

## *EANnet® Sustainability, Not Just Compliance*

Data Synchronisation has fast become one of the hottest topics in the retail industry. For suppliers and manufacturers in the Australian packaged good industry, supporting local Data Pools such as EANnet® and soon GS1net, has now become a mandatory process to exchange product and price information with their customers.

Traditionally a manual process, the exchanging of this information has commonly been done via paper based buying forms or excel spreadsheets. With the development of more advanced electronic trading processes (Commonly known as Business-to-Business or B2B) this manual process of sharing product information has now become vastly outdated, and also inefficient.

Since the launch of EANnet by GS1 Australia (Formerly EAN Australia), and the adoption of this process by the major Australian retailers such as Coles and Metcash, the requirements for companies to manage their product data more efficiently and accurately has grown enormously. The benefits are only now starting to appear after historically having to manage this product data manually within numerous separate databases and systems all across the business.

EANnet adds another level of complexity to product maintenance for companies. Businesses spend vast amounts of time and money to engage and adopt EANnet. Not only do they invest in resources and training, but also middleware software tools that assist to store this EANnet specific information.

However, managing EANnet data is only a small part of their overall business requirement. Within the business operation, EANnet product attributes are usually accompanied by vast numbers of product images, product data sheets, barcode reports, along with internal information like ingredient lists, and nutritional data. This information is stored on a range of network directories, unclassified, and inaccessible by most employees.

Many companies choose middleware software tools that are specific to EANnet data. It's not too far down the track that they soon realise that although those tools were effective at the time, their business requirements have now outgrown the software functionality. Now five years into the life of EANnet, companies are revisiting their EANnet systems and processes, and starting to more closely align these with other business processes such as New Product Introduction, and Product Lifecycle Management.

As more and more retailers begin to subscribe to EANnet data, the complexity of the catalogue, and the amount of information required will increase. In late 2007, a new version of the catalogue will be introduced called GS1net. GS1net is more closely aligned to the global standards for Data Synchronisation (GDSN). There are over 400 companies now publishing their product information to EANnet. These companies need to begin implementing sustainable management solutions to ensure they can meet compliance now, and into the future of GS1net.

There are several options for companies to begin this process,

**Understand their existing product process.**

Often companies do not understand in detail the steps their business goes through to launch or change a product. There are numerous steps within this process, each are managed by many people in many different departments.

**Identify how you currently manage and load data to EANnet**

EANnet data management systems are usually a software tools that are installed independently on individual computers. The information within these systems is often keyed in manually, and does not align to the rest of the organisations data.

**Evaluate systems and processes**

Who does what? Where does your product information reside? Who is in charge of this?  
Do we have a back-up and support plan? What technology is available to link EANnet to our business processes, product information, systems, and also our people?

**Do we have the relevant skills**

Do we need to invest in some staff training and project guidance? External organisations like Retail E-vironment Pty Ltd (retail e-v) specialise in this area?

**Documentation and Support**

Like any other business system you have, clear and concise documentation that provides the user with a step-by-step process is essential.

Retail E-vironment can provide a range of services that assist companies to manage their product information, and comply with global data pools like EANnet and soon GS1net. Each of the above mentioned steps are covered by the retail e-v ‘Sustain & Maintain’ program – information about this program is available from the retail e-v website or contacting [sales@retaile-v.com.au](mailto:sales@retaile-v.com.au)

For more information on how you can implement a sustainable and commercially feasible EANnet product management process, please visit [www.retaile-v.com.au](http://www.retaile-v.com.au)

We can also help with the adoption of GDSN standards for global data pools such as GS1net.

**About retail e-v**

Retail E-vironment Pty Ltd (retail e-v), utilising Six Sigma quality methodology, provides a range of product, brand, retail and category management services to retailers, supplier, and manufacturers. With a customer base comprising of 70 of Australia’s top 100 FMCG companies, retail e-v has been implementing their “Go to Shelf” strategies both here in Australia, and also New Zealand for over 10 years. [www.retaile-v.com.au](http://www.retaile-v.com.au)