

Is it Time to Recall your Recall Process?

BY JACK PAYNE ON SEP 11, 2015



The number of U.S. food products recalled, and the cost associated with those recalls, has nearly doubled since 2002, according to several reports. With the recent influx in food safety issues, it's no surprise the spotlight is burning brightly on supply chain management.

Fatal mistakes made by well-known brands, like Blue Bell Creameries, have called into question how manufacturers—and supply chain executives specifically—are executing two major components of food safety: prevention and response. Could it be time for supply chain executives to recall their own processes?

Some still leverage antiquated and error-prone manual techniques, while others aren't properly using the track and trace technology they have. With advancements in these solutions, supply chain executives have no excuses for not being more proactive in mitigating risks.

When it comes to reducing the number of food recalls, preparation is prevention's greatest ally. Continual process refinement paired with the proper use of track and trace technology can greatly reduce the occurrence and effects of food safety issues. Establishing automated preventative measures including mandatory product check points and quality tests during the procurement and manufacturing stages of the supply chain can help identify issues faster and more consistently.

If used correctly, track and trace solutions can notify manufacturers in real-time so issues are addressed before the product leaves the production floor. Furthermore, accurately implementing track and trace technology into the supply chain provides you with greater visibility and actionable insight to improve pre-distribution processes. At the same time, in the event that a recall needs to be issued, track and trace technology can also quickly and easily kick start the recall process in a more strategic manner — aiding in avoiding common pitfalls.

Let's say you manufacture a particular type of sauce and leverage a variety of outside vendors to source its ingredients. You also supply the sauce to thousands of grocery stores throughout the country. News hits about a listeria outbreak at one of your vendors' plants. Now what? Without a clear understanding of the flow of product and materials coming and going, you jeopardize your brand and the well-being of consumers.

Properly using track and trace technology can allow you to document your sauce's ingredients and suppliers while also identifying—in real-time—where sauce produced during the outbreak is located within the supply chain. This enables you to quickly determine every point of possible contamination and recall accordingly.

Seemingly simple answers to questions like where, when, and what quantities products were shipped to and from, are being missed daily by supply chain executives. Not knowing the ins and outs of your product's lifecycle during a recall can truly cost you. In fact, according to Food Safety News, in more than half of the recalls occurring over the past 15 years, the recall cost each affected company more than \$10 million. Some lost more than \$100 million, and a few closed their doors for good because of the excess cost.

Many supply chain executives have product tracing systems but they differ in quality based on precision and how far forward or backwards in the supply chain they can track. Whether or not they can provide full control over the end-to-end process is critical to meeting compliance and maximizing efficiency.

Amidst growing consumer concern and compliance demands, increasingly more changes to the supply chain are necessary. Now is the perfect time to re-evaluate your recall processes to ensure you're using the right technology to minimize revenue losses and maximize consumer safety.

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