



Wal-Mart's Data Synchronization Initiative **Frequently Asked Questions for Wal-Mart Suppliers**

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Wal-Mart's Data Synchronization Initiative FAQ for Wal-Mart Suppliers

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1 INTRODUCTION

This document is a compilation of questions received, and their associated answers, relative to Wal-Mart's data synchronization initiative. It pertains to suppliers that want to synchronize data with Wal-Mart.

2 GENERAL DATA SYNCHRONIZATION QUESTIONS

- **Q: What is Data Synchronization?**

- A: Data synchronization is the electronic transfer of standardized **product** and **location** information between trading partners and the continuous synchronization of that data over time. When this data is exchanged via a central global repository - GS1 Global Registry™, it is referred to as Global Data Synchronization.

Product information includes:

- Item attributes controlled by the supplier, e.g., Global Trade Item Number (GTIN), Size, Weight, Height, Brand, UPC code

Location information includes:

- Global Location Number (GLN) – Locations involved in trade such as company headquarters, billing departments, and ship-to addresses

- **Q: What is the Global Data Synchronization Network® (GDSN®)?**

- A: The GDSN is an automated, standards-based global environment that enables secure and continuous data synchronization. This allows all trading partners to have consistent item data in their systems at the same time, ensuring that all parties in the supply chain are working with the same data. The GDSN helps to save time and money for all organizations by eliminating steps to correct inaccurate data.
- A: The GDSN enables the GS1 Global Registry and a network of interoperable, certified data pools that enable data synchronization per GS1 System standards.

- **Q: What are the benefits of synchronizing data through the GDSN?**

- A: There are several benefits, including:
 - Allows real-time item maintenance for specific fields
 - Provides accurate, standards based, synchronized data that reduces inefficiencies in the supply chain
 - Ensures dimensions are correct and stored at the each, case, warehouse pack, and pallet levels

- **Q: What is a data pool? What is a GDSN-certified data pool?**

- A: An entity that provides its customers data synchronization services and a single point of entry to the Global Data Synchronization Network (GDSN) is called a data pool.
- A: Data pools must be certified per GS1 System standards to operate within the GDSN. Data pools interoperate with the GS1 Global Registry and each other. Example: 1SYNC Data Pool.

Note: 1SYNC is a not-for-profit subsidiary of GS1 US; the standards organization for the United States

- **Q: Where can I find a list of GDSN-certified data pools?**

- A: The GS1 website has a list of GDSN-certified data pools with contact information. You can find the list here
<http://www.gs1.org/productssolutions/gdsn/>

- **Q: What is a company prefix?**

- A: A company prefix is a globally unique number assigned to companies by GS1 Member Organizations (GS1 US in the United States) to create the identification numbers of the GS1 System. It is comprised of a GS1 Prefix and a Company Number.

- **Q: What is a GLN?**

- A: GLN is an acronym for "Global Location Number" and refers to the globally unique GS1 System identification number for legal entities, functional entities, and physical locations. A GLN is comprised of 13 digits that together represent a GS1 Company Prefix, Location Reference, and 'check digit'. Supply side trading partner locations generally include corporate headquarters, regional offices, warehouses, plants, and distribution centers. Demand side trading partner locations generally include corporate headquarters, divisional offices, stores, and distribution centers.
- **Note:** Wal-Mart's US GLN is 0078742000008

- **Q: What a GTIN?**

- A: GTIN is an acronym for "Global Trade Item Number" and refers to the globally unique GS1 System identification number for products and services. A GTIN may be 8, 12, 13, or 14 digits in length, represented as GTIN-8, GTIN-12, GTIN-13, and GTIN-14, respectively.

- **Q: Is data synchronization an Information Technology (IT) function? Does it require IT resources?**

- A: Data Synchronization is a business process that uses technology in its implementation. For a successful implementation, it is recommended to have executive sponsorship and technology resources allocated to this program.

- **Q: Is data synchronization just another term for EDI?**
 - A: No. EDI is used in the transmission of many e-business transactions, whereas data synchronization is the electronic transmission of standardized product and location information.

- **Q: Does my sales team need to be involved with data synchronization?**
 - A: Yes, sales people play an important role in the success of this process. For example, for new items to be submitted to a buyer at Wal-Mart, the sales person would go into Retail Link to NEW ITEMS RECEIVED and click on the GTIN to submit the new item information to his buyer. This process replaces emailing Form 33 to the buyer.

- **Q: What is the Global Product Classification (GPC) code?**
 - A: A GPC code is a 8-digit number that represents a classification of products. It is a 'flat' classification system based on attributes and values. Global Product Classification is a required element of the global data based on attributes, and values and is a required element of the GDSN.

Note: If you need a list of GPC codes contact your data pool provider. To request a GPC code to be added to standards, work with your data pool provider to submit a change request.

3 WAL-MART'S DATA SYNCHRONIZATION INITIATIVE

3.1 General Wal-Mart Questions

- **Q: Why is Wal-Mart implementing data synchronization?**
 - A: As part of Wal-Mart's continuing focus to improve supply chain efficiencies for Wal-Mart and its trading partners, Wal-Mart has worked with other retailers and suppliers to help build the GDSN. Data synchronization provides tangible benefits for retailers and suppliers such as:
 - Elimination of hand keying for creation and maintenance of items
 - Enabling real time updates for item maintenance
 - Increasing market share for early arrival of new items by 5% - 15%
 - Increasing the efficiency of your business
 - Building the foundation for electronic collaborative commerce

- **Q: Are all of Wal-Mart's suppliers required to implement data synchronization via the GDSN?**
 - A: At this time Wal-Mart recommends that all of its suppliers who currently use Form 33 for submitting their New Item Creation and Maintenance changes begin utilizing the GDSN to submit these changes instead.

Note: Currently, suppliers who use Supplier Quotes or fall under the Direct Imports category do not need to implement data synchronization. However, if

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a supplier falls under both the Direct Imports and Domestic categories, they would need to utilize data synchronization for their domestic items.

Specific instances when suppliers using Form 33 do not need to engage in data synchronization with Wal-Mart at this time include:

- Sam's Club suppliers
- Suppliers for walmart.com
- Suppliers that use an existing Wal-Mart 4000 UPC (old assortment numbers) should not publish a new GTIN to replace an existing Wal-Mart 4000 UPC (assign a new UPC/GTIN on all new items moving forward).
- For PLU (Price Look-Up) items, Wal-Mart will synchronize bulk items that utilize the GS1 data bar barcode solution.

• **Q: Is data synchronization replacing Form 33 for New Item Creation and Maintenance?**

- A: Yes

• **Q: Do Direct Store Delivery (DSD) suppliers need to implement data synchronization?**

- A: Yes

• **Q: Do Vendor Managed Inventory (VMI) suppliers need to implement data synchronization?**

- A: Yes

• **Q: Are suppliers that sell to a distributor that sells to Wal-Mart required to implement data synchronization?**

- A: If a supplier only sells to the distributor and not directly to Wal-Mart, they would need to discuss this with the distributor. Some distributors (such as McLane) require their suppliers to send item data via the GDSN.

Notes:

- Any wholesaler or distributor (regional or national) using Form 33 for new item creation has to synchronize data with Wal-Mart except when the Brand Owner is involved and is on Vendor Managed Inventory (VMI); in that scenario the Brand Owner must synchronize data with Wal-Mart.
- If a Brand Owner (regional or national) does business with Wal-Mart via VMI, then the Brand Owner must synchronize data with Wal-Mart on behalf of its distributors.

In summary, if you sell any item(s) directly to Wal-Mart (and use Form 33), then you have to synchronize data with Wal-Mart for those items.

• **Q: Is data synchronization being used in other countries for Wal-Mart?**

- A: Wal-Mart Stores Inc. in Canada, Mexico, and Great Britain are testing with a small group of suppliers. If you currently utilize data synchronization to send your product data and you would like to start working with these

countries, contact Wal-Mart in these countries and let them know. Wal-Mart is determining the readiness for other countries.

- **Q: What are the data synchronization requirements for Sam's Club?**
 - A: Wal-Mart is not currently rolling out data synchronization for Sam's Club. This is estimated to be a late 2009 initiative and you will be notified by your Sam's buyer accordingly.

3.2 Data Pools and Solution Partners

- **Q: What is a GDSN-certified data pool?**
 - A: See Section 2.1 of this document for answers to general Data Synchronization questions
- **Q: What/who is 1SYNC™?**
 - A: 1SYNC is a neutral, not-for-profit GDSN-certified data pool and works closely with Wal-Mart in implementing its data synchronization initiative. Wal-Mart uses the 1SYNC Data Pool Solution for its GDSN services.
 - A: A subsidiary of GS1 US, 1SYNC supports and works with over 50 retailers and 5,000 suppliers (of all sizes). To learn more about 1SYNC and its services, visit www.1SYNC.org or call +1 866.280.4013, Option 1.
- **Q: Do I have to sign up with 1SYNC™?**
 - A: No. You can choose to sign up with any GDSN-certified data pool of your choice.
- **Q: How do I sign up with a data pool?**
 - A: You must choose a data pool that best fits your company's needs and follow its procedures. Use the direct link to GS1 Certified data pools under the Support Links on Retail Link, or visit the GS1 website at www.gs1.org/productssolutions/gdsn to obtain a list of certified data pools.
- **Q: How much does implementing data synchronization cost?**
 - A: The cost will depend on the data pool your company chooses to work with. For example, if you choose to work with 1SYNC, as a not-for-profit neutral organization 1SYNC operates on a cost-recovery model and fees are calculated based on your company's total annual sales. Visit http://1sync.org/subscription_fees.html for more details.
- **Q: What is a 1SYNC Solution Partner?**
 - A: A Solution Partner is a company that enables supply chain functions through the provision of products and services. A *1SYNC Certified Solution Partner* refers to a company that has been certified by 1SYNC to connect to the 1SYNC Data Pool. 1SYNC customers have the option to choose a certified Solution Partner to assist in managing their data synchronization initiative.

For a full list of *1SYNC Certified Solution Partners*, visit www.1sync.org/partnerships and search for a Solution Partner that meets your needs.

- **Q: Do I have to use a 1SYNC Solution Partner?**
 - A: 1SYNC provides customers with multiple implementation options to successfully synchronize data with Wal-Mart. 1SYNC offers implementation tools for customers and has partnered with some of the largest and most well-known companies in the world, including many that suppliers may already be working with today. A supplier can implement with the solution that best fits their needs and requirements.
- **Q: I use data pool "X" or Solution Partner "Y" and have a question about how to use their system – who should I contact?**
 - A: For questions associated with GDSN, the first source for information should be your data pool. The data pool you select should be able to answer or provide proper direction for all your questions associated with data synchronization with Wal-Mart. For more information please contact 1SYNC customer support at customersupport@1sync.org or +1 866.280.4013.

3.3 Wal-Mart's Retail Link & Data Synchronization

3.3.1 ADDING DATA THROUGH DATA SYNCHRONIZATION

- **Q: How do I load data into a data pool?**
 - A: You will have to follow the procedures provided by the data pool you have chosen to work with. Please contact your specific data pool for any additional support with your implementation.
- **Q: Can I just use Retail Link to do data synchronization?**
 - A: No, In order to synchronize product data information, it must be published through a GDSN-certified data pool.
- **Q: The data I sent through data synchronization doesn't match what is seen on Retail Link. What should I do?**
 - A: Please contact 1SYNC customer support at customersupport@1sync.org or +1 866.280.4013.
- **Q: What level of packaging does Wal-Mart consider as its vendor pack orderable level?**
 - A: Check in Retail Link; it is the GTIN listed as the Supplier Pack.
- **Q: When is Wal-Mart planning to accept the Attribute Value Pair (AVP) Extension? How will suppliers know if they need to populate this information?**

- A: Wal-Mart will communicate when they begin accepting the AVP extension information. Wal-Mart will use the GDSN standard.
- **Q: What is the difference between a Wal-Mart Supplier Pack and a Wal-Mart Warehouse Pack?**
 - A: The supplier pack is the orderable quantity that Wal-Mart will order from the supplier. The warehouse pack is an inner pack quantity that the warehouse would send to a store. If the product does not go through the warehouse, the supplier pack and warehouse pack quantity will be the same.
- **Q: How do I know if I need to assign a new Universal Product Code (UPC) when I make changes to an existing product?**
 - A: Follow the GS1 Standards GTIN Allocation Rules. For example, if the consumer net content changes, then a new UPC must be assigned. For more information on GTIN Allocation Rules visit www.gs1.org/gtinrules. Contact your data pool for more information.

3.3.2 PUBLISHING DATA TO WAL-MART

- **Q: My Wal-Mart buyer says I have to do data synchronization. Where do I start?**
 - A: The steps to get started are:
 1. Attend a web seminar session (held every Tuesday and Thursday) to understand Wal-Mart's requirements. Register for the session on Retail Link here <http://retailink.Wal-Mart.com> or at <http://1sync.org/Wal-Mart>
 2. Sign up with a GDSN-certified data pool
 3. Learn about the implementation options offered by your data pool and choose the option that works best for your company
 4. Obtain Education/Training from your data pool or solution partner based on the option you selected
 5. Work with your data pool or solution partner to cleanse your product data
 6. At the Retail Link home page, click on "Explore the Site", then click on "Data Synchronization" under the header "Find Documentation" to understand Wal-Mart's requirements
 7. Catalogue Item Subscription (CIS) must be received before you publish
 - Contact Retail Link Technical Support with your GLN and 6-digit Vendor Number at +1 479-273-8888 or vendoraccess@Wal-Mart.com
 8. Load items into your data pool
 - Ensure your data is accurate (pack quantities, measurements, weights, country of origin, etc.)
 - Load all item levels in your packaging configuration (hierarchy) – Each, Case, & Pallet
 9. Publish items currently in the Wal-Mart Item File
 - Publish to the Wal-Mart US GLN: 0078742000008
 - Publish items as Initial Load
 - You can start with one category and work up to all

10. Manage Catalogue Item Confirmation (CIC) Responses from Wal-Mart
 - If you receive REVIEW or REJECTED, log in to Retail Link and run the Data Sync Report to determine the error and next steps
 11. Log in to Retail Link and type Online Item file in the search box to locate the Data Synchronization Tools-New Items Received- Synchronization Report-Synchronization Status Report
 12. Going forward, all changes should come through your data pool
- **Q: How does Wal-Mart Subscribe?**
 - A: Wal-Mart subscribes at the supplier GLN level and the target country market code
 - **Q: Is data synchronization only for existing items that Wal-Mart carries, or should I publish new items also?**
 - A: You should publish both existing items and new items through the GDSN to submit to the Wal-Mart buyer. This replaces the Form 33 template.
 - **Q: What do I do about items that my company no longer carries, but they are on the Synchronization Report for me to publish?**
 - A: You need to verify that there is no inventory in Wal-Mart DC's (Distribution Centers) and no purchase orders on these items. Then, a list can be sent to the buying department to be put in a delete status. You can create this list by exporting the *Data Synchronization Report* from Retail Link and identifying the data you would like deleted in yellow highlighting.
 - **Q: Should I publish my displays or PDQs?**
 - A: Yes. If you have issues with your published items, please contact 1SYNC customer support at customersupport@1sync.org or +1 866.280.4013 for more details.
 - **Q: Should I publish my mixed pallets?**
 - A: Yes. If you have issues with your published items, please contact 1SYNC customer support at customersupport@1sync.org or +1 866.280.4013 for more details.
 - **Q: If I supply private label products for Wal-Mart (e.g., Sam's Choice), do I use data synchronization?**
 - A: Yes. Contact your data pool for more information.
 - **Q: What should I do if I have published my items but I do not see them in Retail Link?**
 - A: Check with your data pool provider to ensure that your item synchronization was successful to Wal-Mart. If you continue to have difficulties please contact 1SYNC customer support at customersupport@1sync.org or +1 866.280.4013 for more details.

- **Q: How long does it take for the data to show up in Retail Link after I have published?**
 - A: If there is not a backlog, you should see your publication on the Sync Report in approximately 1 to 2 hours.
- **Q: Can a supplier publish a "buyer assigned 4000 UPC"?**
 - A: No – if you are trying to synchronize on an existing Wal-Mart 4000 UPC, do not publish a new GTIN to replace it. That is why a supplier must assign the UPC/GTIN on all new items moving forward.
- **Q: I have successfully published my items and they do not show up as synchronized with Wal-Mart. What are my next steps?**
 - A: Look at the Sync Report on Retail Link. If the items are not synchronized, they will be listed here with the status. If the status is REVIEW, you can hover over the field and a message will appear, or you can export to Excel and the message will be listed in a column.
- **Q: Why are my items rejected on Retail Link?**
 - A: When you publish your hierarchy (e.g., pallet, case, inner/pack, each), the system checks first for the 'each' level GTIN to match in the Wal-Mart system. If it does not find a match, it will automatically list the status as REJECTED.

Note: If you published a "new item" as an "initial load" item, you would receive a REJECT status, as the Wal-Mart system would not be able to find a matching consumable UPC for that item.
- **Q: Why does the Sync Report show "Accepted Confirmed", but my items are still not synchronized?**
 - A: "Accepted Confirmed" is an automated message only, and an action must be taken by the supplier or buyer. Suppliers must go to Retail Link and populate the additional information required by Wal-Mart. For more information on these steps, please review the Supplier Training Document on Retail Link.
- **Q: If Wal-Mart orders in eaches, do I publish in eaches?**
 - A: Not always. If your company has a higher level than an each, you can publish the higher level hierarchy. The hierarchy of a GTIN is based on what the supplier wishes to sell to all their customers or retailers on a specific GTIN.
- **Q: What should I do if my data in Retail Link is not what I last published?**
 - A: If the last published data did not make it through to Wal-Mart, contact your data pool provider or solution partner to ensure that your item synchronization was successful to Wal-Mart.

- **Q: If my products are random items in an assortment and I periodically add or remove items from this assortment, how should these items be submitted?**
 - A: Please contact 1SYNC customer support at customersupport@1sync.org or +1 866.280.4013 for details.

- **Q: If I supply private label items to Wal-Mart, do I still verify with Wal-Mart for GTIN compliance prior to registering items with my data pool or solution partner? If so, whom should I contact?**
 - A: Yes. Please contact Wal-Mart's UPC/Item File Administration Department at upcsupt@Wal-Mart.com

- **Q: Is Wal-Mart checking the Initial Load or New Publication Types for incoming Catalogue Item Notification (CIN) publications?**
 - A: Yes – it is very important to set the correct publication type of either Initial Load or New on published items. If the publication type is not set correctly, you will have to resubmit the publication.

- **Q: When can I expect to see the Catalog Item Confirmation (CIC Authorization) in my data pool provider solution?**
 - A: After Wal-Mart receives the Catalogue Item Notification (CIN) – including all changes – it is subjected to matching and validation rules. The Catalogue Item Confirmation (CIC) is generated immediately after those rules are executed.

- **Q: When can I expect to see the Catalogue Item Confirmation (CIC), and what are the possible responses (states) of a CIC (Authorization) that I can expect to see in my data pool provider's solution?**
 - A: When Wal-Mart receives a CIN; the system auto-generates a CIC with the state of ACCEPTED. This tells you that Wal-Mart has received your publication, but has not processed it.

 - A: For INITIAL ITEM LOADS, MODIFIES, and CORRECTIONS, the validation and matching rules determine the CIC status. See below for details:
 1. If Wal-Mart does not find a match for a consumable (Consumer Unit, EACH) GTIN, then the publication is REJECTED (This is the only way for a rejection to occur).
 2. For Item MODIFY and CORRECT - If a GTIN passes all validations but does not qualify for auto synchronization, it will have a status of ACCEPTED and the buyer will have to review the changes prior to sending SYNCHRONIZATION.
 3. If Wal-Mart finds the consumable GTIN but the replenishable pack (case, pallet, inner pack) quantities do not match, the CIC will have a status of REVIEW (means that supplier should please review – something is wrong).
 4. If Wal-Mart passes all validations and finds a match, the CIC will have a status of SYNCHRONIZED.

- **Q: Does the Wal-Mart buyer see my new item publications?**
 - A: When new items are published from a supplier, the buyer does not see the new items until the supplier goes into Retail Link on New Items Received and submits it to the buyer. Wal-Mart has specific attributes that are not included in data synchronization. This step is where those attributes (such as pricing) are added for new item creation.