

Databases for Shelf Labeling:

# "GTI Data Document Systems"

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## Introduction

Graphic Technologies Inc.- Data Document Systems is the manufacturer of bar coded labels. In 1986, we were asked by our grocery customers, to provide nutrition information on the labels that we already provided for their daily operations. We first attended this conference in 1986 while researching their request for nutrition labeling. When we returned to the Mid West, we contacted the University of Kansas Medical Center for data assistance. Nutrient data there was used for research and for average daily and weekly intake records. Each item in the database contained many fields of nutrient data.

For the production of a shelf-edge label, the final product is completely different and the data management is also different. This morning I will tell you something of the issues involved in the production of a shelf-edge label that displays nutrition information, such as;

1. Data Management Issues
2. The Media of the Shelf-edge Label
3. The Involvement of the Food and Drug Administration
4. The Value to the Consumer
5. The Value to the Nutrition Community.

## Data Management Issues

For the production of a *product* label or *shelf-edge* label, fewer nutrient categories are of issue because of the limited space, but additional data categories become necessary for the management of the large amount of product-specific data. Fields like the 10-digit UPC number become critical to channeling the data to its' desired destination. The UPC code or Universal Product Code, identifies who made the product and specifically which product by kind and size. To that

number, can be attached any number of facts, like product movement (by the manufacturer and the grocer), the price (by the grocer), and any number of demographic considerations when coordinated with a grocer's customer file, such as "Who buys cat food". For the purposes of our discussion this morning, we will only consider one kind of UPC-related data - nutrient data.

## The Media of the Shelf-edge Label

The media of the shelf-edge label provides a very effective method of communicating. Here is an example of a basic shelf-edge label. You are probably aware of the existence of these labels in your grocery stores.

The original purpose of this label was to help the grocer communicate pricing information to the customer, unit pricing (required in some states) and to help the grocer reorder quickly and accurately by providing a scannable bar code. This bar code is read instantly by a light projection scanner and translated to a number: the UPC or Universal Product Code number.

We are all experienced in a certain kind of poverty - a poverty of time. "Fast" becomes a necessity of many of our activities, especially routine ones like grocery shopping. So when you want to communicate something in the grocery store you must do it *clearly, briefly and attractively*, or your message will not take.

## The FDA is Involved

When nutrition information is the issue, the shelf-edge label is viewed as an extension of the product label and regulated like the product label by the Food and Drug Administration. The concern of the FDA is that the consumer be presented with consistent terminology. For the manufacturers of a *product* or the manufacturers of shelf-edge labels to use descriptors

such as Low Sodium, Low Calorie, and Source of Fiber, FDA-established criteria must be met;

“Low Calorie”, 40 calories or less per serving and no more than .4 calories per gram

“Low Sodium”, 140 mg. or less per serving

“Low Fat”, 2 gm. or less per serving, and no more than 10% fat on a dry weight basis

“Low Cholesterol”, 20 mg. or less per serving

“Source of Calcium”, 100 mg. or more per serving

“Source of Fiber”, 2 gm. or more per serving.

At present, serving size is as stated by the manufacturer. You may be aware that new regulations for nutrition labeling are being formulated and will become part of the Code of Federal Regulations in November of this year. The issue of “serving size” may become regulated within product categories. It is also possible that the “Low Fat” and “Low Cholesterol” categories will be combined, meaning that before a product can be called “Low Cholesterol”, it must fit both the Low Cholesterol and Low Fat criteria.

Source of Calcium is based on the USRDA for Calcium and USRDA's are changing to “Daily Values”, so there may be a slight change in this category.

The primary focus of the new legislation is the product label, but since the shelf-edge label is seen as an extension of the product label, it will touch this area also.

#### Value to the Consumer

The value of displaying nutrition information on a shelf edge label is that you have the opportunity to help the consumer make educated choices about the foods and beverages that they consume, *at the point-of-purchase*, where according to the Point Of Purchase Advertising Institute, 66% of all buying decisions are made.

The data directly reaches the consumer; not as it relates to a daily or weekly average, but as it relates to a serving of the product considered for purchase.

When a product label says that the product contains 120 milligrams of sodium, some consumers need help interpreting that amount into its' relevance to their

dietary concerns. Therefore, when 120 milligrams can be described as “Low Sodium”, the sodium level in this product becomes *relevant* to the consumer.

Modification is a concept that is critical to making good dietary choices. It is, however, a concept that is difficult to effectively communicate with the space allowed on a shelf-edge label. The shelf-edge label is the first step, providing a very elementary education but the only education some consumers will choose to receive. The second is an informational brochure which helps fill in criteria and category information. The third and final step, and one we encourage our grocers to consider, is the involvement of local dieticians in store tours or group information sessions. The consumer then has an opportunity to ask questions of and become acquainted with the services available through the local professional.

#### Value to the Hispanic Consumer

We are especially pleased to be making this information available in Spanish. At an FDA hearing in San Antonio, we heard Dietician Rosario Hamilton ask for Spanish nutrition information from food manufacturers. San Antonio has an Hispanic population of 70%. Many of the people she counsels speak English only as a second language.

The 1990 Census reported that 9% of the population of the United States is of Hispanic origin. In the Hispanic household, to a greater degree than the Anglo household, the women are the decision makers about food purchases, preparation and family health. They are also less likely to be educated than the men of the house, and are therefore more likely to be communicating primarily in Spanish. When Spanish is the first language, product labels in English are of little use.

Manufacturers may have a difficult time responding to this need because of all that is already required on the product label. Here a shelf-edge label becomes the communications media that crosses that language barrier with some very important information.

#### Value to the Nutrition Community

According to the latest study repeated annually by the Food Marketing Institute, *96% of grocery shoppers consider nutrition an important consideration when making a food or beverage purchase*. This is the time hoped for, when the consumer makes food choices based on nutrition value, rather than taste, trends and the seduction of clever advertising.

Certainly, changes are ahead, but it is a dynamic and exciting time for nutrition education. We are pleased to provide an education tool for our grocers and for the nutrition community.