



National pharmacy provider

Delivering the prescription for inbound document automation



A leading U.S. pharmacy provider wanted to automate and streamline business processes by centralizing inbound fax document management with a single solution that would reduce the cost of paper handling. After painstaking research, they found what they were looking for: Esker DeliveryWare.

Challenge: Automate and centralize

With inbound document volume of approximately 200,000 faxes per week, the company was using analog fax machines in most of its locations for a complex workflow process of faxing prescriptions to 75 pharmacies — primarily nursing homes. “Basically there was a server at the pharmacy and a fax would come in through an analog line and then be printed out through the fax server,” recalls the company’s senior systems administrator. “That meant a lot of paper handling.”

Reducing the cost and inefficiency of paper processes was the initial driver. They wanted to find a way to get documents into a centralized location and to be able to work through processes. Rather than taking on a decentralized infrastructure with 20 different servers, the company wanted to centralize with one solution that they could use for a variety of purposes.

Many of the company’s pharmacies were outgrowing their analog lines. Clients often would get busy signals during peak production time, so customers would have to redial 20 or 30 minutes later — a situation that often resulted in “stat” orders to prevent critical faxes from arriving too late. In some cases pharmacies would actually resort to alternative methods of processing orders that required more labor and were error-prone.

The company researched virtually every fax product on the market, along with document imaging and hardware appliance products. “We spent a full year getting software, installing it, evaluating it,” says the company’s manager of information systems.

Solution: Esker DeliveryWare

“Esker DeliveryWare stood out because it’s really not a fax server,” says the systems administrator. “It’s a document delivery solution, and the ways that it allows manipulation of documents to come in, no matter how they come in, was a driving factor in our choice.” The IS manager adds, “We realized we needed something more than a fax server because at some point in time we’re going to go beyond faxing. We needed a product that would grow with us, and

a fax server wouldn’t do that. That’s where the Esker solution came in. We know as our business matures, as our business needs change, Esker DeliveryWare is dynamic enough to assist us in moving along.”

The company began using Esker DeliveryWare primarily to receive faxes from nursing homes and other facilities. Faxes are routed out to printers at the different pharmacies, depending on where the pharmacy is. The DeliveryWare Rules Engine routes inbound prescriptions to the correct pharmacy based on specified criteria.

When a fax comes in from a nursing home, Esker DeliveryWare recognizes an ID number, does a database lookup to find the corresponding pharmacy, and then routes it to that printer. And, according to the systems analyst, “For printers that have multiple input and multiple output, with three or four different paper types and eight or nine mail bins, the routing capabilities allow for easier processing of fax orders.”

In addition, the company took advantage of Esker DeliveryWare database storage capabilities, maintaining a six-month archive of all faxes that come in. Pharmacists can use the Esker Web Interface for retrieval if they need to review records. The company keeps its Esker DeliveryWare database on a storage area network, providing plenty of volume for growth.

“Beyond replacing analog fax machines, we’ve also built some real redundancy into the system,” says the systems administrator. “The phone lines are on a safer grouping so they will fail over. The servers also fail over to each other, so if one server were to go down because those phone lines go down, faxes would come into the other machine. We also put two printers at every pharmacy so if one printer fails, all

“I see Esker DeliveryWare as a core technology that feeds our business. It helps us grow and maintain our business. So our use of Esker DeliveryWare will continue to increase as we look deeper into improving business processes.

▪ Manager of Information Systems



We looked at a variety of different options. Esker DeliveryWare was the only solution that came close to what we wanted to do.

▪ Senior Systems Administrator

faxes that have arrived in the meantime will get routed to the backup printer."

The company gained another capability that they didn't have with their older systems. In some facilities, prescription faxes are also printed to a central location for tracking of regional business operations, regulatory compliance, or other record-keeping purposes. The systems administrator notes, "Now they can just automatically have a fax come in and split off into two different directions, and that can save a lot of time."

Esker DeliveryWare has helped the company weather storms — literally. When devastating hurricanes in 2004 cut electricity to pharmacies in Florida and Atlantic coast states, threatening to disrupt communication (and business), the company was able to redirect 10,000 faxes from those pharmacies to printers at other pharmacy locations. "We lost no faxes during that time," recalls the systems administrator, "because all the faxes are stored centrally so if they stop printing in one location, they get printed someplace else."

In another hurricane-related situation, pharmacies in Pennsylvania and West Virginia areas lost analog phone service for nearly a week. According to the systems administrator, "They loved this system because they received all of their faxes throughout the entire ordeal. Without our Esker DeliveryWare system they would have lost their analog phone lines and not received any faxes. That was a real win situation."

Benefits/future plans

With Esker DeliveryWare, the company gained consistency and control with a paper trail, saved about three cents per fax page by going from analog to digital, and made better use of labor resources by reducing paper processing and filing.

"Today customers can pump data to us and they never get a busy signal," says the systems administrator. "The benefit of

this is they're getting more business, providing better service, and in some cases eliminating situations where they have to manually pick up the telephone and write down the fax because they can't get it through on the fax number."

With Esker DeliveryWare, The company achieves "shifts" in busy time, reducing stat orders. "Esker DeliveryWare has allowed us to push busy time ahead from, for example, 3:00 to 2:30. We've been able to shave time off the processing cycle because we can receive faxes sooner and process prescriptions faster," says the IS manager. "And the telco reductions — we went from about 17 cents per connection for the analog lines down to six or seven cents per connection. When you multiply that by 200,000 faxes a week, it's good chunk of change."

The IS manager adds, "Esker DeliveryWare has helped us cut the cost of approaching new markets. Through startup cost reduction, Esker DeliveryWare can help us enter a market for up to 50 percent less. And we've increased retention of customers because of the process of delivering documents."

"Esker DeliveryWare is about document delivery and leveraging what you have, extending applications further," says the IS manager. "One of the things I really like is that Esker DeliveryWare finally allows us to manage the full life cycle of a document. And that's not a piece of paper. It could be an email, an SMS message, or just about anything."

Esker DeliveryWare figures further into plans for the company to become a fully paperless organization. Faxes that used to be faxed to an analog fax machine are now faxed to Esker DeliveryWare and will eventually go from Esker DeliveryWare to an imaging system to maintain prescription information without any printing.

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