

Fastenal uses Sterling Integrator to incorporate XML within its existing e-business processes



Location

Winona, Minnesota

Industry

Distribution

Business challenge

Create an alternative sales channel

Solution

Sterling Integrator®

Benefits

- Manage all business processes and systems
- Exchange business documents easily and cost-effectively
- Integrate people with applications

Fastenal Company

Company background

Fastenal was founded in 1967 in Winona, MN by company Chairman Bob Kierlin. Since then, Fastenal has expanded to become the fastest growing full-line industrial distributor and is now the largest fastener distributor in the nation. Its service-oriented business network currently includes an in-house manufacturing division, a product quality assurance and engineering department, a strategic system of 12 distribution centers across the nation, a fleet of more than 300 company-owned semi-trucks and trailers, and more than 1,700 store sites.

Business challenge

Fastenal approached Sterling Commerce in the late 1990s because it wanted to create an alternative sales channel. However, this endeavor required Fastenal to use Extensible Markup Language (XML) for the first time to transport purchasing information via the Internet. Because of the company's vast network of stores and operational facilities, Fastenal needed a solution that would be easily accessible from every transaction point. To succeed,

the end result would require very little training, be easy to use, and most of all, be reliable.

Solution

Sterling Commerce recommended that Fastenal use Sterling Integrator to incorporate XML within its existing, well-established e-business processes. Sterling Integrator is an end-to-end integration system that supports multiple protocols, technologies and business applications.

Key benefits

According to Eric Falls, Fastenal's e-business manager, he and his colleagues were relieved to know that Sterling Integrator enabled them to use the programs they already had in place to integrate XML into the point-of-sale system.

"Each XML document followed the existing e-business processes, which meant no additional training for staff," he said. "The result was a secure system that funneled all incoming electronic documents, regardless of format, through Fastenal's e-business systems."

“Not only did we create an entirely new sales channel to increase revenue, but we also succeeded in tightly coordinating all business processes and systems worldwide.”

Eric Falls
E-business Manager,
Fastenal Company

Falls said the suite of Sterling Commerce solutions enabled Fastenal to accomplish two key objectives. “Not only did we create an entirely new sales channel to increase revenue, but we also succeeded in tightly coordinating all business processes and systems worldwide.”

Sterling Integrator has four main components that helped Fastenal accomplish its key objectives.

The Integration Broker is the core component of Sterling Integrator and allows Fastenal to manage all business processes and systems. Its content-based routing capabilities make it easy to analyze and act on data, automate responses, and filter out errors.

The B2B Services make it easy and affordable for Fastenal to exchange business documents with customers and trading partners. That’s because it supports a wide range of data formats and protocols.

EAI Adapters integrate B2B data with existing business processes, thereby facilitating internal data flow at Fastenal. The EAI Adapters support more than 200 business applications, messaging systems and technologies. For example,

Sterling Integrator integrates seamlessly with Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems like PeopleSoft, which is what Fastenal uses.

Web Extensions allow Fastenal to integrate people with its applications. For instance, when the Integration Broker routes a large invoice to a purchasing manager for approval, Web Extensions present that same invoice in a browser format for easy interaction.

Falls said it’s vitally important that Fastenal support the e-business market far better than its competition. “We want to be the industrial distributor of choice,” he said. “Customers need to move data quickly, so our processes have to be as streamlined and seamless as possible, and Sterling Commerce has helped us achieve that goal.”

Falls added that his contacts at Sterling Commerce have always been more than willing to listen to Fastenal’s needs and help him find solutions. “We feel Sterling Commerce is the best fit for our business,” he said. “We’ve faced a number of challenges over the years, but we’ve been able to hit them head-on because Sterling Commerce has provided us with a toolset that’s easily deployable and always successful.”

About Sterling Commerce

Sterling Commerce, an AT&T Inc. (NYSE:T) company, helps companies optimize and transform their Business Collaboration Network to accelerate revenues and reduce costs. Sterling Commerce provides more than 18,000 customers worldwide with applications and integration solutions to connect, communicate and collaborate inside and outside their enterprise. More information can be found at www.sterlingcommerce.com.

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