



Verified by GS1 case study

The data quality journey of chocolate and candy giant Mars Wrigley

Thanks to a range of data quality initiatives, product data accuracy is now close to 100%



Challenge

In the mid-2000s, an insufficient focus on product data prevented Mars Wrigley from being certified by distributors and vendors, slowing their speed to market, affecting their availability to launch new items and costing them sales.

Solution

Mars Wrigley rolled out GS1 standards, starting with Global Trade Item Number® (GTIN®) allocation and packaging measurement rules and progressing steadily to global data synchronisation and Verified by GS1. Today, Mars Wrigley has a purposeful, governed, proactive and federated approach to data quality.

Benefits

Mars Wrigley product data now has meaningfully fewer errors and much greater consistency. Online product images are more accurate, mistakes are easier to spot and fix, and they are helping protect the reputations of their well-known global brands.

On 26 June 1974, at a Marsh Supermarket in Troy, Ohio (USA), cashier Sharon Buchanan scanned the world's very first GS1 barcode on a 10-pack of Wrigley's Juicy Fruit gum. More than 48 years later, **Mars Wrigley**—the world's leading manufacturer of chocolate, chewing gum, mints and fruity confections—is still a believer in the power of GS1 standards. **Joyce Ann Rosenfield** has been with the group for 16 years, almost all of them as the data sync functional expert for Mars Wrigley in North America. Today, she is the Master Data Value Creation Lead, a cross-segment global role that was created to properly harness the power of data in order to drive value back into the business.

2000s: data quality impacting sales

Data quality first became a topic of interest at the company in the mid-2000s when McLane Company, Mars Wrigley's biggest distributor at the time, began requiring brand owners to become certified vendors.

"We weren't certified," explained Rosenfield, "and that impacted everything. It was affecting our speed to market. It was affecting our availability to set up and sell new items. In fact, because of the number of SKUs that we have, we realised that not being certified by McLane's was costing us almost [US] \$2 million a year."

In light of that figure, applying for McLane's certification was an easy decision to make. "But we didn't get certified," said Rosenfield, "because our data was not good enough. The idea of data quality was not embedded into our processes then. We didn't have buy-in from the entire organisation. And I knew we couldn't succeed until data became part of our way of doing business."

Data matters

At that time, Mars was growing quickly and frequently changing, updating their enterprise standards and making a range of acquisitions. The number of items in their data management framework grew at expedited rates. This was when Rosenfield's team decided to put data on their side. They tracked the company's product data in multiple ways for a full year. They audited products and looked for discrepancies between the physical world and the data world. They built a case on facts.

"The takeaway of that project was just one sentence, but it sure got everyone's attention," she said. That sentence: We are wrong more often than we are right.

"I'm not proud to say it, but our product data was only about 46% accurate then," said Rosenfield. "That fact was the catalyst that enabled the company to realise that data matters."

Education first

Mars laid the groundwork for high-quality data governance by creating a thoughtful and robust training programme: "We invited James Chronowski, Scott Brown and others from GS1 US into our offices and asked them to run training sessions on GTIN allocation rules and packaging measurement rules. They explained why these rules were useful and important."

The Mars data sync team and the team from GS1 US were careful to adapt the training sessions to the job responsibilities of the people they were addressing. This helped to ensure people understood the standards and how each department's work results could be improved by deploying standards properly.

"For example," Rosenfield explained, "when we started working with folks in the research and development area, we spent time talking about how, even though you might sit the product a certain way on the shelf, that has nothing to do with how to express its dimensions in our systems."

These discussions helped identify a big source of error and discrepancies: Mars Wrigley was logging packaging measurements in their SAP databases in a certain order and orientation that did not respect the order and orientation of GTIN allocation rules.

"Everyone understood that the standardised GS1® way of expressing dimensions—although different than our usual habits and not perhaps the way a package may sit on a store shelf—was the way that our business needed

“ Being part of a business that sees the value in master data is just one of the many reasons I am proud to be working for Mars.”

—Joyce Ann Rosenfield, Master Data Value Creation Lead, Mars Digital Technologies

“ We see data as a true asset and not a necessary evil. Once you see data as an asset, you can really unlock untapped potential.”

—Joyce Ann Rosenfield, Master Data Value Creation Lead, Mars Digital Technologies

to use it because it was the way that more and more of our distributors and retailers were expecting. We got the entire business on board using that standardised way of expressing packaging dimensions everywhere—in our SAP system, on our fact sheets and in our data sync operations. People can understand the importance of being consistent.”

It wasn't always easy, but by working together as a united front, the data sync team and the sales team succeeded in pushing past the lukewarm first reactions of some of their colleagues: “There were definitely people who thought these were isolated problems or ‘one-off’ issues. But we had the data from that year-long analysis to prove how pervasive the data discrepancies were. Plus, more and more of our customers were sending us scorecards that showed the problems with our product data.”

Recognising the significant shift in consumer and customer needs and seeing new ways to engage them in an increasingly digital world, Mars launched an enterprise-wide digital transformation with the bold aspiration to be a digital-first business. “At Mars,” explains **Aniruddha Govande**, Digital Foundations Master Data Senior Director and the person chosen to lead that new business, “data management and expertise evolved organically rather than strategically. Our enterprise master data transformation was launched in 2017.”

The company's data management transformation focused on building first-time-right capability, establishing governance focused on business value and building a master data network to streamline master data management. Mars

implemented data governance centred around value creation. “We wanted all critical data standards to translate into business value when governance was adopted well—and into impacts when it wasn't,” says Rosenfield.

Launching Verified by GS1

By mid-2020, when Rosenfield and the Mars Wrigley data sync team were ready to publish product data to Verified by GS1, strong master data management and data quality were well integrated into the group's activities in the U.S.

“When we looked at the seven attributes* that are part of Verified by GS1,” Rosenfield said, “I thought, ‘Well, this will be easy for us. We'll push our product data into Verified by GS1, and everything will be fine.’ But it turned out to be a bit more nuanced than that. Verified by GS1 provides a real consistency check!”

*Each product Verified by GS1 has the product's GTIN, brand name, description, GS1 Global Product Category (GPC) code, the item's net content with the unit of measure, the country of sale and the URL of a product image.

Protecting their brands to protect their business

Surely one of the most famous products of Mars Wrigley is M&M's, the multicoloured button-shaped chocolates. The Mars data sync team discovered that this one product name was spelt four or five different ways across their own internal databases: “Until we went live in Verified by GS1, we didn't realise that our own product data had it spelt in

Benefits of Verified by GS1

For brands



Simplified listing process and faster time to market

For retailers



Reduced time and costs to gather and verify data

For consumers



More reliable product information



Data quality visibility and insights



Optimised business processes



Increased satisfaction and fewer returns

“ We have improved the standing of our master data because we implemented controls and governance.”

—Steve Curtis, Master Data Management Technology Senior Lead & MGS Digital Technologies, Mars Digital Technologies

all capitals, in all lowercase, with an apostrophe, without an apostrophe ... it was a real aha moment to discover that we, ourselves, had let so many different iterations of this major brand name slip into our systems.”

Steve Curtis, Master Data Management Technology Senior Lead & MGS Digital Technologies, Mars Digital Technologies, is at the head of a team committed to driving the company’s data management capabilities to the next level. Steve has been recognised in the industry as a leader in this area. His team—tasked with developing and deploying the company’s master data governance solution—have found solutions to problems that were previously considered impossible to address. Through these programmes, Mars has made more than 250,000 changes, with the strictest governance, validation process and sign-offs, and always in respect of the highest data quality standards.

Another benefit the company has seen since launching Verified by GS1 concerns product images: “We were immediately able to identify a few instances where we had the same image for multiple products. These were obviously mistakes—but mistakes we would not have been able to catch so quickly and easily without Verified by GS1,” says Rosenfield.

More and more people across all business functions are now aware of the increasing importance of accurate product images in a world where online shopping is on the rise. “All it takes is one bad impression to lose a consumer, and every consumer is equally as important to us.”

Rosenfield has also found that Verified by GS1 gives them an easy way to notice an expired image link. “These things happen. A tech hiccup, a backend system change or a product webpage that gets moved without warning. The missing image is flagged immediately in Verified by GS1,

and we can chase down the problem and fix it.”

In short, Mars Wrigley sees clearly how Verified by GS1 lets them maintain a strong brand reputation by ensuring consistency in how their products show up in physical store listings and digital marketplaces. “It really allowed us to take control and make sure that we are truly protecting our reputation.”

“Verified by GS1 helps us maintain high-quality data, and high-quality data plays an important role in protecting the reputation of our brands, lowering our logistics costs, reducing our carbon footprint and increasing our on-time and in-full customer service levels.”

Joyce Ann Rosenfield, Master Data Value Creation Lead, Mars Digital Technologies

Measurable results

Mars Wrigley gets a monthly report from GS1 US: a scorecard of their Verified by GS1 status with an overview of the accuracy rates for their products, what percentage of each of the seven attributes is complete and validated, and a listing of what has failed.

“As of September 2022, we are at 100% accuracy on six of the attributes and 90% to 95% for the images—which we tolerate because, for new listings, product packaging imagery comes later in the process,” Rosenfield said, adding that they expect to maintain those high levels of accuracy going forward.



Mars Wrigley product data:

accuracy 2006

46%

accuracy 2022

95-100%

Mars Wrigley’s 4E Strategy—Evangelize, Educate, Engage and Enforce—coupled with first-time-right capabilities and a robust master data network, enabled over [US] \$300 million of value creation between 2018 and 2022.

Business value beyond data quality

Mars Wrigley has seen benefits to using Verified by GS1 that go beyond simply boosting their data quality.

Rosenfield notes the value the service can bring to mergers and acquisitions: “We’ve made our M&A and legal colleagues aware of the power here. Verified by GS1 is a great way to be sure that the product GTINs you acquire while acquiring a company are in shape and accurate.”

The same works for divestments. Rosenfield imagines a company that intends to spin out or sell one of their brands or activities: “As part of any divestment, it is important to transfer GTIN ownership into the acquiring company’s control so that years down the line, there are no issues or problems that could hurt the seller’s reputation.”

“GS1 standards alone are not enough, and Verified by GS1 alone is not enough. But when you couple them together, they become a very powerful way to drive data quality through every aspect of your organisation.”

Joyce Ann Rosenfield, Master Data Value Creation Lead,
Mars Digital Technologies

Rosenfield also notes how quality data is part of any company’s commitment to be socially responsible: “You may wonder how data quality could have a social impact ... but think about it. If a product is either over or under the tolerance of its declared gross weight, then you’re either overfilling or underfilling delivery trucks. Overfilling creates delays and logjams in the supply chain. Underfilling leads to ‘empty miles’ and an unnecessarily higher carbon footprint. And both those situations increase logistics costs.”

Worth the effort

When asked if she would recommend Verified by GS1 to peers at other companies, Rosenfield replied, “Oh, in a heartbeat! I’d tell them that it’s one of the greatest investments you can make. It may be only seven attributes, but they define your brands. I really feel that all data governance actions are worth the time because they are a way to drive value for business, customers and consumers.”

What’s next

Rosenfield explained that data quality is now embedded in the company’s ways of working: “In fact,” she noted, “I thought that when we pressed ‘Go’ on Verified by GS1, it was going to prove that we had had all of our data quality in order, that everything was perfect. But what it actually showed is that we still had room for growth. It was a valuable reminder to me that data quality is a ‘forever’ project.”

Mars Wrigley wants to use Verified by GS1 to put “quality in” at the beginning—“where it belongs,” as Rosenfield would say—and then have checks and balances in place all along the lifecycle. If something does get missed, if there’s a hiccup, if there’s a change, Verified by GS1 brings it to the company’s attention, and it can get corrected as soon as possible.

“Our business is building a strong master data organisation,” Rosenfield adds, “but the master data organisation can only be as good as the quality of the data. Because without quality data, you can’t run a quality business.”

“Without quality data, you can’t run a quality business.”

Joyce Ann Rosenfield, Master Data Value Creation Lead,
Mars Digital Technologies

“Traditionally, data governance is perceived as more controls and bureaucracy. At Mars, we centred data governance around value creation, empowering our associates and functions to multiply value by a hundred, leveraging timely, accurate and trusted data assets.”

—Aniruddha Govande, Digital Foundations Master Data Senior Director

About Mars, Incorporated

For more than a century, Mars, Incorporated has been driven by the belief that the world we want tomorrow starts with how we do business today. This common purpose unites our 140,000+ Associates. It is at the centre of who we are as a global, family-owned business, and it fuels how we are transforming, innovating and evolving to make a positive impact on the world. Every year, our diverse and expanding portfolio of quality confectionery, food, and pet care products and services delights millions of people and supports millions of pets. With almost [US] \$45 billion in annual sales, we produce some of the world's best-loved brands, including Ben's Original™, CESAR®, CocoaVia®, DOVE®, EXTRA®, KIND®, M&M's®, PEDIGREE®, ROYAL CANIN®, SNICKERS® and WHISKAS®. We are creating a better world for pets through nutrition; breakthrough programs in diagnostics; wearable health monitoring; DNA testing; pet welfare and comprehensive veterinary care with AniCura, Banfield Pet Hospital®, BLUEPEARL™, Linnaeus and VCA™. We know we can only be truly successful if our partners and the communities in which we operate prosper. The Mars Five Principles—Quality, Responsibility, Mutuality, Efficiency and Freedom—inspire our Associates to act every day to help create a better world tomorrow in which the planet, its people and pets can thrive.

www.mars.com

About GS1

GS1 is a neutral, not-for-profit organisation that develops and maintains the most widely used global standards for efficient business communication. We are best known for the barcode, named by the BBC as one of “the 50 things that made the world economy.” GS1 standards improve the efficiency, safety and visibility of supply chains across physical and digital channels in 25 sectors. Our scale and reach—local Member Organisations in 116 countries, 2 million user companies and 6 billion transactions every day—help ensure that GS1 standards create a common language that supports systems and processes across the globe.

www.gs1.org

About Verified by GS1

Verified by GS1 is a repository of product data that helps organisations answer the question: “Is this the product that I think it is?” Brand owners use Verified by GS1 to associate seven core attributes with each of their products: the product's GS1 GTIN, brand name, description, a URL of a product image, its GS1 Global Product Category (GPC) code, the net content and unit of measure and the country of sale. With the help of Verified by GS1, brand owners, retailers and marketplaces can build rich consumer experiences that deliver trusted, brand-sourced product data, which drives confidence, satisfaction, loyalty—and ultimately, increased efficiency and growth for their businesses.

www.gs1.org/verified-by-gs1



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