

Sterling Commerce improves Ball Corporation's supply chain efficiency



Location

Broomfield, Colorado

Industry

Manufacturing

Revenue

\$5,751.2 million for 2005

Business challenge

- Streamline supply chain processes while integrating several acquisitions
- Replace legacy EDI platform
- Extend B2B solution and strategy to their trading community

Solution

- Sterling Integrator[®]
- Sterling Collaboration NetworkSM

Benefits

- Eliminate manual processes
- Increase data quality
- Decrease process delays
- Improve customer satisfaction
- Quickly reskill internal and external users

Ball Corporation

Leading Manufacturer Increases Accuracy of Business Transaction Processing by 5-10%

Customer background

Ball Corporation is a provider of metal and plastic packaging, primarily for beverages, foods, aerosol products, aerospace and other technologies and services to commercial and governmental customers. Founded in 1880, the company employs more than 15,600 people in over 90 locations worldwide. The company has experienced rapid growth in the past decade, due in large part to a series of strategic acquisitions that have helped the company to better fulfill its mission.

Business challenge

Although Ball Corporation has changed dramatically over its 125 years, from a small, family-owned business into a public company with people and interests around the world, the company's core purpose has remained the same: to provide quality products and services—and a quality experience—to its customers. Ball Corporation guides its entire business on the key principles of extreme focus on customer satisfaction, continued ability to innovate in products

and processes, and attention to detail that helps ensure that everyone operates like an owner in their business.

“As a company, we take a lot of pride in being attentive to customer needs,” said Natalie Henderson, Director of IT Account Management at Ball Corporation. “When you operate in our industries, you can't just rely on your product to win over customers—you have to provide the customer with an overall experience that makes them want to continue doing business with you. One of the ways you do this is by having a more efficient supply chain than the competition.”

This philosophy led Ball to reevaluate its existing B2B IT environment, which was built on a legacy EDI platform. Many processes and data conversions within the supply chain were still manually driven—a cumbersome fact, given that Ball had 60 large trading partners and processed 3500 documents a day. The company saw an opportunity to streamline its business operations and began approaching vendors for a solution that would address its needs.

Solution

Ball selected Sterling Integrator and Sterling Collaboration Network from Sterling Commerce as the ideal solutions to reduce inefficiencies within the Ball supply chain. Sterling Integrator is a flexible integration platform that cuts through barriers and creates unprecedented visibility into, and control over, collaborative processes by replacing legacy B2B solutions, resulting in lowered operating costs and improved quality of B2B services.

“We saw a real opportunity to transform our business processes through reengineering, workflow automation, and collaboration,” said Henderson. “This wasn’t just an IT initiative, but a business initiative. The ultimate goal was to help the business grow by being easier to do business with.”

Sterling Collaboration Network extends integration and communication to the trading partners, and connects the entire community regardless of data format type or protocol, and provides visibility to all transactions. This allows Ball to provide accurate and timely service for both suppliers and customers.

This impressive result depended on stakeholder recognition within the supply chain. This included internal users such

as accounting, manufacturing, and sales departments, as well as external supply chain partners.

“We wanted to focus on areas that were real pain points for these various constituencies,” said Henderson. She continued, “Wherever there was an area of duplication, confusion, redundancy, or delay from our legacy systems, Sterling Integrator provided a chance to address and solve the problem. Just as importantly, we knew that people could quickly be reskilled from our legacy system to Sterling Integrator, which helps accelerate the partner onboarding process. That ease-of-transition allows us to get a more efficient supply chain up and running quicker.”

Sterling Commerce customer support and community management services played a critical role in the success of the implementation by ensuring a seamless event from Ball’s customers’ point of view, while mitigating a potentially catastrophic event internally.

“They helped us rapidly recover from what could have been a real disaster,” said Henderson. “We would have been exposed to a huge drain on our time and resources—as well as potential revenue exposure—if we hadn’t had such ready access to their knowledge and expertise.”

Once implementation of Sterling Integrator and Sterling Collaboration Network began, Ball was able to improve many business processes. Removal of numerous manual elements through business process modeling and automation features improved data accuracy. The enhanced reporting and notification functionality ensured prompt notification of errors to business users. Finally, the audit trail and control oversight features helped guarantee compliance with Sarbanes-Oxley and internal audit reviews.

Key benefits

Sterling Integrator enabled Ball to streamline operations and gain enhanced supply chain visibility, with measurable results. Previously, Ball managed an average of 5-10 orders per week, flagged by the internal error and monitor system, known to cause delays to customers. By using Sterling Integrator to track multi-enterprise collaboration processes from end to end, that rate has been reduced to a few instances per month.

As a result, Ball has differentiated itself from its competitors by responding more quickly and accurately to customers. “The bottom line is that Sterling Integrator and Sterling Collaboration Network combined allows us to handle our partners and our supply chain relationships more effectively,” said Henderson. “And that, in turn, helps us provide superior service to our customers.”

About Sterling Commerce

Sterling Commerce, an AT&T Inc. (NYSE:T) company, helps companies optimize and transform their Business Collaboration Network quickly, easily and securely so they can accelerate revenues, reduce costs and protect their enterprise. Sterling Commerce provides more than 30,000 customers worldwide with applications and integration solutions to connect, communicate and collaborate with their customers, partners and suppliers. Learn more at www.sterlingcommerce.com.

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