



Duferco Farrell Corporation

Forging new efficiencies for customer satisfaction



A unit of the global Duferco group located in Farrell, Pennsylvania, Duferco Farrell Steel finishing operations include hot strip mill, HCl pickle line, tandem and "Z" cold mills, annealing furnaces and temper rolling mills as well as a full-scale, A2LA-accredited metallurgical testing laboratory. Duferco Farrell is a mid-size manufacturer of hot-rolled strip, cold-rolled strip and cold-rolled sheet steel products from slabs. Its customers include companies in the automotive, construction, and hand tool industries along with converters of steel products.

Challenge: Inbound fax routing to CSRs and outbound EDI from Oracle

As its business grew and the company was running at high capacity to handle increasing order volume, Duferco Farrell Corporation recognized that manual processes were hindering its operational efficiency.

Inbound POs were coming into stand-alone fax machines, creating the risk of faxes getting lost or not getting to the correct customer service representative. Duferco Farrell sought to turn those paper faxes into electronic documentation that could be automated into a network directory and tracked.

"Customers would sometimes have questions about orders not being in the system," said James Rowe, Manager of IT Infrastructure at Duferco Farrell. "They would tell us they ordered a while ago, and we couldn't immediately confirm that we had received a PO. So our CSRs would run a report that was about 700 pages long. They would burst it, group it by customer, and fax order status to customers every morning."

Along with the original challenge of inbound fax routing, another issue arose. "We had a few customers who were asking to get EDI 856 advance ship notices from us," said Rowe. "They wanted to prevent situations where coils of steel would show up at their doorstep without them being aware of exactly when the orders were coming."

Ideally, customers would have been able to use XML data that Duferco Farrell already had set up. But those who were requesting EDI couldn't handle XML and needed traditional X12 data instead. "We weren't looking to do EDI and buy specific EDI software," said Rowe. "We wanted something more robust and flexible than just an EDI solution for X12-type transactions." Still, finding the best tool to perform the X12 conversion was a key issue.

Duferco Farrell had looked at Esker faxing solutions and later saw Esker DeliveryWare in a Gartner Magic Quadrant. In addition to Esker, Duferco Farrell evaluated solutions from Captaris RightFax and one other vendor.

Solution: Esker DeliveryWare

"When we were ready to go forward with implementation, we decided to leverage Esker DeliveryWare as a platform for the future and the various things we needed to do," said Rowe. "I looked at the capabilities, and the Esker product stood out for features and usability and scalability that the other vendors didn't have. At the point where we saw the full benefit of Esker DeliveryWare, we didn't even consider any other products."

Duferco Farrell uses Esker DeliveryWare to route inbound fax POs directly to the appropriate customer service reps. "When a PO comes in, we recognize the call station identifier and look up that data in our Oracle customer table, drop the fax identifier at in the home folder and send an email with a link to the file," said Rowe.

With Esker DeliveryWare rules-based automation, Duferco Farrell also can extract data from its Oracle database and convert flat XML files to multiple formats. "Esker DeliveryWare provided a good solution to take the XML file we already had designed, turn it into an EDI file and send the information to customers," said Rowe. "We convert to traditional EDI and do file transfer to our customers, and we also send out PDF reports from the same type of data that goes to other customers as X12. That's ended up being probably the biggest thing we use Esker DeliveryWare for — the functionality to convert XML files to EDI and also do the PDF reporting."

Esker DeliveryWare gives us the flexibility to take multiple pieces of input and do just about anything with it.

James Rowe ■ Manager of IT Infrastructure
■ Duferco Farrell Corporation



With Esker DeliveryWare I can take information from any source inside my company and route it or convert it or deal with it in ways I can't do with any other software that we currently have.

James Rowe ■ Manager of IT Infrastructure ■ Duferco Farrell Corporation

Other than minor assistance from the Esker Professional Services team with the Oracle EDI processing, Rowe has developed all of Duferco Farrell's Esker DeliveryWare rules himself. "Esker DeliveryWare is easy enough that you can pick it up and do powerful things without having to get into heavy scripting," Rowe said. "If I do need a little help, Professional Services is very knowledgeable about what they can make rules do. With the Oracle outbound EDI rule, they were really willing to transfer knowledge to me to make sure I could maintain it so I didn't have to be dependent on them."

Rowe adds that Esker Technical Support has been helpful on the rare occasion when he has called. "We had an unexpected issue with a fax board firmware update, and Esker tech support jumped right on it," he recalled. "They got us the information we needed to figure out what the problem was, and they helped us get the problem fixed. It was above and beyond what I would have expected."

Benefits

Customer satisfaction

Complaints from customers about orders not being in the system have dropped off significantly since the implementation of Esker DeliveryWare. "Now we have the ability to go back and confirm that we've received and processed orders, and to see the current status," said Rowe. "As for the outbound EDI, that was customer-driven so I'm sure automating with Esker DeliveryWare has helped us keep customers from going to other suppliers."

According to Rowe, Duferco Farrell has enhanced customer satisfaction by getting information to customers more readily and quickly through the EDI advance ship notice automation. "With Esker DeliveryWare we give our customers better ability to plan for when these large shipments of steel coils are going to arrive and be used for orders," he said.

Support for growth

Rowe reports that Esker DeliveryWare has made Duferco Farrell's staff more efficient and productive, noting that "We've grown since the implementation, and we haven't had to increase staff as much as we would have with the manual process."

Future plans

Duferco Farrell is also exploring automation of inbound invoice processing with Esker DeliveryWare. "I'm confident that we can leverage the accounts payable automation capabilities of Esker DeliveryWare as an alternative to bringing in another third-party vendor to deal with inbound invoicing," said Rowe.

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