EDIFICE – Liaison Report

EDIFICE would like to make MH10 Subcommittee 8 aware of the Set Label Guideline that was recently published. Here is the information about this guideline:

In the IT and telecommunications industry’s supply chain, packages may contain many products. These products often consist of components which may also be relevant for tracking & tracing (e.g. bundles or modules/ boards as preconfigured “assembled products”).

Automatic data capture infrastructure already in place normally is not used for the capturing of those hierarchical structures as bar codes mostly are used to identify the type and instance of the bundle/assembled product.

This guideline defines how to encode multiple product information into a high capacity media (e.g. 2D symbols or RFID tags) in a hierarchical and structured way. It enables tracking of assets on a type and instance level even for hierarchically structured products while fully relying on established ISO/ ANSI standards.

Transparency of the supply chain helps to minimize capital and operational expenditure by enabling the business to know where purchased assets are within the supply chain. Depending on the level of detail used with the definition of assets, it is important to know the details of products and components not only on a type level but also on an instance level. To minimize uncertainty on where assets are within the supply chain, material information should be captured as soon as it enters the company’s goods receipt and should be fed into the relevant IT Systems. This also helps when taking inventory into account for goods still on the road or on the installation site and reduces undesired loss of materials.

Most businesses therefore already employ automatic data capture (ADC) technologies and count on standardized processes and structures. When capturing product and instance data, usually automatic capturing technologies like bar codes, 2D symbols and/ or RFID are used.

In the IT and telecommunications industry packages may contain many products. These products often consist of components which may also be relevant for tracking & tracing.

As of the development of this guideline, ADC infrastructure already in place normally is not used for the capturing of those hierarchical structures as bar codes mostly are used to identify the type and instance of the bundle/assembled product. Transmission of the data is instead done via electronic data exchange and/or printed documents sent with (attached to) the product package. Additionally transmitting the information about the content of packages as part of the package marking would enable identification of the content of the package using ADC technologies, as a complement to existing solutions (i.e. EDI and paper).

To enable fast capture of the type and instance identification of a hierarchical structured product without opening the package or correlating electronically received data, this document defines how to encode multiple product information in a high capacity media (e.g. 2D symbols or RFID tags), in a hierarchical and structured way. The capability of automatic identification of the content in a package supports the goods receiving, warehousing, inventory management and redistribution processes. Using this specification, the Lifecycle Management can be extended from products down to components of products. The components can be imported into relevant systems and tracked on a type and instance level.

The labeling guideline primarily refers to the labeling of product packages.

The guideline is available to the following public web site at:

<http://repository.edifice.org/setlabel.htm>

EDIFICE would also like input from MH10 Subcommittee 8 on the following:

1. A potential new request for a Data Identifier to unambiguously identify an RMA number.
2. A potential new request for a "Page Append” Data Identifier to solve a problem of concatenating

data information being printed on different symbols on pages or labels – similar to what is proposed through the Set Label Guideline described above.

**Item 1: Data Identifier to unambiguously identify an RMA number:**

EDIFICE is suggesting the introduction of a DI to unambiguously identify an RMA number:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **25R** | Identification of a PIC (Party Identification Code), followed by an RMA number issued by the PIC. |

Here, a PIC describes a party to a transaction, consisting of an IAC as identified in 18V plus potential sub-issuer codes (e.g. company identification codes).

It is not considered necessary to distinguish between codes assigned by the supplier and codes assigned by the customer as it is the case with the existing 1R and 2R. In typical processes, the Party Identification Code would provide the required information.

BUSINESS CASE:

Just as shipping labels can employ a “J” Data Identifier to identify the transport unit and a “25S” to identify unique item, an RMA Numbers identifies a return process. For uniqueness’ purpose, it does not matter which party has issued the number, as long as both IAC and RMA number in the ADC content come from the same source.

This will solve current issues that prevent companies from systematically putting RMA codes in bar codes today: RMA codes from different issuers could be identical or not be able to be allocated to the corresponding issuer. Typical cases:

a) Repair provider

Entities that execute the repair and exchange process do not necessarily know the carrier’s package or shipment ID. They need the RMA code as an unambiguous identifier to allocate packages to the correct return processes. In many cases, the repair/return service is even executed by specialized companies that render this service for various companies. They need to be able to distinguish between returns for different companies.

The current 1R Data Identifier makes this difficult or impossible.

The usage of 25R would help create truly unique RMA barcodes while the customer companies would still be able to issue their RMA numbers independently. Alternatively, a repair and return company could issue RMA numbers as part of their service offering and barcode them with an own IAC. In this case, they would control the structure of all codes and still create globally unique RMA codes.

b) Transport Companies

Forwarders, parcel and express companies increasingly execute the repair and return process for customers. This often includes the management of data, usually identified via RMA number.

As long as these numbers cannot be barcoded in an unambiguous way, it will be difficult to automatically allocate shipments to the correct return process, as these carriers transport goods from different customers in the same network.

Without the DI 25R, carriers will keep suffering from the strict dependency on data mapping (shipment ID to RMA number) and on manual intervention.

All general advantages of the underlying unique identification concept used with 18V, 25S etc apply here as well.

DEFINITIONS:

1. A **Return Merchandise Authorization** (**RMA**, or as the alternative **Return Merchandise Agreement**) is a transaction whereby the recipient of a product arranges to return [goods](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Good_%28accounting%29) to the [supplier](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Distributor_%28business%29) to have the product repaired or replaced or in order to receive a refund or credit for another product from the same retailer or corporation within the product's [warranty](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warranty) period.

An RMA is also known as a "Goods Return Authorization" or GRA (depending on the country).

The RMA process and the issuance of an RMA is a key gatekeeping moment in the [Reverse Logistics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reverse_logistics) cycle.

*(Source: Wikipedia)*

1. We recommend introducing the term **“Party Identification Code” (PIC)** which describes the identification of a party to a transaction. We usually find multiple parties behind one Issuing Agency Code, mostly specified by subsequent identifier codes. Therefore, a PIC consists of the IAC plus any following identification identifier. This applies wherever an identification concept as described for DI 18V is applied.

Examples of PICs:

1. LEIBM: Issuing Agency Code LE (EDIFICE) plus company code IBM (for EDIFICE member IBM).
2. **JD00001**: Issuing Agency Code J (UPU) plus company code D00 (for DHL Express) plus company country code 001 (for DHL Express Austria)

JUSTIFICATION:

What was easy in the closed loops of the past has become a challenge in today’s multi-modal, multi-party logistics processes: Unambiguously allocating identifiers to subjects. Without a proper framework such as the proposed 25R Data Identifier, business subjects would have to align with all other issuers of similar identifiers in the world.

Where identifiers are not unique, resolution of allocation errors is difficult. The DI 25R would overcome this issue through globally unambiguous numbering. The current ambiguity, whether with 1R / 2R DIs or with totally proprietary codes, prevents this automation step from being widely adopted.

As a result of the introduction of 25R, automation of processes can increase the efficiency of repair and return processes. Today’s manual capturing and comparison of figures will be overcome. Human error as an influencing parameter will be reduced. This will also increase customer satisfaction

MEDIA APPLICATION AND USE:

* Use this Data Identifier with all media (e.g., bar code, 2D symbol, RF tag, etc.)
* The stage when the Data Identifier and data will be created and applied: Whenever a return or repair process is set up and It will be created as a process identifier
* In most cases, the media will be added to the Transport Label.
* Information needs to be machine-readable whenever a package needs to be linked to a return or repair process. At that point, the number needs to be captured. Automated capturing would ensure higher speed and less human error.
* The media is read at multiple points during the logistic chain, e.g. during handover to the carrier, during transport to trigger special handling, during handover to repair entity (which could, but would not necessarily be identical to the original selling company).
* The DI is used by all parties to determine the RMA number and thus to allocate a package to a certain repair or return process. The information would be used for billing purposes or in order to retrieve necessary steps which are stored together with the respective RMA file.
* The potential user would be all major manufacturers of goods that are subject to repair or return processes e.g. household appliances, electronic devices, precision instruments – hundreds of thousands per day globally.

**Item 2: "Page Append” Data Identifier to solve a problem of concatenating data information being printed on different symbols on pages or labels**

See attached document: Page\_Append\_DI-110707-14.pdf