

Health Co. — Overcoming the challenges of fax orders to drive customer satisfaction

Highlights

- Software as a Service
- Converting fax orders into EDI for ERP integration
- Replacement of existing template-based solution
- Order prioritizing and routing to specific agents
- Processing multiple orders on one fax
- Visibility to identify specific faxes for order changes

Healthcare Products

This \$10 billion global healthcare products company creates innovative medical solutions for better patient outcomes and delivers value through clinical leadership and excellence. The company manufactures, distributes and services a diverse range of industry-leading products including medical devices, imaging solutions, pharmaceutical products and medical supplies. With more than 40,000 employees worldwide, the company's products are sold in over 100 countries.

Challenge: Improve fax service

With its large customer base including many sole proprietors and shop owners who fax in their orders, the company needed to provide a quick turnaround time with an order confirmation. If customers didn't receive a prompt confirmation, they would call. "Because the orders were all manual, we had no visibility — they might be in a stack on someone's desk," said the company's Worldwide Director of Customer Service. "We were finding that our manual fax process was a source of errors, detracting from the customer experience, and it was resource-intensive." When the company decided to automate, they first used a fax service offered by its EDI provider, for those customers who could not move to EDI. But after two years the cost and limitations of this fax service became painfully obvious.

"It was template-based OCR technology, and we had thousands of templates for tens of thousands of customers," said the Director. "Setting each template was almost as resource-intensive as the manual process. It didn't give us the flexibility we needed to recognize priority orders or route to certain agents for special handling. Template-related errors were affecting the customer experience, plus each new template cost \$500 and took two weeks to be delivered."

With this service the best the company was able to achieve was 60% of orders processed electronically, of which half of these required an agent to intervene. This left 40% of the company's sales orders to be printed and processed manually, leading to the inevitable problems associated with paper.

Esker on Demand enables me to focus on running my department instead of configuring and maintaining servers.

Worldwide Director of Customer Service ■ Health Co.

"Along with the flexibility that our customer base demands, visibility was a major concern for us," said the Director.

Still preferring a Software as a Service (SaaS) solution over hosting servers in-house, the company looked at a few solutions. "Most of them weren't really touchless solutions," said the Director. "They would receive the faxes, store them, process them manually and send them back to us as an EDI order. This really didn't offer us much flexibility or visibility. Some solutions could give visibility of fax volume, but not the ability to pull a fax that was received a few minutes ago and make adjustments. We also needed the ability to route to specific reps for exception handling."

Solution: Esker on Demand

According to the Director, the company selected the Esker SaaS solution based on its Dynamic Document Capture and learning capabilities. "We can teach the system to process each fax based on the customer's needs," he said. "We found that our fax process could be a driver of customer satisfaction rather than dissatisfaction with the capabilities for special handling and routing to a rep who understands the account, and the ability to rush and prioritize orders. And the visibility we have now is tremendous. When a customer wants to change an order, now we can identify the fax, pull it and add items or make changes. Before we would just have to hope that we caught the fax later, which caused errors."

The process

With the Esker service, the company chose to have each inbound fax order routed and processed into one of three queues for their different business units. Sales orders are automatically analyzed to extract relevant data such as customer name, sales order number, material number, unit of measure, and PO total, as well as identifying Rush and Priority orders for special processing. The Esker service then performs a database lookup to check the data captured. Once the data is validated, the Esker service automatically creates an X12 EDI file for secure delivery via AS/2 to the ERP application. The original sales order is then indexed, allowing users to quickly retrieve it from a database or repository available in the company's ERP system and the Esker web interface.

If discrepancies are found between the data capture and the ERP master data, the sales order is presented to a user in an online web validation interface showing a side-by-side view of the sales order and the captured data. Here users can Teach the system how to recognize the correct data for future orders. When taught, users simply enable "Touchless" and this customer's subsequent fax orders are automatically processed from fax reception to secure EDI delivery without agent involvement.

Benefits

New efficiencies and functional advantages

- **100% throughput** with no templates needed
- **100% visibility** of received and processed orders
- **Quick response and control** for new order formats
- **A single process** for handling fax orders with no risk of losing an order

- **Immediate cost savings** and the ability to cost-effectively achieve a high level of automation
- **More powerful technology** at a lower cost
- Ability to **recognize and prioritize** special orders
- Higher percentage of Touchless orders requiring **no human intervention** to process

Improvements over the former service

- **50% higher** (and rising) touchless percentage rate
- **40% increase** (to 100%) in electronic order throughput
- **Nearly 60% reduction** of labor overhead in order entry
- **Over 40% reduction** of monthly order processing cost

Green savings after the first 6 months alone

- **9.38** trees
- **3,975** gallons of water
- **2,306** kilowatts of electricity
- **3,201** lbs. of CO₂

Unanticipated outcomes

The Director also reports two pleasant surprises that have driven customer satisfaction — processing of:

1. **Multiple POs** on one fax
2. **Orders for multiple business units** on one fax

"Previously we would have to manually break each order apart and lose visibility," he said. "With a typical multi-business-unit order there would be one or two items that were never entered. Now they're processed on one fax and split into orders for us, and we have 100% visibility."

The Director added, "We like that Esker provides network redundancy for disaster recovery, as well as scalability as our business models continue to change. It gives us a lot of confidence that whether we expand the use of fax orders or contract it, Esker on Demand can scale with us."

Future plans

"We're looking at automating other processes to go completely paperless," said the Director. "We've identified opportunities for improvement in approval workflow and in quoted technical items that are passed back and forth between several functions both within our organization and external customers."

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