



THE GLOBAL LANGUAGE  
OF BUSINESS

## CASE STUDY



# Shamrock Foods



**“During the Shamrock Supplier Summit in July 2014, we discussed the importance of having complete and accurate GS1 data. This information is not only an important tool for our sales force, but is being requested and required from our customers.”**

— **JODY WILMES**, Vice President  
of Category Management,  
Shamrock Foods

## Foodservice leader serves up quality data from pallet to palate

### CHALLENGE

Shamrock Foods (Shamrock) needed complete and accurate data for its web-based ordering system to satisfy the increasing demands of its customers, especially healthcare providers and school systems that require nutritional and allergen information before purchasing. The company also understood how using quality data could help it become more efficient and cut costs throughout its operations.

### SOLUTION

The Shamrock team created a new supplier connection process for its vendors to publish their product data and images in its electronic ordering system for customers. The team used multiple venues to reach its suppliers, requesting their participation and offering guidance via the Foodservice GS1 US Standards Initiative. Today, more than 500 Shamrock suppliers publish detailed product information as well as share and synchronize data via the Global Data Synchronization Network™ (GDSN®).

### BENEFITS

Shamrock advises it has experienced a 20 percent increase in sales and a 14 percent increase in demand for those products that have extended data attributes such as nutritional information and product images. The company has increased its level of customer service by providing extended product information to help them make better buying decisions.

Shamrock Foods, a nationally recognized foodservice distributor, has always focused on using technology to gain efficiencies in its operations to drive down costs while improving customer service. Yet when the company decided to launch its online ordering system, Shamrock needed much more than technology—it needed complete and accurate product data.

“To truly satisfy our customers, we required better product information from our suppliers—data that our customers could rely on,” says Joan Knaack, director of Financial Services. “As a result, we launched a data quality initiative.”

By having and using accurate product data, Shamrock understood the potential impact on its business. “We knew having accurate data would help us become much more efficient and allow us to serve our customers better—having the right pallet height for the warehouse, having the exact weight for the logistics team, and having the correct portion size for our sales teams and customers,” continues Knaack.

“During the Shamrock Supplier Summit in July 2014, we discussed the importance of having complete and accurate GS1 data. This information is not only an important tool for our sales force, but is being requested and required from our customers,” says Jody Wilmes, vice president of Category Management. “As consumers we always want to have detailed information and images on what we purchase; why should our customers expect anything less?”

Shamrock is requiring all suppliers to complete the GS1 data by March 31, 2015. For any data that is not completed by this date, Shamrock will engage a third party to provide this information and will charge the supplier for Shamrock’s incurred cost.

After asking vendors to participate, Shamrock offered implementation support for those in need of additional information. To guide suppliers’ efforts, the team used the [Foodservice GS1 US Standards Initiative Roadmap](#), which provides a step-by-step approach for implementing GS1 Standards, including the GDSN. “Today, approximately 500 vendors are actively participating in our supplier connection process,” says Knaack. “We’re pleased with our progress.”

With the new process, a supplier chooses a data pool in which to publish its product data and images and uses the GDSN for sharing and synchronizing their data with Shamrock.

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— **BRYAN WEST**, Senior Director of Information Systems,  
Shamrock Foods

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“We compare the supplier’s data with what is in our system, using a Global Trade Item Number,” explains Jocelyn Cahall, supervisor of Enterprise Data Compliance. “After the review, we import and may synchronize their data in our system if there are no issues such as missing information. We have a four percent tolerance threshold that may require the supplier to confirm or correct the data.”

Suppliers provide information based on Shamrock’s required Phase 1 Global Trade Item Number® (GTIN®) attributes like weight, case and carton sizes, and shelf life, and Phase 2 GTIN attributes such as nutritional elements, ingredients and allergens.

Other groups of happy Shamrock customers include healthcare providers and school systems. “They love that we provide expanded data and would even like to have data supplied down to the micronutrient level,” says Bryan West, senior director of Information Systems. “They wouldn’t even agree to buy an item unless we provided the needed information like nutritional ingredients and allergens.”

West advises that Shamrock has seen a 20 percent increase in sales and a 14 percent increase in demand for those products that have extended data attributes such as nutritional information and images. In fact, he reports that extended product information is used by customers to make buying decisions fully one quarter of the time.

“Data standards for the foodservice industry are reaching a maturity that makes it easier for those just now embarking on such an initiative,” advises Knaack. “It’s important to just get started since quality data is not simply an initiative but an ongoing journey.”

To learn more about Shamrock Foods, visit [www.shamrockfoods.com](http://www.shamrockfoods.com).

To learn more about the Foodservice GS1 US Standards Initiative, visit [www.gs1us.org/foodservice](http://www.gs1us.org/foodservice).



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