



The Lane Company

Speeding up inbound and outbound order processing



Lane®

The Lane Company, a \$90 million furniture manufacturer owned by Furniture Brands International (FBI), sells its products through the FBI network of 13,000 retail dealers. In processing orders and confirmations, Lane sends and receives up to 1000 faxes per day. To handle this high volume, Lane relies on Esker Fax to automate inbound and outbound document routing and streamline the ordering process.

Challenge

Historically, Lane dealers placed orders via fax. Received in the Lane mailroom, faxes were hand-carried to order entry staff in another location — a slow process that introduced as much as a day's delay between fax receipt and order entry. Once personnel entered the orders, the procedure repeated in reverse. Confirmations were printed in the order entry office, carried back to the mailroom, and then mailed to dealers. The entire cycle from fax order to receipt of confirmation often took a week or more.

Understanding that customer service was critical in its competitive market, Lane set out to speed up order processing and improve communication with dealers. During operations review and planning, Lane considered several options, including online ordering. In the end, fax remained the only viable alternative. While some large dealers had online systems, thousands of smaller dealers relied on fax alone.

Lane was left with two choices: add fax machines and train new staff, or turn to fax automation.

Technical requirements

As Lane studied their technical needs, the choices among fax automation gateways quickly narrowed. The solution would have to integrate tightly with Lane's business applications and computing environment — an IBM ES/9000 mainframe and Ethernet-connected LAN — and handle up to 30,000 inbound and outbound faxes per month. The one product that answered all of these needs was Esker Fax.

Solution

Esker Fax delivers true enterprise fax automation — sending, receiving, routing, and archiving high volumes of documents with unsurpassed speed and economy. Esker Fax performs flawlessly in the most heterogeneous environments.

From a single server, Esker Fax simultaneously integrates with

SNA hosts, UNIX systems, AS/400s, and LANs to handle high-volume production fax, intra-network fax, mission-critical inbound fax, and fax routing.

Esker Fax is compatible with a wide range of network types. It also integrates seamlessly with business systems such as SAP and BPCS applications, as well as all major messaging programs, including Microsoft Exchange and Lotus Notes.

Fully integrated within Lane's mainframe/LAN environment, Esker Fax has allowed the company to automate every phase of its order entry operation. First, Lane took advantage of Esker Fax simultaneous multi-fax processing by tying the company's toll-free fax number into a hub system that roll calls to eight fax-dedicated lines. Next, Lane took the mailroom out of the equation.

Orders are now received at the Esker Fax server. From there, they are routed directly to the desktops of order entry personnel, where they are processed without delay and with no risk of being lost or misplaced. Order entry agents use split screens to view the fax order and copy data to the mainframe-based order entry application. As soon as the information is entered, the confirmation process begins instantly — and ends in a matter of minutes.

The mainframe generates confirmations automatically, but the plain-text document needs some attention before it goes off to customers. Forms Merge capability with Esker Fax gives the document a crisp and professional look, converting plain text to attractive fonts and merging it onto an electronic form with tables, Lane logos, and corporate messaging. The order entry agent simply selects "Return" on the Esker

 Esker Fax helps us automate business processes.

Tom Thompson ■ Manager of Information Systems
■ The Lane Company



There is no delay from the time the order is received to when it is available for the order entry agent to process.

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quality confirmation printed out on their own fax machine.

Lane relies on another Esker Fax feature — Advanced Inbound Routing (AIR) — to accomplish its multi-phase inbound/outbound routing. With AIR, administrators can route documents according to any document attribute — originating CSID, file size, time of day, number of pages, etc., and to any destination — fax machines, desktops, even forms-recognition applications or document management systems.

Benefits

By any measure, Esker Fax benefits have been real and immediate. Personnel no longer wait for the slow grind of the fax machine, and orders no longer pile up before the next trip to order entry. "The fax never really hits paper, says Tom Thompson, Manager of Information Systems. There is no delay from the time the order is received to when it is

available for the order entry agent to process. A processing cycle that once took a week is now completed in as little as an hour."

A complete host/LAN solution, Esker Fax provides additional benefits as well. It not only manages Lane's order entry production fax, it also automates the storage of all inbound and outbound documents and streamlines Lane's one-to-one, agent-to-customer office correspondence. "Esker Fax helps us automate business processes," concludes Thompson.

With its reliable, high-volume fax processing, robust routing, and state-of-the-art features, Esker Fax helps Lane help its customers — and stay ahead of the competition.

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