

# Datatrac Survives Growth Thanks to Integration Software from EXTOL

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Huge vertically integrated shipping companies, many with household names, paved the road to online orders, package tracking, delivery confirmations and other logistics services for customers. But, size no longer ensures their unique position, or even business advantage. Through networking and third-party business integration software, Datatrac is leading the way to full customer-facing automation for shippers of all sizes, in effect transforming a network of independent business partners into the equivalent of the largest of integrated shippers.

Datatrac operates a shared, hosted network that simplifies communication, minimizes disputes and streamlines the delivery and freight settlement process without requiring and capital investment or commitment of scarce IT resources. Specializing in expedited freight delivery, logistics and transactions, Datatrac coordinates all aspects and all parties in the delivery chain: shippers, freight forwarders, delivery agents and couriers. Its main integration platform is a two-way, Windows Server 2003-based IBM xSeries server (soon to be running Linux), which handles shipping documents and transactions coming and going across a wide range of computer systems used by its customers, including iSeries, AS/400s, Windows, Unix and Linux systems.

The Datatrac electronic network replaces fax and phone as the primary way of dealing with agents and couriers. Clients include UPS Supply Chain Solutions and DHL Danzas, as well as couriers like Dynamex and Velocity. The network handles over the five million transactions per month, with a turnaround of less than 10 seconds from source to target. The Atlanta-based company's full-service network allows customers to streamline freight settlement, removing two to 10 days from the Days Sales Outstanding (DSO) workflow.

Such was not always the case. When Datatrac's clients were faced with increasing customer demand for real-time shipment visibility, Datatrac recognized that there were only two choices: provide their clients with the same capabilities as the bigger vertically integrated carriers like FedEx and UPS, or have them lose business to those larger companies.

## The Setting

Some 300 logistics companies now use Datatrac's solutions to improve their productivity and financial performance. Shippers, freight forwarders and delivery service companies use Datatrac's flagship tracking product, eTrac, to track package location and movement in real-time. eTrac also automates signature capture and proof of delivery documentation and invoicing. eTrac directly connects courier software and trucking software, including applications running on iSeries, to provide end-to-end connectivity in the courier and expedited freight industries.

But success has brought its own challenges. While Datatrac has its own network for tracking all this information, adding, connecting and integrating new clients such as shippers and other customers required custom programming. Whether they were using such standards as EDI or FTP, were providing data in their own format, or needed a new protocol that Datatrac had not implemented, Datatrac had work to do for every connection.

This repetitive effort was consuming the time of Datatrac's developers, who are the same people charged with new product development, enhancements and improvements to the network itself. In a way, adding each new customer meant the Datatrac network needed to transform itself to accommodate the customer's document or transaction format. By having programmers assigned to this sort of development instead of adding new features or developing new applications, Datatrac could lose new business opportunities. Unless an automated system was employed, manually adding customers would be at the expense of new product and service enhancements. Business would stagnate.

*"Adding new accounts manually was a slow and laborious task until an automated business integration solution was deployed," says Gardland Duvall, chief technology officer of Datatrac. "We integrate customers systems with eTrac so they can accept orders and updates electronically. To accomplish this in the past, companies either needed to conform to our standard, or we had to*

*have core developers code the integrations by hand. We decided to look for software that would allow us to map all these document types, and that's how we wound up with EBI."* EXTOL

International's EXTOL Business Integrator (EBI) has greatly reduced the time Datatrac developers needed to integrate their standard network formats to meet the requirements of each new customer. The company can now add new customers faster, easier and with fewer resources than before implementing EBI.



*"We knew that a tool like this could save significant programmer*

*hours," says Duvall, "because most of the work is done by our implementation team" using the integrator. "Furthermore, the implementation department is much closer to the customer than the programmers in the IT department, and the implementation specialist can work directly with the customer."*

*"It costs us less to get it done, and it saves the customers money. If they don't have a reusability component, we'd still be doing custom work, charging them for it, resulting in a business disadvantage to ourselves."*

Datatrac has 300 customers, and achieving its goal of growing to thousands would be impossible without this automation. They simply would not have been able to afford the necessary programming power to both develop eTrac interfaces and new network functionality and still remain competitive.

Now developers are able to focus on new feature, function and products and use development resources for strategic projects, not tactical tasks.

## And the Winner is... The Customer

In order to more effectively manage their delivery operation, while ensuring more prompt and accurate payment for their services, Corporate Couriers decided to implement eTrac, Wireless eTrac and COPS. Now the majority of Corporate Couriers customers place their orders online, enabling dispatchers to receive critical delivery and pickup instructions in real time. The customers have up-to-the-minute information about delivery status with eTrac. And with Wireless eTrac, dispatchers and drivers can share real-time order and delivery information with Nextel mobile phones.

While the customers benefit from faster provisioning, Datatrac also wins. Being able to deploy its programming resources to product improvement — instead of custom-programming to add a new interface or new customer - helps develop new business. It's the proverbial win-win.

None of the parties sees the EBI software, which is the invisible glue that holds all the elements together, integrating business partners and applications.

## Results

By implementing the full suite of Datatrac courier solutions, Corporate Couriers added the flexibility and functionality necessary to move their business forward without adding staff.

Datatrac solutions have equipped the company to handle 128% more orders and realize an 86 percent increase in revenue. Corporate Couriers estimates they are saving \$125,000 per year with the increased efficiencies that Datatrac brought to their operating environment.

*"When EBI is invisible to the customer, that means it's doing its job,"* comments Duvall. Like many other catalysts, EBI is only visible in the results it achieves for its customers.

But the benefits of EBI are far from invisible to Datatrac itself. In the first six months of EBI use, the company's utilization of their own core developers working on core projects has increased by about 25%. Duvall says that this translates into *"a significant reduction in the time required to deliver new functionality, and a huge savings of opportunity costs."* Datatrac believes that within just the next few months, EBI will have paid for itself.

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