

Getting Started with ARTS Standards

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There are plenty of reasons to use ARTS Standards to resolve challenges faced by IT in the retail industry. Among the many benefits are vendor neutrality, efficient use of existing resources, reduced and manageable risk and interoperability.



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Additionally, ARTS Standards provide a direct return on investment by lowering installation and start-up costs. All this (and more) is making the use of ARTS Standards an increasingly common practice in the retail industry.

Once an enterprise overcomes its initial resistance to using the standards (and the associated fear that doing so will diminish the competitive advantage of its proprietary applications), a frequent question often arises among potential users: "How do we begin to use ARTS Standards?"

A practical answer can be found in how El Corte Ingles uses them to improve the price system in its stores, leverage central repository and store systems and generate "one truth" in selling prices.

Our software architects were worried that the data model was expanding in a non-systematic way, including multiple repositories with similar logic entities but without a consistent general view.

We needed to unify and rethink the system, moving from "multiple" corporate models to one that was clearly centralized. An improved price system project would serve as a concept test for the unified model we were seeking.

For the last five years, El Corte Ingles has been participating in ARTS' efforts to provide the retail community with a set of standards to improve the communication of data inside the walls of the business, and we have followed the evolution of the ARTS Data Model and ARTS XML Schemas.

Preliminary study

We saw the opportunity to test both for this particular project and, in particular, to use the ARTS Data Model as a reference for our centralized corporate data model.

A preliminary study established the project's scope and

planning phases, and determined the model domain in a more precise way. We then proceeded with a multi-disciplinary team (integrated by a business consultant, functional analyst, development technicians and a database specialist) to complete the implementation study and familiarize the team members with the ARTS Data Model terminology and limitations.

An interesting and useful exercise was to compare the use cases in the ARTS XML Price Schema and the entities from the ARTS Data Model with our business user cases; we even extended our user requirements with other user cases less frequently found in our market environment.

As a result of this work, we identified the extensions needed to support the El Corte Ingles specific user cases.

In this phase of the project the team was helped by an ARTS Data Model specialist who validated the model extensions, listened to alternative proposals and discussed the design decisions with the project team.

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Ready for more projects

The result was a price data model unifying the central repository and store database that could not have been more satisfactory. Not only was the project completed in a reasonable timeframe, but we now have a working team that is skilled in the ARTS Data Model and is ready to undertake other projects.

Furthermore, as the vendor community expands its adoption of ARTS Standards, El Corte Ingles has ever-greater opportunities to utilize compatible software applications.

Compliance with ARTS Standards is now being included in our RFP for potential vendors, and we are currently evaluating the use of the ARTS XML POSlog Schema for the optimization of our events log in our stores.