



# 50th Anniversary: Invention of GTIN-the Number Behind the Barcode

*Strategy.  
Action.  
Results.*

With 50 years of digitalisation in commerce, GS1 calls for collaboration towards next generation barcodes

Fifty years ago, on 31 March 1971, leaders from the biggest names in commerce came together and transformed the global economy forever by developing the Global Trade Item Number (known as the 'GTIN').

This numerical code uniquely identifies every single product and is the core of the barcode, the most important supply chain standard in history.

Today, the barcode is scanned over six billion times every day and remains one of the most trusted symbols in the world.

Maria Palazzolo, Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer of GS1 Australia said, "I firmly believe that the digitalisation of the GTIN is one of the most significant milestones in the life of our organisation.

"From the linear EAN/UPC barcode to 2DBarcodes, the need to capture more than just product and pricing information is becoming more urgent and increasingly important. In order to do this successfully we must bring industry together to collaborate and to harmonise. The journey into the future has well and truly begun."

GS1 standards such as the barcode continue to help make the vast complexity of modern, global business flow quickly, efficiently and securely, simplifying all kinds of supply chain processes in almost every sector all around the world. However, as consumers demand more and better product information, it is time to bring barcodes to the next level.

Developments towards next-generation barcodes (for example square barcodes like QR codes), which can hold vastly more information, should be used to empower consumers with trusted information and reshape global commerce, just as the GTIN did half a century ago.

50 years ago

The 1971 historic meeting took place in New York City and included leaders from the biggest names in groceries, retail and consumer goods at the time, including Heinz, General Mills, Kroger and Bristol Meyer.

The executives agreed to create a system to uniquely identify every single product, calling it the Global Trade Item Number, or GTIN. With great foresight, they believed that the GTIN could have a positive impact even beyond the grocery store - from warehouses to board rooms - and would boost speed and efficiency of transactions and processes that could transform everything from supply chains to consumer experiences. And they agreed at the meeting to continue to innovate together to create a system that would benefit businesses and consumers alike. Decades later, the BBC named the resulting outcome one of "the 50 things that made the world economy."

More information and quotes are in the attached media release.

TO INTERVIEW Maria Palazzolo, Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer, GS1 Australia or Marcel Sieira, Chief Customer Officer, GS1 Australia please contact: Marian Makram-Perkins, T: 03 8581 5940 E: [marian.makram-perkins@gs1au.org](mailto:marian.makram-perkins@gs1au.org)

About GS1 Australia

GS1 is a neutral, not-for-profit organisation that develops and maintains the most widely used global standards for efficient business communication. We are best known for the barcode, named by the BBC as one of "the 50 things that made the world economy". GS1 standards and services improve the efficiency, safety and visibility of supply chains across physical and digital channels in 25 sectors. With local Member Organisations in 114 countries, 2 million user companies and 6 billion transactions every day, GS1 standards create a common language that supports systems and processes across the globe.

For more information visit the GS1 Australia website: <https://www.gs1au.org/>

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