GS1's Recall platform: an invaluable resource

GS1 Australia's Recall platform is an online tool used by food, beverage and general merchandise industries to mitigate the risk of unsafe and faulty products reaching consumers.

GS1's Recall Platform is an invaluable asset for any company looking to mitigate the risks associated with food recall.

Despite excellent controls and global best practice by suppliers, things can go wrong, with often significant economic and reputational impacts for companies and the public.

Mark Blitenthall, manager for service engagement at GS1 Australia, believes the GS1 Australia Recall platform is an invaluable asset, helping companies of all sizes to minimise the impact and cost of product recalls and withdrawals throughout their supply chains.

Many parts of the recall and withdrawal process rely on human input to manage. Most large corporate retailers pay due attention to how they manage recalls and to their regulatory obligations, but many of the smaller organisations rely on procedure manuals, non-integrated systems and processes.

While these procedures and systems can manage a recall to conclusion, technology has the added benefit of expediting the process ensuring a more efficient and timely result for the company.

It was this thinking that led to the development of the GS1 Australia Recall platform.

"GS1 Australia is a not-for-profit organisation, any service we develop is built based on input from industry. We host forums and have advisory groups to understand requirements and regularly engage with industry to improve and develop our services," said Blitenthall.

"Members of the GS1 Recall Advisory Group recommended that all businesses could benefit from the use of a centralised, online tool for managing product recalls and encouraged all suppliers and recipient organisations to be part of this industry initiative to diminish risk and improve consumer safety."

"We factored into the development of Recall the processes that companies need to go through when they issue a recall notice. The Recall platform actually takes them step-by-step through the processes they need to follow and communications required for trading partners and regulatory bodies," said Blitenthall.

"It's not their whole process, the company obviously has to have a recall process outside of that, but in terms of issuing the notices and tracking responses, we provide the functionality to manage that from end-to-end."

"The Recall platform guides the user in terms of what they need to do and when and how they should do it. We also have the ability for users to do mock recalls.

"GS1 Recall is really fit for purpose, ease of use and the support we offer such as our free 'discovery' webinars and the support desk being key feedback we often receive.

"Managing a recall is quite a stressful situation so the fact users can reach out to our Recall team for help is something that people appreciate," said Blitenthall.

GS1 Recall Bootcamps

In addition to offering the Recall platform, GS1 Australia runs a series of online Recall Bootcamps, an educational network that provides attendees with access to greater

Mark Blitenthall spoke about the platform and how it helps companies minimise the impact and cost of product recalls.

levels of information delivered by industry experts.

GS1 Recall Bootcamps are offered at no cost and are open to everyone. "A lot of the time companies are looking for more information and more assistance in relation to product recalls. Particularly those small and medium sized companies, so initiatives such as our Recall Bootcamps are really aimed at trying to give them more information and food for thought," said Blitenthall.

GS1's Recall Bootcamps are designed to help stakeholders better understand the changing landscape of the supply chain, while also teaching them the importance of better recall management practices.

"Like all of the services and standards we develop, our Recall platform is developed and enhanced in consultation with stakeholder groups," said Blitenthall.

"Part of what we emphasise in our conversations with the recall community, is understanding the supply chain and being able to anticipate things that you might not foresee if you weren't thinking more broadly about it."

"Related to that are things like horizon scanning, where you keep an eye on everything that's happening globally. Having their finger on the pulse in this way enables suppliers to become more aware of potential global risks to their products as soon as they arise."

How does GS1 Recall work?

1. Create your notice. The sponsor of a product recall/withdrawal collates and enters relevant product data and instructions into the GS1 Recall platform via a user-friendly workflow, individually targeting

all recipients.

2. Send your notice. The sponsor issues notifications to customers and trading partners, automatically notifying regulators and government agencies.

3. Receive responses. Recipients action your notifications and communicate product recovery and/or quarantine instructions throughout their supply chain, enabling the removal of affected products. Recipients respond directly to the sponsor via the Recall platform, allowing real-time progress updates and enhanced traceability.

4. Close off. Complete regulatory processes and reporting responsibilities, as well as internal reporting and auditing requirements.

Streamlining the recall process

"In addition to standards and barcodes, GS1 provides a number of other services that support those standards. For years, hundreds of companies have been using Recall to manage their product recall and withdrawal events. Recently we built a link between Recall and another

GS1 runs a series of online Recall Bootcamps, an educational network with access to greater information.

of our services, the National Product Catalogue which hosts suppliers' product data. Now when a Recall is issued, the data is pulled from the National Product Catalogue to ensure the information provided to those involved is accurate."

Another GS1 initiative with the potential to further streamline the recall process is 2DBarcodes and the inclusion of extra data such as production date and batch numbers, the latest in the line of defence when it comes to food safety and food waste concerns.

"The extra data contained in the 2DBarcodes provides greater accuracy for product recalls. For example, 2DBarcodes allow you to target the specific products that are impacted and return only those products to the supplier," said Blitenthall.

Supported by bodies such as HACCP and AIFST, GS1 Australia's Recall platform enables all stakeholders in the supply chain to efficiently manage their recalls and share notifications with regulators including FSANZ, state-based food safety regulators and trading partners, in accordance with FSANZ Food Industry Recall Protocol and the ACCC. This helps to make GS1 Recall a key tool in the protection and safety of consumers and a vital asset for any company impacted by the product recall process and subsequent fallout. **F**

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