

The Pharmacy Verification Network: Simplifying Fast, Cost-Effective Document Communication



The Pharmacy Verification Network is an online service established to provide a single-source, secure database of pharmacy-managed profiles required for the verification and credentialing of pharmacy partners.

For pharmacy owners and operators, The Pharmacy Verification Network provides an easy way to share pharmacy profiles with pharmacy benefit managers, managed care organizations and health plans that credential their pharmacies. In addition, the network alerts pharmacy owners and operators when industry data sources report information that differs from their pharmacy profile on the network.

Pharmacy benefit managers, managed care organizations and health plans are able to query the network by pharmacy type, location, services offered and more. Custom reports and data downloads are delivered in multiple formats, including ad-hoc downloads to meet specific data needs.

www.pharmacyverification.com

Information Technology Industry

When one of its pharmacy benefit manager (PBM) clients came looking for a solution to get contract information to pharmacies within the network and receive documents back, with a mechanism to track and confirm receipt, reply and other actions for auditing purposes, The Pharmacy Verification Network turned to Esker.

Since this initial project, The Pharmacy Verification Network has continued to expand the use of Esker on Demand services to automate a range of document processes.

Challenge: Higher speed and visibility, lower costs

Delivering 3 to 4 documents per month to groups of a few hundred to several thousand, the PBM had a fully staffed mail room and was sending all of the contract documents via postal mail. Call center staff made phone calls to follow up and confirm that the documents were received. When documents came back in, other staff had to review them and then all of the paper had to be filed and stored. According to Michael Lewis, Manager of Integration Services at The Pharmacy Verification Network, "It was a very burdensome and expensive process that took a lot of man hours and created a lot of waste with so much paper. There were a large number of people involved in making the process happen, and they all had other responsibilities in addition to the follow-up calls and sorting through the paper documents." Along with looking for a faster and more cost-effective alternative to the mail process, the PBM was moving to a new location and wanted to create a greener, more paperless environment.

“We were interested in the ‘flashy’ aspects of an on-premise software solution, but as soon as we saw Esker on Demand we knew it would give us the flexibility we needed and would allow us to move very quickly with the automation project.”

Michael Lewis ■ Manager of Integration Services ■ The Pharmacy Verification Network

Project execution

“We had an extremely tight schedule of about a month-and-a-half from when the project started to when we had to start sending out the contract documents,” said Lewis. As his team began developing a process to track the documents, they implemented a Laserfiche document management system to house the documents as they went out and came back in. “But at that point we hadn’t really looked into how we were going to send documents out of Laserfiche,” said Lewis. “Previously we had used an online fax service for some documents, but we tried to minimize that because of cost and difficulty in getting anything custom set up to work.”

Esker was recommended to The Pharmacy Verification Network by Unity Business Systems, who did the Laserfiche installation and had done several implementations for other organizations integrating Esker solutions with Laserfiche.

Solution: Esker on Demand

While faxing represents the majority of its Esker on Demand traffic because so many independent pharmacies still rely on fax communication, The Pharmacy Verification Network also uses Esker on Demand for email and mail communications. Lewis recalled, "The very first job we sent out, we still had a manual component to the mailing because we hadn't fully explored the abilities of Esker on Demand. It took six people almost 10 days to put the mailing together — about 3,000 pieces. Then we found that we could use Esker on Demand for the mailing component as well, which has really been a lifesaver for me."

Hosted Rules

The Esker on Demand service monitors an "In" folder into which files are saved by Pharmacy Verification Network staff. These files are uploaded to an Esker-hosted business rule for processing based on transport modes (email, fax and postal mail) and the order in which to attempt them, based on a configuration file that accompanies the document files.

An increasing segment of The Pharmacy Verification Network's contacts, particularly nationwide pharmacy chains, prefer to have documents sent via email. For these clients Esker on Demand first attempts to email; if email is unsuccessful then it faxes, and if fax is unsuccessful it sends postal mail:

- If the transport listed is email, the hosted rule captures the email address from the document and sends the document, as a PDF attachment, to that address. Esker on Demand allows Pharmacy Verification Network to track when the email has been opened by the recipient.
- If the transport listed is fax, the hosted rule captures the fax number from the document and sends the document to that fax number.
- If the transport listed is mail, the hosted rule captures the mailing address from the document and submits the document to Esker on Demand for production and postal delivery to that address.

“Esker on Demand could achieve everything we needed, and it was the only solution that could accommodate the very short period of time we had for implementation. It has worked so well that we're continually finding new ways to use it to improve processes in other areas of our business.”

Michael Lewis ▪ Manager of Integration Services
▪ The Pharmacy Verification Network

Reporting

When messages are sent, document and job identifiers from the configuration file are displayed in the Esker on Demand web interface, allowing for reporting and searching based on ID and final status.

Final status of each document is contained in an XML file created upon successful sending of the document. Once all documents have been successfully sent, the XML file is automatically downloaded to an "Out" folder on the Pharmacy Verification Network server and saved there.

Benefits

"With Esker on Demand the PBM's process was dramatically improved and made more efficient," said Lewis. "Now just a few people can review the documents through electronic workflow rather than having to go and find all of the information." Esker on Demand has helped to:

- **Free up time** that the PBM's staff formerly spent on manually sending documents, making follow-up calls and filing documents
- Reduce costs of **5 FTE positions**
- Move from a 1% error rate to a **0% error rate** in merging account information into The Pharmacy Verification Network's own mailings to customers, returning more accurate data for contracts and the pharmacy database
- **Cut mailing costs by one-third** in addition to eliminating printing and envelope stuffing
- **Reduce overall faxing costs** and gained flexibility in comparison with the online fax service previously used

Going forward

Since the initial deployment, Lewis's group has found many other ways to use Esker on Demand, including sending marketing communications and inbound fax automation. The addition of fax numbers for inbound faxing allows for tracking of separate workflows in a variety of ways. These numbers route into an FTP server; the documents are automatically retrieved and automatically fed into the Laserfiche document management system and routed to start the workflows.

Lewis also had a positive experience working with the Esker Professional Services team. "The Esker team has really been great. Beyond meeting our own requirements, they've helped understand how to make the best use of Esker on Demand to achieve our goals," he said. "They've given us a lot of valuable input on best practices for our internal processes."

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