



THE GLOBAL LANGUAGE  
OF BUSINESS

## CASE STUDY



# J.Reneé



## J.Reneé Leads the Effort to Apply GS1 Standards to Product Imagery

### CHALLENGE

Visual representation of products is essential to sales. However, the complexities of image sharing among retail trading partners had reached dramatic proportions, without a common set of guidelines to govern technical requirements, delivery methods or, indeed, any universal standards on what, how or when, visual imagery should be exchanged between partners.

The explosion of eCommerce, in addition to brick-and-mortar stores, further complicated image delivery management to nearly uncontrollable levels. Consider that until the wide adoption of standards, a manufacturer supplying a dozen retailers could be asked to supply product images in a dozen different ways.

### SOLUTION

By adopting GS1 Standards and guidelines that govern visual imagery in conjunction with those standards already in use by industry trading partners, the labor-intensive process of getting images to retailers who need them to sell products has been streamlined—and greatly enhanced.

### BENEFITS

Suppliers now have a single set of guidelines to follow for sharing product images, and affording latitude in making the parameters work with internal systems. Both suppliers and retailers realize productivity gains, cost savings, enhanced speed-to-market capabilities, and marketing alignment that can maximize profitability.

## Getting on the Same Page

Every day millions of Americans go online to shop. The images these consumers peruse to make their purchasing decisions are indispensable to sales—and historically have been one of the most complex and frustrating information exchanges for suppliers and retail trading partners.

## A Picture's Worth a Thousand Worries

Multiply each product by the dozens of image formats, image sizes, photographic angles, backgrounds and white space and you start to grasp that in commerce, a picture is worth a thousand worries.



“For each shoe we make, we may have as many as 70 images attached to it to meet the needs of our various retail partners,” explains Coby Sparks, CIO and COO for J.Reneé, a brand manufactured by the Remac Company headquartered in Carrollton, Texas. “With as many as 60 styles produced in any given season, you can see how the need for guidelines was at the top of our wish list.”

Take that same scenario from a retailer’s perspective and the problem becomes monumental. “We work with thousands of vendors, the vast majority of which supply multiple products to us. Multiply the thousands of products by the number of images representing them and the result can be nearly unmanageable,” explains a manager of vendor relations for a major department store chain.

Delivery methods—standard spreadsheets that required manual interpretation, CDs that could be misplaced, emails that were misdirected, file transfer protocols that were not secure or could not be accessed properly—all added to the ordeal of getting product images into the hands of those managing critical consumer-facing information.

### CATALOG PROVIDERS CONTRIBUTE TO COLLABORATION

Most trading partners subscribe to one or more third-party catalog services. These cloud-based solution providers allow vendors to manage their product information by style and GS1 Global Trade Item Numbers (GTINs) and subscribers to upload or download product information from each of their archives. These companies also served on the Product Images and Data Attributes Workgroup within the GS1 US Apparel and General Merchandise Initiative. They host the warehouse Global Document Type Identifiers (GDTIs) attached to the items—for thousands of products and close the (visual) information gap for trading partners.

Retailers have automated systems to grab the product information from the catalogs for the products they will carry, all based on their GTINs. Now, these same software applications can retrieve and crop images the way they are needed for eCommerce, and more.



**“[Adopting GS1 Standards for image sharing] is an opportunity. Getting a product online sooner increases the likelihood of a full price sale, increasing profitability, and represents a vast improvement to productivity.”**

— A representative of a major retailer involved in the image-sharing initiative.

During an industry roundtable discussion it was surprising to learn how widespread the problem of image sharing had become. “Everyone was experiencing the same pain—the time-consuming manual processes that we all were undertaking just to get the right photographs needed to sell product,” a retailer representative recalls. “If we cannot get the image from the vendor, we have to wait for the shipment of merchandise and then send items out to be photographed. The delays and the tremendous duplication of effort could be greatly diminished with an industry-supported initiative.”

Just as revolutionary supply chain efficiencies have been gained worldwide through GS1 Standards—with five billion barcode scans a day globally—an ambitious group of individuals representing American and Canadian retailers, manufacturers and suppliers, catalog houses, and third-party service providers formed a workgroup to explore how standardizing the image-sharing process could be made more efficient.

Growing out of the former Voluntary Interindustry Commerce Solutions® Association (VICS), the workgroup, made up of members of GS1 US and GS1 Canada, came together to develop standards-based guidelines and established best practices in the process.

## What’s in a Name?

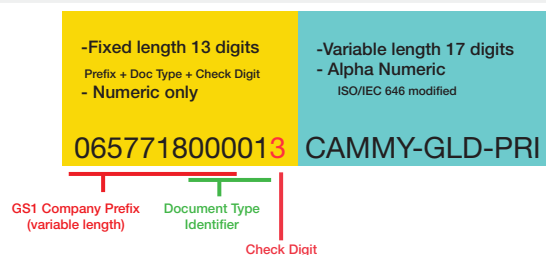
The Product Images and Data Attributes Workgroup, within the GS1 US Apparel and General Merchandise Initiative, knew that the GS1 System of Standards could supply a framework that would eliminate false starts. Specifically, the group focused on utilizing the Global Document Type Identifier (GDTI) to expand on existing product image specification standards and existing GS1 image standards without “reinventing the wheel.” The workgroup relied on the neutrality of GS1 US in helping retailer, vendor and service provider members take an “ecumenical” approach, letting universal perspectives trump individual preferences. The Canadian participants, who had developed standards for image capture in the consumer packaged goods sector, also contributed invaluable experience from that effort to accelerate the work.

One of the most important aspects of the guidelines involved the unique naming of each image. The GDTI is composed of a GS1 Company Prefix, a document type identifier, a check digit and a one-to-17 digit alpha/numeric serial number. The GS1 Company Prefix is exclusive to each company, ensuring brand authenticity and one-of-a-kind identification to name each product image. This helps eliminate confusion that might result from vendors using identical product names—shoes both named “Gloria,” for instance. By adopting this standard, individual manufacturers are also given wide latitude to preserve internal product codes within the GDTI.

## How the GDTI is constructed

At its simplest, the document type refers to a set of documents with similar attributes and identifies each as imagery; the serial number represents each instance of a document with those attributes. In short, when you locate one image for a product, all other images for that product are readily at hand, making the selection for websites, catalogs and advertising more streamlined.

GS1 Company Prefix > < Doc Type												Check Digit	Serial Number (optional)
N1	N2	N3	N4	N5	N6	N7	N8	N9	N10	N11	N12	N13	X1 variable X 17 **



“We couldn’t have tackled this without GS1 US and GS1 Canada—their cooperation, experience and neutrality helped us to ‘right-size’ this initiative.”

— A retail representative on the Product Images and Data Attributes Workgroup.

### Picture This: Streamlined Image-sharing

Guidelines for images themselves started with the adoption of the .jpeg as the preferred electronic format, as well as clear instructions for color designation, sizing in dimensions and pixels, clipping path, backgrounds, orientation, white space and other technical specifications.

The ease with which images can be shared—and readily located—is critical not only to the retailer’s marketing departments, but to the in-store merchandisers. Even before a shipment is unpacked, store merchandisers can access images to complete their planograms, the diagram that indicates the placement of retail products on shelves to maximize sales. Using the images, the retailer can boost revenue potential, not to mention avoiding the placement of an evening shoe in the midst of a sneaker display.

“We couldn’t have tackled this without GS1 US and GS1 Canada—their cooperation, experience and neutrality helped us to ‘right-size’ this initiative,” a retail representative says. “I recommend looking at this as an opportunity rather than a requirement. Getting a product online sooner increases the likelihood of a full-price sale, increasing your profitability, and the vast improvement to your productivity is obvious.”

“GS1 Standards will, with no exaggeration, be revolutionary in streamlining image sharing, and we have plenty of room to grow into even more robust solutions in the future.”

— COBY SPARKS, CIO and COO, J.Reneé

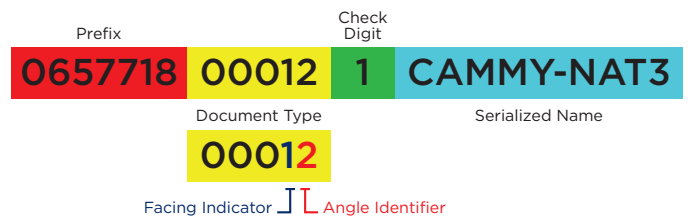
### Not the End-of-the-Line, the Beginning

Major retailers are already onboard with using the standards and guidelines. Once critical mass has been achieved among manufacturers and suppliers, the Product Images and Data Attributes Workgroup of the GS1 US Apparel and General Merchandise Initiative will reconvene to adjust what is already in place. It will also expand guidelines further with new product categories and the number of attributes that can be associated with each product, making sure that eventually a picture will be worth much more than a thousand words alone.

“GS1 Standards will, with no exaggeration, be revolutionary in streamlining image sharing, and we have plenty of room to grow into even more robust solutions in the future,” Sparks says.

### Vendor-defined Intelligent Naming Convention within GDTI

0657718000121CAMMY-NAT3



This is an example of how you could use the GDTI standard - using your GS1 Company Prefix, the Document Type to indicate facing and angle, Check Digit, and your Serialized Name for a more intelligent naming convention for internal use.

“Using GS1 Standards, our workgroup was able to define workable product attributes for apparel and general merchandise and compile sensible guidelines for their use.”

— COBY SPARKS, CIO and COO, J.Renéé



**Coby Sparks, CIO and COO for J.Renéé co-chaired the workgroup producing image-sharing guidelines and product attributes using GS1 Standards.**

## STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION ALSO LEADS TO GUIDELINES FOR EFFICIENTLY SHARING EXTENDED ATTRIBUTES

Along with the naming conventions and technical requirements applying to imagery, the Product Images and Data Attributes Workgroup also worked on attaching attributes for each product, using the GTIN® as the common link. The Voluntary Guidelines for Exchanging Extended Attributes for eCommerce were developed with more than 15 retailers, vendors and solution providers to strengthen trading relationships and collaboration—as standards’ adoption takes hold.

“We had the opportunity to use up to 140 different attributes under the GS1 Standards,” Sparks says, “but we knew this was too many during our first phase of development, so we pared it down to 52.”

The guidelines would have to work for many different goods in the apparel and general merchandise industries. Consideration had to be given for any number of categories: carat content for gold jewelry, country of origin for furriers, shoulder strap drop length for leather goods, circumference of the leg for boot makers, and the like. And definitions would be needed for attributes such as closures—is it a buckle, laces or zipper? A primer was needed to instruct on the proper way to measure—for instance, heel height is measured from foot bed to floor for shoemakers. Not every attribute must be used by every vendor, adding inherent flexibility. On average, vendors use 34 attributes of the total of 52 available.

Among the attributes assigned through the GTIN, is the added ability to include both short and long marketing messages, giving the retailer a leg-up in describing the item in marketing copy: for example, “a champagne lace 3-inch sling back” or “a champagne lace 3-inch heel sling back with satin bow embellishment.” Fabric content, care instructions, product features and benefits can now all be accessed easily, delivering on the age-old marketing mantra of “one sight, one sound, one sell.” Implementing these guidelines—agreed upon by industry stakeholders—will be central to those organizations that are employing a strong omni-channel strategy focused on serving consumers with a consistent selling experience across many or all retail venues.

## About the Companies

### CONTACT US

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The GS1 US Apparel and General Merchandise Initiative is an industry group that is committed to defining business challenges and opportunities and organizing adoptions plans for the implementation of GS1 Standards. The members of the Initiative represent a broad cross-section of industry trading partners. The work of the Initiative is driven by workgroups of industry stakeholders who are collaborating to develop standards-based guidelines, best practices, case studies and thought leadership. To learn more, contact us [apparelgm@gs1us.org](mailto:apparelgm@gs1us.org) or visit our website at [www.GS1US.org/apparelgm](http://www.GS1US.org/apparelgm)

### ABOUT J.RENEÉ

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In 1974, Reneé and Micky Harrison founded Remac, the owners of the J.Reneé line, to realize their dream of creating shoes that provide women with fashion-forward confidence. For over 30 years, J.Reneé has been about creating affordable fashion for women with bold style and flair. J.Reneé, specializes in dressy and dress-casual shoes and handbags for every occasion. From narrow to wide widths, small to large sizes, today's trendy woman is sure to find the perfect pump, sandal, or boot with J.Reneé. Unique pieces from the collections can be found across the country in national department stores, specialty store chains, and independently owned stores and boutiques. [www.jrenee.com](http://www.jrenee.com).

### ABOUT GS1 US

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"GS1 US, a member of the global information standards organization GS1®, brings industry communities together to solve supply-chain problems through the adoption and implementation of GS1 Standards. Nearly 300,000 businesses in 25 industries rely on GS1 US for trading-partner collaboration and for maximizing the cost effectiveness, speed, visibility, security and sustainability of their business processes. They achieve these benefits through solutions based on GS1 global unique numbering and identification systems, barcodes, Electronic Product Code (EPC)-based RFID, data synchronization, and electronic information exchange. GS1 US also manages the United Nations Standard Products and Services Code® (UNSPSC®). [www.gs1us.org](http://www.gs1us.org)



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