



## **DGI Update: Your Guide to Interoperability and Conformance Test Services**

**June 2007**

### **Commentary: The Need for Industry Test Profiles**

In the apparel industry, you can separate retailers into two categories. Both types of retailers have their place, and both require different business models to reach their customers:

- The first are general retailers who offer a wide range of apparel and accessories. Department stores would fit in this description. They service a wide range of customers and preferences. Almost any type of apparel can be found there, but their offerings may not meet the needs of customers who want unique and particular styles.
- On the other end of the spectrum are specialized retailers and boutiques that target customers with specific needs or requests. They do not have the vast offering of a large chain department store, but they have a much larger selection of a specific niche, such as shoes or high-end fashion.

If you compare technical standards to the vertical apparel industry, open standards, such as AS2 and ebMS, would be the department stores. They are developed to meet general business needs across a wide scope of supply chain industries. However, their vast scope means they must often make choices to limit or not define niche uses of their standard. Not every business need is addressed because its intent is to address a broad audience.

The scope of these open standards is sufficient for most business transactions. However, different industries or user groups may have unique requirements which either go beyond the limits of the standard or address requirements which were originally undefined. The standard may even address most needs, but something else is needed to respond to their specific business model or B2B process. In cases

like these, an industry profile is needed. An industry profile, like AS2 Reliability from the eTG group in GS1, builds upon a standard like AS2 to define specialized requirements. While an industry profile requires a written specification with specific requirements, it is not considered a new standard as it is directly associated with an existing standard and must be used in conjunction with this standard.

Like the underlying standard it is associated with, a profile must start with business requirements, have its technical requirements communicated in a clear and concise manner through a document and be tested within an interoperability certification among all implementers. Drummond Group continues to have various industry groups approach us for this type of testing. The goal is to meet specific industry needs and ensure the products certified are interoperable. It is a win-win for end users. In the coming months, we will look at different industry profiles such as CEM, AS2 Reliability, Automotive Retail and others being tested by Drummond Group.