



EDI Performance Enhancements

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E1 Editor's Note: This is a case study of how one consumer products company significantly improved the processing time on their EDI inbound sales orders. It demonstrates the tremendous value of enterprise-wide communication, collaboration, and cooperation, and supplies details of the technical resolution.

Introduction:

With today's retailers looking to reduce costs yet provide better service to their consumers, working with the suppliers to increase product availability is emphasizing challenges through the supply chain.

As Director of ERP Applications for a consumer products company, I am fortunate to work with most areas of the business and by having a foundation in technology and integration, I get to see their moving pieces through a slightly different set of glasses.

Before I tell you how we resolved our EDI Performance Issues and took our EDI Inbound Sales Order Process from 10 hours to 3 hours, I'm going to give you the background for what (in my opinion) became one of our most successful accomplishments — forcing the business and end users to work closely together, and with the help of IT, to break silos and introduce progressive change.

It's not uncommon for technology to be the force that introduces these types of changes, however I believe that typically the types of technological change that impact a business are more along the lines of a Y2K four-digit year initiative or Oracle Fusion introduction and initial response for a need to upgrade. In more recent times, I believe we have seen much less of these types of "forced"

initiatives and we have let ourselves fall into the "If It's Not Broke, Don't Fix It" mentalities. Fortunately for me, I truly believe more in the "If It's Not Broke, Doesn't Mean It's Optimal" mindset [Mark Cuban, 2/4/2009, <http://blogmaverick.com/2009/02/04/if-its-not-broke-doesnt-mean-its-optimal-even-in-the-nba/>].

Background:

One of our recent challenges came about when sales landed a great new program with one of our largest retail customers. From my perspective in IT, one of the hats we wear is to ensure the business has what they need to accomplish their tasks effectively. We go above and beyond in some cases to put the service in our Information Technology and Services department (IT&S). We strive to focus on the Information (both the presentation of and the data that it is composed of), the Technology (the hardware and software the business uses to work with that Information), and the Services (to ensure that the Technology and Information is available for our customers, the business users, as they need it). The environment of this installation was JD Edwards E8.11 SP1, TR 8.98.47, iSeries i740, SSD.

So, to facilitate that goal of our department, for this particular challenge (like many others through the years), we get the chance to showcase our hat wardrobe! From Sales perspective, they sold one of the biggest recent opportunities. A large number of SKUs, with priority inventory and shipping. Oh and by the way, we will ship it directly to your stores for you! From the retailer's perspective, this a dream supplier and partner, helping to not only ensure inventory is going to be available but also helping to reduce costs by taking on the labor needed to pick, pack, and ship individual store orders.

We need to work with Inventory Planning and the Warehouse Distribution Center. Easy. Project Complete! Right? I'm sure many of you are saying the same thing at this point -- typical, that always happens here, no one talks to each other and expects IT to just handle it and make the impossible possible. Well it's true! If you are working as part of a successful and accomplished IT team, that is probably true! You provide exceptional service as you should and the business has come to expect it. There's nothing wrong with that. Your team is awesome! Except this time, they really did find the impossible task and I don't know if we can make it possible. Well fortunately for us, we are "multi-lingual" and accustomed to translating the department speak so that they can talk to each other and work together. This time was going to take some persistence.

Back to the issue at hand. Aside from planning needed to ensure manufacturing makes the finished goods inventory, which requires purchasing to work with our suppliers and ensure the raw materials are landed, and once that inventory is allocable, we can then shift gears to be the supplier and process the retailer's orders through that pick, pack, and ship process. But first, we have to get those orders in house and into "the system". So, as you can see, our hat wardrobe is like the back stage at a fashion show, shuffling the designs and wearing the latest trends.

In this project, "the system" at hand was the EDI Sales Order process and method of order entry in to JDE. After getting the initial orders through our EDI translator, the process involved to polish the data and create orders in JDE took several days, including user intervention and unfamiliarity with the DSDC process. After the initial struggle of getting the orders in to JDE, we then had to run our custom allocation and percent full process. Before finally running pick lists and sending the picks to the warehouse WMS to be picked, packed, and shipped.

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