:

If you are a member and would like more copies of SCAN, or if you are not a member and would like to subscribe, please contact Jessica Coulson on 04 494 1050 or jessica.coulson@gs1nz.org.



HELPING BUSINESSES



Imagine an information system so smart that when a supplier changes the price on one of its products, retailers receive the updated price automatically. A system where both suppliers and retailers can look at exactly the same information about products at any particular time. EANnet is that system.

For businesses trading in a wide variety of products, having correct information on them is vital. EANnet uses data synchronisation – a technology for ensuring that the same information is stored about a product regardless of where it is stored. For example, a company may store pricing about its products in one system, product quantities in another and product dimensions in a third. Data synchronisation is all about ensuring that all relevant information on a product is available through one system.

Error reduction

The aim of data synchronisation is to minimise errors and ensure consistency. Global studies have estimated that upto 30% of item data in retailer's core systems contains errors. Data errors cause supply chain inefficiencies, invoice discrepancies, lost sales due to out-of-stock situations

and slower speed-to-market. The studies have shown that improved data integrity through synchronisation can lead to a reduction in supply chain costs of 1-3%.

EANnet enables suppliers and retailers to look at the same information about products at any given time - and that really helps business to do business!

EANnet helps to ensure that the right product is ordered in the right configuration, at the right price. The automatic nature of data updating across diverse locations is the key.

Manual, paper-based systems always have the risk of errors at different stages of an updating process. Take, for example, a supplier selling a product to five different retailers. The supplier needs to fill in a product submission form, for example a Universal Buying Form or UBF for each retailer, with scope for error to creep in here and at the point when those five retailers are entering the new data into their different systems.

EANnet does away with the paper trail and the errors. All product information is entered by the supplier and goes into EANnet. Suppliers can choose which retailers see which information. If there are any changes - for instance, if an item is discontinued – then EANnet sends the change automatically to the retailer. Provided the data is entered correctly in the beginning, there is no room for mistakes.

Australasia

EANnet is the only data synchronisation system of its kind in Australasia. It was developed in Australia, predominantly to meet the needs of the grocery industry in both Australia and New Zealand, but it can be used for other industries as well. In Australia, the liquor industry and healthcare sector are using EANnet. We expect that EANnet will be adopted by other industries in New Zealand in the future.

EANnet is being widely taken up in Australia where more than 600 companies are registered with nearly 100 companies now live – that means all product information exchange between the supplier and the retailer is aligned electronically through EANnet. In New Zealand, 36 companies are registered to use EANnet and two companies are 'live', Whittakers and Maltexo (a Lion Nathan company). New Zealand's three companies in the Foodstuffs group, the largest player in the grocery market, expect to be live in November 2005 and they are using six suppliers as part of the pilot. Other Foodstuffs' suppliers should start thinking about moving towards using EANnet now!

It is important to note that EANnet is NOT an online ordering system. The ordering process between suppliers and retailers takes place separately. However, EANnet improves the ordering process by ensuring that all parties are trading on the basis of the same information.



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Three steps

Moving to EANnet is a three-step process which, depending on the volume of products a company has and the quality of the information recorded on those products, can take anywhere from two weeks to 12 months. The three-steps are:

- registering,
- becoming 'EANnet Ready', and
- going 'EANnet Live'.

Once registered, the largest part of the process begins. This requires you to enter all the data on your company's products and ensuring it is correct and up to date. This is easier for some companies than for others, depending on a number of factors including their data management system and processes already in use.

There are two key strands to this process. The first is information technology and data-focussed, making sure that your data is accurate and can be entered on EANnet. The second strand arises from the need to put in place business processes that will ensure your data remains accurate.

One of the most important issues in ensuring the ongoing success of EANnet is future data management. EANnet relies on having up-to-date information. There is no point using the system if you are not going to update the data when crucial changes are necessary, for example when a product line is being deleted. Not maintaining the database will only result in retailers being frustrated and lead to unnecessary work for everyone.

Once this data process has been completed, a supplier can then allow retailers to access the information. Then they are EANnet ready. Going live occurs when retailers have accessed the system and are happy with the information. They then turn it on to receive automated updates.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

GS1 New Zealand is able to assist companies at all stages of the process. We are able to help companies establish a process that will ensure the sustainability of the system. Just call!

Find out more on our website: http://www.gs1nz.org/EANnet/default.aspx or contact Robert Turner on 04 494 1066.



BAR CODE FOUNDATION COURSE

Understand how bar codes are created, allocated and managed.

Understand the impacts of poor quality bar coding.

This comprehensive course is for newcomers to the GS1 bar code system. It covers the basics of bar code management and standards. It will help you ensure your products are handled efficiently by everyone who is involved in getting them to market, without costly delays.

Course benefits are:

- Save time and money by ensuring your bar codes are right first time.
- Avoid the risk of retailers rejecting your products.
- Learn new technologies that will support your business operations.
- Develop the confidence that you can effectively manage your bar coding.

On the course, you will learn to:

- Create, allocate and manage item (bar code) numbers.
- Understand bar code technical standards, e.g. type, size, location.
- Improve your organisation's supply chain and inventory control through the use of bar codes.
- Introduce creative bar codes into your packaging.
- · Eliminate bar code errors that could cost time and money.

Course participants may bring bar code samples for discussion and expert assessment of their quality.

UPCOMING SEMINARS

Course dates and venues

Christchurch, Heritage Christchurch, Monday 15 August

Wellington, GS1 Office, Wednesday 17 August

Auckland, Novotel Ellerslie, Thursday 18 August

Christchurch and Wellington courses will be 9am-5pm. The Auckland course will be 9.30am-5pm.

Course fees

First Attendee GS1 member \$199 + GST (\$223.88)

Non-member \$299 + GST (\$336.38) Additional Attendees GS1 member \$99 + GST (\$111.38) Non-member \$150 + GST (\$168.75)

Remember if you are a new member of GS1 New Zealand you can use your complimentary Bar Code Foundation Course voucher/s to attend this course free of charge.

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By visiting htt or by contacting Andrea Fleming 04 494 1062 or andrea.fleming@gs1nz.org





EANnet FOUNDATION COURSE

EANnet is coming your way!

Foodstuffs has launched a project to implement the EANnet system for master product data synchronisation and, ultimately, for ending its use of the Universal Buying Form (UBF).

Suppliers need to understand EANnet

If you supply to Foodstuffs or Progressive Enterprises and have yet to attend an EANnet seminar, then this is the course for you! It is designed especially for the people in your organisation who are responsible for supplier/retailer relationships, category management and database management. It is not just for IT administrators!

Programme

- Principals of data synchronisation,
- Overview of EANnet,
- Key concepts,
- Foodstuffs timeframes,
- Online demonstration,
- Industry status,
- Costs and benefits,
- Implementing EANnet.

Course dates and venues

Christchurch, Heritage Christchurch, Monday 22 August

Auckland, Novotel Ellerslie, Wednesday 24 August

Wellington, GS1 New Zealand Office, Thursday 25 August

Christchurch and Wellington courses will be 9am-5pm. The Auckland course will be 9.30am-5pm.

Course fees

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Bar codes made simple

Everyone understands what bar codes do, right? Here is a simple guide for people who need to make sure that bar codes actually do what they are supposed to do. There are seven golden rules.

Rule 1.

BY OWEN DANCE

Think numbers first, then move onto bars.

Forget about bar codes for a momentnumbers are what matter most. Numbers identify things and if your numbers are wrong, your bar codes are useless no matter how well they are printed.

Bar codes are simply a way for numbers to be read automatically, with more accuracy and speed than the average pair of human eyes. There are about 800 bar code types, or "symbologies". Any can be used to encode a number but people who will subsequently scan the bar code need to have the appropriate scanning equipment for the symbology that has been used.

A recent survey of bar code quality in the hardware sector revealed that one range of products had been identified with the correct numbers but then encoded in obviously wrong symbology (a Codabar symbology). Codabar is for use in libraries and blood banks - it is completely unscannable in retail outlets throughout the world!

It really pays to know your symbologies, or at least those commonly used in retailing and in retail supply chains. The EAN-13 symbology is used at retail point-of-sale while ITF-14 is used on cartons for example. GS1 New Zealand is always ready to help identify the right symbology for your particular numbers.

Rule 2. Choose the right colours.

Once assured that your numbers and symbology are correct, there is the choice of bar coding colours. Black on white is the traditional norm but there are plenty of alternatives (see article on page 12). It may be possible to use interesting (and contrasting) colours that match the packaging design. GS1 New Zealand is always ready to advise on suitable colours.

Rule 3. Stay in your size range.

Big is better with bar codes. The bigger, the easier to print clearly and the more reliable when scanned. There is a defined size range for each symbology and you must stick within that range (and at the top of end of the range if you can). GS1 New Zealand has a members' handbook on size ranges.

Size includes height. There is a widespread belief that bar codes can be shortened without doing any harm. This is not true. As soon a bar code is shortened, its scanning capability has been degraded. The shorter you make a bar code, the more likely you make scanning a problem.

Rule 4. Allow scanning "quiet" spaces.

Is there enough clear space either side of the bar code? As a scanner works, it sends signals to a computer that will attempt to decode whatever it is receiving. Before picking up the pattern of rising and falling signals created by any bar code, the computer will need a brief instant of "guiet" - a millisecond of no signal variation at all that helps ensure the following pattern is clearly discernible.

Once the bar code is scanned, more quiet is needed to separate its data for decoding from whatever the computer is about to receive next. For this, the bar code needs some clear background colour down each edge of the printed bars. Call them "quiet zones" or "light margins" - their size is crucial. Half a millimetre too narrow and the bar code may not scan accurately, or only sometimes.

Rule 5. Use a knowledgeable designer.

Packaging designers may or may not know much about bar coding - and many do not, even if they think they do! You know what a bridge looks like, so why not design one yourself and trying selling the design to an engineering firm that actually builds bridges. Will they buy? Not likely, and it is the same with bar codes. Packaging designers need complete and current knowledge if they are doing your bar codes.

It might pay to quiz your designer from time to time: Can they summarise the location guidelines for bar codes on cartons and retail items? Do they know the difference between EAN-13 and UPC-A, and does the difference matter now that January 2005

has passed? Do they understand where the preferences of the grocery trade in Australia and New Zealand fit into the overall GS1 specifications? And so on.

Rule 6. Ensure bar codes are seen.

Bar codes need to be easily seen and scanned. That's obvious but still bar codes are sometimes applied around corners, under flaps, or where wrapping or straps will cover them.

On units that are being shipped, placement is even more vital because automated warehouse systems may use fixed scanners pointed only at one place as units move along a conveyor. If the bar code is in the wrong place, it will probably be missed. There are guidelines for bar code location - GS1 New Zealand can advise.

Rule 7. Verify.

Bar codes need checking: Do they scan properly and do they have the right numbers in them? Checking with an ordinary scanner is of limited use. In fact, scanners perform differently according to their age, quality, type and the features of the associated software – your bar code may be fine with one but not with others. The only valid testing of quality requires a verifier, a very smart type of scanner that analyses the specific dimensions and reflective properties of any bar code and compares them with universal standards.

Verifiers are expensive (from around \$2000 upwards) but a verification by us only costs \$15 plus GST. What is the cost of having a product consignment rejected by a major customer because of bar code problems? Verifiers can be your best friends (along with GS1 New Zealand's technical consultants, of course!) Remember that, as a member, you are entitled to 10 free verifications (worth \$150) each year. Use them!

> For further information on any of these rules, call GS1 New Zealand 0800 10 23 56 or visit www.gs1nz.org

he world has become a friendlier place for many Kiwi exporters to the United States and Canada, thanks to "Sunrise 2005".

Back in 1997, the Uniform Code Council of the United States (now called GS1 United States) launched the Sunrise 2005 programme for all US and Canadian retailing companies to introduce point-of-sale scanning and processing of EAN-8 and EAN-13 symbols, in addition to 12-digit UPC symbols. Under Sunrise 2005, companies were supposed to have this capability from 1 January 2005.

Awake to Sunrise 2005



web www.goldfields.co.nz Goldfields Print I td

The programme is a major step for the globalisation of bar coding at retail point-of-sale. Sunrise 2005 should stop exporters worldwide from having to put 12-digit UPC symbols on products sent to the US or Canada, but EAN-13 symbols on products sent to other markets.

Both UPC and EAN bar codes should now be acceptable in the US and Canada – both large export markets for New Zealand. So are our exporters seeing the benefits? Some have told GS1 New Zealand that their US customers are, indeed, able to receive products with EAN-13. Make sure you ask the question, if you haven't already!



EPC enters the reality phase



Companies are realising that it will take hard work to create real business value from Electronic Product Code technologies and they are buckling down to get it done. **Mark Roberti*** reports.

It has been nearly seven months since Best Buy announced plans to require the use of Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tags carrying Electronic Product Codes (EPC) on shipments from its suppliers, starting in January 2006. In that time, not a single retailer, manufacturer or government entity has announced an RFID mandate. And at least one RFID software provider, GenuOne, is withdrawing from the RFID market.

To some, this implies a loss of momentum on EPC adoption. The truth is, we've entered a new phase of adoption, one in which the excitement over EPC's potential to radically transform global supply chains has been replaced by the understanding that deploying EPC technologies in ways that deliver real business value is not easy. The new phase is based also on the knowledge that, despite the tremendous progress made over the past two years, there is still a great deal of work to be done to build out the EPCglobal Network and the standards for data sharing that will support it.

While no new mandates have been issued, there is a great deal of progress being made, both by EPCglobal and by end users. EPCglobal achieved a major milestone in the RFID industry when it got some 60 vendors to agree on and support the second generation EPC air interface protocol standard.

This standard, which has been submitted to the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) is a great leap forward in several ways. First, it bridges the ISO-EPC divide within the industry. It takes the best features of the ISO 18000-6 UHF air interface protocol and the first generation EPC protocol and combines them with some new features that will help end users get more value out of EPC systems. One vendor told me recently that they are

* Mark Roberti is the founder and editor of RFID Journal, the world's first and largest media company focused on the business applications of RFID and EPC technologies.



seeing a 40% improvement in read range with the Gen 2 protocol over Gen 1.

Another major benefit of the new standard is that it can be used globally. Europe has struggled with UHF

systems because of tight controls on reader power output, which greatly limit read range EPC Gen 2 will reduce some of those problems (but not all).

Progress

The Auto-ID Labs are continuing to do primary research around the standards needed to implement the EPCglobal Network in a way that brings value to all companies in the



supply chain. Progress is being made, and EPCglobal Hong Kong recently announced a major initiative to build the infrastructure needed to track goods made in China, shipped through Hong Kong and delivered to customers in the United States and Europe.

End users are also making progress. Wal-Mart has deployed EPC readers in 150 stores and three distribution centers. I recently had the opportunity to tour one of the EPCenabled stores and was impressed with how Wal-Mart is already able to use the information gathered from the system to begin to tackle the problem of out-of-stocks in a systematic way. By the end of this year or early next year, I believe the retailer will be able to quantify the improvement in on-shelf product availability in the stores that are EPC-enabled.

Manufacturers are struggling with the high cost of EPC tags (currently between US20-100 cents or more, depending on volumes purchased and packaging of the tags). It is difficult to offset this cost when the tags are placed on product that is then shipped to a customer. But most manufacturers understand now that retailers are serious about deploying EPC and they have to comply with mandates. Many of the largest manufacturers in the United States, including Kimberly-Clark and Procter & Gamble, have set up internal laboratories to test the technology and are running pilots to determine the benefits.

RFID Research

Companies have also joined with academic institutions around the world to find solutions to real-world deployment problems. I recently attended the opening of the RFID Research Center at the University of Arkansas. This impressive facility boasts a lab in a real warehouse and has dock doors, a high-speed conveyor, warehouse racks and shelving similar to that used in the backrooms at retail stores. The center was funded by companies such as J.B. Hunt Transport, Tyson Foods, Wal-Mart and others. The center will study real-world deployment issues and do run tests of tags on products. The goal is to understand how EPC technologies can deliver value and transfer this knowledge to end users. Students from information technology, engineering departments, as well as

> the business school, will work in the center. These students will join the workforce armed with hands-on experience and a deep understanding of what EPC technology can and can't do.

Companies are also supporting work being done at the Auto-ID Labs. Special interest groups comprising vendors, end users and researchers from the labs

around the world are working together to develop data standards, solve problems tagging certain types of products, developing packaging solution and doing applied research that will move adoption forward.

EPCglobal has also established business action groups (BAGs) in which participants in different industries come together to define the needs of the industry and develop best practices. In the United States, BAGs have been formed for the fast moving consumer goods and pharmaceutical industries and others are planned.

Industry Spread

Even as this work progresses, the technology is also spreading quickly to new sectors of the global economy. The pharmaceutical industry, which has been hurt by a rise in counterfeiting of drugs, is moving aggressively to study EPC's potential to provide a cost effective system for tracking and tracing drugs and complying with pedigree laws (laws that require detail histories of the manufacturing and movement of each drug shipment).

Boeing and Airbus have joined forces to develop standards for tagging airplane parts. The initial specification calls for using the ISO 15693 standard, but the two airplane manufacturers are also looking at the possibility of using EPC technologies. And the Auto Industry Action Group recently revised its specification to call for the use of EPC protocols to track tires.

There are a great many challenges ahead before companies realise the great potential EPC offers. Vendors need to improve the performance, consistency and reliability of EPC tags. Prices for tags and interrogators need to come down, and standards for sharing data need to be finalised. End users need to enhance their information technology infrastructure to cope with the massive flow of data that will come from EPC systems, and they need to figure out how to re-engineer their business processes to take advantage of the data. This will take time, but make no mistake, rapid progress is being made in all of these areas.

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It's not that black & white...

Ask people what a bar code looks like and most will say, "black stripes on a white rectangular background". That's obviously so with the vast majority of bar codes we see on retail products today.

arrangement of

up the encoded

bars and pick

For some people, black and white bar codes will not only look very familiar but also an ugly blot on otherwise beautifully designed product packaging.

Well, the good news is that bar codes do not have to be black stripes on a white "background"

use today – but that still leaves a world of possibility beyond

black and white. (Note that, technically, a bar code is made up

of alternating dark and light bars rather than dark bars on a

If an infra-red scanner cannot detect sufficient difference

between the bars, it will not be able to correctly identify the

at all. They <u>do</u> have to be colours that contrast with each other sufficiently for the scanners that are widely in

background.)





"background" colour given that scanners emit a red beam which "sees" any red surface as

frucor

white. By the same token, never use red for bars.

There is, in fact, an array of colour combinations that will work for bar coding. See the GS1 New Zealand publication, The Bar Code Colour and Size Guide, for examples. This is available automatically to all GS1 New Zealand members. Anyone bar coding products are actually spoilt for choice when it comes to colour selection!

Frucor Beverages Limited is one member with a colour flair and willingness to innovate in its bar coding. In recently launching the G Force Bite range of beverages, Frucor wanted to do

something out-of-the-ordinary with the back of its packaging. "We challenged our design agency, Dashwood Design, to find a way to make the bar code more interesting and to reflect the G Force brand personality and proposition," says Nick Rowe, Frucor's Packaging Technologist.

The bar code was given a yellow background with "bites" taken out of the top section (see

examples). This design has passed GS1 verification with flying colours. The background colour is adequate and the bars are high enough for the size of the bar code (before those bites).

"Bar codes are usually seen as a necessary nuisance that takes up valuable space on the retail pack," says Nick. "Dashwood Design came up with the idea of taking bites out of the bar code to tie into the front of the unit, which they did very effectively and consequently we are very satisfied with the finished packaging."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Any member wanting to become more innovative with bar code design and colour is welcome to contact Jay Carlson on 04 494 1061 or jay.carlsen@gs1nz.org (Our thanks to Frucor's Nick Rowe and Kathy Aupaau for their contribution.)



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Certificate Course Graduates

The certificate course continues to go from strength-to-strength with eight more graduates taking up the banner for bar code quality and number integrity. The graduates are:

- Janine Fennell of Crossmark NZ Ltd
- Paul Barber of the Goodtime Food Company
- Rachel Hosking, Design Tutor at UCOL
- Graham Burson of Independent Fisheries
- Agata Wagner and Leanne Tauere of Allied Domeqc
- Lodd Soukhaphanh of Saito Labels Limited
- Sharyn Mitchell of Unilever

Congratulations to all eight. Sharyn enjoys the distinction of being the first graduate to receive the new-look certificate bearing the GS1 New Zealand logo. A special welcome also to Rachel, the first representative of the design industry to complete the course.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For further information on GS1 New Zealand's Certificate in Automatic Data Capture course, contact Owen Dance on 04 494 1064 or owen.dance@gs1nz.org



Staff Profile JILL PEACOCK



Jill Peacock recently joined GS1 New Zealand as Corporate Services Manager, bringing to the organisation her 12 years' experience in financial management at a senior level. Jill was previously Manager, Financial Accounting at the Ministry of Health.

Prior to this, she was Finance Manager for the Wellington Institute of Technology where she oversaw a complete restructuring of the finance department. Jill has also held finance manager positions with the Government Communications Security Bureau and the National Library of New Zealand.

Jill is a Chartered Accountant, and has a Bachelor of Business Studies in Accounting and Management degree and a Post-Graduate Diploma in Business Administration (Management). Her studies continue with current work on a Masters degree in Management.

Jill's particular interests lie in process improvement and rationalisation, and the automation of accounting processes. She is mother to two adult children and enjoys spending time in the Wairarapa, where she has a cottage and large garden.

Scan this ...



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Supply chain management not always Ezi.

CONFERENCE DEBRIEF

In our first conference debrief, SCAN reports on the presentation of Scott Kerr, Supply Chain Manager, EziBuy Ltd.



EziBuy is a New Zealand icon. Over the past two decades, few families will not have received one of EziBuy's courier bags filled with "honest value" clothes or home ware.

Four years ago, EziBuy became the largest catalogue business in Australasia after acquiring the Myers Direct database. Today, sales are 55% in Australia and 45% in New Zealand.

Palmerston North-based EziBuy offers its products through regular mailings of its primary and specialty catalogues, five retail stores and the Internet. It has built a sound reputation for selling products of quality at favorable prices, and for excellence in customer service.

One of EziBuy's strengths is its returns capability – nearly 25% of products sold are returned after the customer decides they are not suitable. The business has around 37,500 active stock control units (SKUs) with orders peaking on some days at 20,000.

Problem and solution

By 2004, business growth was causing strain within EziBuy. The company was running out of space and capacity to support its catalogue and other retailing activities. Its three distribution facilities were struggling to meet peak needs.

An obvious solution was to add more distribution centre (DC) capacity. But it also became apparent that attention to other aspects of the supply chain could dramatically improve efficiency. EziBuy had:



- Poor overall visibility on its processing of orders
- Unstructured inventory planning and control
- No electronic capture of product data at item level (bar coding)
- Poor understanding of true cost of sale of goods

EziBuy decided on a three-phase response, with project time horizons between six months and three years. First, new DC capability had to be added - a new 24,000 sg m facility in Palmerston North, with new conveyor, sortation and voice pick technology.



Bar coding initiatives

Priority projects also included making much greater use of GS1 (EAN.UCC) standards - not an area of traditional strength. EziBuy has not had bar coding on all consumer units, although it has usually applied a global trade item number (GTIN). Bar codes have not been routinely applied on cartons, only on products sold in the stores.

One key project will standardise shipping outers (cartons) and put bar coding (or Electronic Product Codes) on all products. EziBuy is also focused on reducing the rework required in New Zealand and on getting its suppliers to deliver "customer ready stock".

Setting quality criteria for bar code application by suppliers in China and elsewhere is a big necessity. Behind the scenes, the company has another key project to develop supply chain performance indicators. These will really help decision making in future.

Even in a successful business such as EziBuy's, standards can help make things "ezier"!



GS1 World 2005.















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A-1 SNAX	COMPOSTING NEW ZEALAND LTD	
ABSOLUTE HOME ENTERTAINMENT	CONSTRUCTION PRODUCTS LTD	
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