



VersaCold warms to EDI with Sterling Commerce



Location

Sydney, Australia

Industry

Transportation and Logistics

Business challenge

Speed the set-up time for EDI communication with new partners and to reduce the complexity of dealing with multiple EDI standards

Solution

Sterling Integrator®

Benefits

- Time required to establish communication links with new customers has been halved
- Mapping is conducted by EDI staff and is no longer reliant on programmers
- Greater flexibility to communicate with all EDI and emerging (AS2, XML) standards
- Improved customer responsiveness
- Less paperwork, fewer errors

VersaCold

Customer background

VersaCold is one of the leading logistics and cold storage suppliers to the Australian market. From its ten warehouses across the nation, the company provides services ranging from traditional pallet storage and transport of products through to more complex and demanding logistics services such as inventory management, high volume carton picking, packing and distribution, blast freezing, import and export services, and online information and transactions. Its clients include some of the country's best known producers, manufacturers, food service operators and retailers.

VersaCold is connected to a global refrigerated logistics network, enabling it to service virtually any aspect of an organisation's temperature-controlled food handling needs.

Business challenge

A conservative start—VersaCold's first step into EDI was in the late 1990s

following a request from a client who wanted to send orders electronically. Recognising that the local market was increasingly moving down the EDI path and that other similar requests were likely to follow, the company deployed the Sterling Commerce Gentran solution on an AS/400 IT platform.

The software's ability to translate data from the multitude of EDI standards and to turn it into readable, actionable information made it possible for VersaCold to offer EDI communications to other trading partners. The resulting reduction in data entry reduced duplication of paperwork, increased order accuracy and gave VersaCold the ability to deliver faster service to customers.

Over subsequent years, demand for the service grew from accepting orders to the issue of purchase orders, eventually leading to requests for full-blown electronic commerce trading.

"It used to take between four and six weeks to create EDI interfaces and map to a new customer ... now we can do it within two to three weeks. This speed and responsiveness has proven to be a big selling point for some of our new customers who need to find a 3PL partner urgently."

Paul Rovella
IT Manager,
VersaCold

Solution

Exponential growth—by late 2006 VersaCold had become far more sophisticated in its electronic commerce and the company was pushing its Gentran software to the limits. Moreover, a number of customers had begun using AS2 and XML for their communications rather than the previous EDI standards. It was clear to Paul Rovella, VersaCold's IT Manager Australia, that change was once again in the wind and that it was time to replace Gentran with its next generation technology Sterling Integrator.

VersaCold's acquisition by Eimskip momentarily slowed Rovella's plan, but by late 2007 it was back on track. Implementation of the new software began immediately and was completed within four months. "We had no down time at all with the changeover to Sterling Integrator. The impact on mapping was minimal and the biggest difference is the new engine. It's all been very smooth, which is important because IT can't afford to impact Operations too much. After all, they are the ones making the money," he said.

Key benefits

New links to trading partners in half the time—the most noticeable benefit of the new solution has been a halving of time required to establish new communication links. "Depending on complexity, it used to take between four and six weeks to create EDI interfaces and map to a new customer. Sometimes it was hard to finish the

mapping before a job was supposed to start," Rovella said. "Now we can do it within two to three weeks. This speed and responsiveness has proven to be a big selling point for some of our new customers who need to find a 3PL partner urgently."

The impact of this has flowed through the entire VersaCold IT team. Developers have been able to concentrate on their primary task of developing the company's warehouse management system. Point and click functionality has made it possible for EDI staff to manage mapping, removing the previous reliance on programmers.

Troubleshooting has also become more straightforward. "Occasionally we get a customer who will call and ask why we didn't do something with their order. Investigating these issues has become much simpler with the Sterling Integrator," Rovella notes. "The software is just that bit more advanced."

"VersaCold's decade-long progress from paper-based systems to EDI to e-commerce has been a case of one step at a time. The company's natural prudence regarding change has stood it in good stead, making sure that any expenditure on new systems and processes is only undertaken when the solution is proven and customer demand is certain. Once the technology is deployed however, VersaCold has shown its determination to get the most from its investment," Rovella concludes.

About Sterling Commerce

Sterling Commerce, an AT&T Inc. (NYSE:T) company, helps companies optimise 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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