

Network Services: Simplified IT Landscape via Automated AR and Cloud Faxing from Esker



With over \$12 billion in revenue and 40+ years of experience, Network Services Company is an international and member-owned organization which provides distribution services to over 75 global accounts in healthcare, commercial real estate and industrial markets.

The Network[®] solution includes janitorial, food service and industrial packaging products and services that contribute to increased wellness while reducing costs, improving service, and meeting unique local market needs for companies with multiple locations throughout North America and Europe.

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Supply Chain Network

Comprised of over 75 member-distributors, Network Services Company is an international, member-owned distribution network that processes 3,000+ invoices each month. In order to simplify their IT landscape and eliminate their previous ERP systems and manual processes, Network Services looked to Esker to create a touchless, single platform solution that integrates with their SAP[®] system and automate outbound mailing and faxing of accounts receivable documents.

Out with the old

Prior to integrating with SAP and utilizing the Esker solution, Network Services relied on a variety of legacy systems to manage their fax and mail volume. In total, three separate fax systems and a mail house were in place across three different ERP systems.

While some of Network Systems' ERP applications were purchased and implemented, others were purchased with acquisitions, each with its own set of characteristics. "It made for a terribly inefficient process," said Paul Roche, CIO of Network Services. "When we acquired a company in 2009, we also inherited their ERP and faxing system, along with all the quirks that came with it."

“It was a tremendous burden for our IT team having to check and manage multiple fax servers each day. A simple task like trying to identify a failed fax and get it resent was a time-consuming ordeal in itself. Plus, we were incurring large hardware, software and maintenance costs in order to fax.”

Paul Roche ■ CIO ■ Network Services

Inefficient IT landscape

In the past, the large files that were generated and sent to Network Systems' mail house typically took 7-10 days to print, sort and finalize before reaching the customers. Managing and checking the fax operations required IT personnel to oversee three separate systems and do multiple tasks with no real tracking or visibility.

"It was a tremendous burden for our IT team having to check and manage multiple servers each day," says Roche. "A simple task like trying to identify a failed fax and get it resent was a time-consuming ordeal in itself. Plus, we were incurring large hardware, software and maintenance costs in order to fax."

In with the new

The decision was made to consolidate everything into one ERP system through implementation of SAP. Subsequently, Paul Roche and others at Network Services sought a certified SAP partner to maximize the efficiency of an on-demand solution.

"I went to numerous SAP user conferences, such as ASUG+Sapphire, to try to discover who the real leaders were in hosted solutions and having a strong SAP partnership — Esker quickly catapulted to the top of the list," said Roche.

Why Esker?

For Network Services, the Esker solution was the ideal model to facilitate the general and widespread use of document automation solutions within their company in a scalable, secure, affordable and simplistic way.

Roche went on to say, "Not only did Esker allow us to avoid installing and managing new software through their SaaS solution, we can also fax and mail all from the same cloud-based platform. Having an on-demand solution that enabled us to do outbound mailing and faxing of purchase orders, invoices and AR statements made the decision to go with Esker a no-brainer."

It's quite remarkable. Where it used to take several members of our IT staff to manage our different faxing systems, everything is now in one place and handled by a single person.

Paul Roche ■ CIO ■ Network Services

Showing results

With the Esker solution, Network Services was able to eliminate their old ERP systems and fully integrate outbound faxing and mailing of purchase orders, invoices and AR statements into their newly adopted SAP system.

Incoming data now automatically goes into the SAP system and makes images immediately available from the interface and visible to all appropriate parties.

"It's quite remarkable," said Roche. "Where it used to take several members of our IT staff to manage our different faxing systems, everything is now in one place and handled by a single person. The mailing process used to take one week. Now, files are sent to the mail house and go out the next day."

Network Services' three biggest benefits achieved since utilizing the Esker solution include:

- **IT simplification** (e.g., fax and mail from a single platform; no hardware, software, maintenance costs)
- **Visibility** (e.g., attachments in SAP can be accessed at the touch of a button without searching or printing)
- **Efficiency** (major amount of support time and costs saved)

On reducing errors and increasing visibility, Roche added, "If a supplier has a question about a purchase order, with single click accessibility, they can open the PDF directly from within SAP. We're guaranteed to be looking at the same document, so there's no need for us to search the fax system and reprint like we used to."

Intangible benefits

"Esker's Document Manager is effortless to use," said Roche. "And because it's the same system for everyone, it's very easy to set up new users and delegate additional users to gain access. Not only that, we've cut down on a ton of printing here in the building. Our in-house efficiency is at an all-time high."

With Esker, Network Services was able to eliminate:

- Inefficiencies of their old systems
- Costs and headaches associated with supporting software, hardware and maintenance for fax
- Approximately 5-9 days in the mailing process (e.g., generating queues, printing, sorting, etc.)
- Errors, low-visibility and hassle of having to track down or resend a fax or order
- A majority of their in-house printing and paperwork

What's ahead

Based on solid business growth and significant savings and process improvements in outbound workflow, Network Services plans to utilize Esker to automate their inbound processes as well.

"We're definitely looking forward to doing inbound accounts payable in the near future," said Roche. "We've seen major benefits on the AR side and only see that continuing in other aspects of our company."

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