

Woodstream Discovers the Better Mouse Trap

Provider of Wildlife and Pest Control Systems and Branded Consumer Products Improves Customer Collaboration and Internal Integration

Woodstream provides wildlife and pest control systems, lawn and garden products and pet supplies. Brands include Victor Pest, Havahart, SaferBrand, Fi-Shock and Perky-Pet, with product lines including traps, repellents, baits, bird feeders and landscaping and houseplant solutions.

They are a technologically sophisticated company who has found a better way to handle Business-to-Business (B2B) communication, Application-to-Application (A2A) integration and automation of internal processes and reporting. In other words, they have “discovered the better mouse trap” for using business integration technology solutions to improve their business.

Woodstream sells to customers of all sizes - from big box retailers and home improvement giants such as Wal Mart, K-Mart, Lowe’s and Home Depot, to hardware chains such as Ace, True Value and Do-It-Best, to down-town, mom and pop and specialty stores. They have more than 1,000 customers, representing over 100,000 retail outlets.

The company was informed by their legacy EDI system provider that their product would no longer be supported. Woodstream would have to go through a complete conversion and platform change to use the vendor’s supported solution. They decided to take the opportunity to investigate other solutions and other providers.

As the team was establishing requirements for a new system, they uncovered needs beyond traditional EDI. In order to accommodate their customers who were not using EDI, they needed an automated way to accept and integrate formats such as spreadsheets, flat files and XML. They also pinpointed a need for



A2A integration to automate and synchronize sharing of data between disparate applications and platforms for better reporting and pinpointed a need for A2A integration to automate and synchronize sharing of data between disparate applications and platforms for better reporting and improved internal business processes.

Woodstream looked into several software products on the market, and narrowed it down to three. In the end, they decided to go with the EXTOL Business Integrator (EBI) because it offered so much more functionality beyond EDI and it could be managed by their existing team.

“We knew that EXTOL had the potential to be a key product for our future growth,” said Barry Mowrer, Director of IT for Woodstream. *“It’s flexible and its any-to-any mapping makes it a tool for any number of important IT projects.”*

Woodstream is using EXTOL far more than they first anticipated. *“We quickly discovered how amazingly versatile EXTOL is. We use it for all integration projects,”* explained Larry Schumacher, Network Database Administrator.



EBI has created a way to expedite the extensive amount of work required by IT during the company acquisitions. They've enhanced reporting throughout the enterprise with their ability to synchronize data and processes and expose data from disparate systems.

They are increasing the availability of their web ordering system and automating the integration between website orders and their back-end applications and processes. They are also using EXTOL to manage both traditional EDI and the much more complex automation of integrating non-EDI formats such as spreadsheets, XML and flat files.

Managing Inventory Across the Supply Chain

Woodstream had already established good EDI relationships with its largest trading partners. But with EXTOL, they were able to take these relationships to a higher level by linking to their partner's Point of Sales (POS) systems.

POS data from many retailers comes into Woodstream's iSeries Server. Using EBI's automated mapping tools, Woodstream created the processes that validate and move data to an application on their SQL Server, which aggregates the information and generates comprehensive reports using Woodstream's standard enterprise tools.

The reports generated give visibility into the customer data, which enables the sales team to have better relationships with the customers. Sales can make the customers aware of trends in regions, products and seasons and make recommendations on how to more efficiently buy Woodstream products.

Mergers and Acquisitions

A big component of Woodstream's plan for market penetration is growth through acquisitions. Acquisitions are a challenge for any IT department. Typically, they're not announced until the contracts are signed. And then IT is expected to transfer all of the trading partner and transaction data of the acquired company into their systems — within days. This often means "burning the midnight oil" to meet the deadline.

WOODSTREAM'S BUSINESS DELIVERABLES ENABLED BY THE EXTOL BUSINESS INTEGRATOR:

- Synchronize data and processes across the organization
- Automate processing of web orders
- Traditional EDI
- Automate processing of spreadsheets, flat files and XML data
- Integration of demand and POS data
- Visibility into up-to-date supply and demand data
- Speedy merger and acquisition data

"We occasionally get the data from the other company in an Excel spreadsheet," explained Schumacher. "The only way to enter the data into our systems was to manually rekey it. This was slow, labor intensive and error prone."

Now, Woodstream quickly and easily sets up maps between the Excel spreadsheets and Woodstream applications, and the data is completely integrated with Woodstream's processes.

It takes minutes to do what used to take days — and without the errors. EXTOL provides the agility the IT team needs to meet tight deadlines with near-routine activity levels.

Order Placement and Fulfillment

"Woodstream is pretty sophisticated and complex. We have developed procedures so that a very high percentage of orders are never touched until they are actually picked, packed and shipped," explained Mowrer.

In fact, 70% of their orders come in through EDI. 120 of their major trading partners are EDI capable. They use 22 different EDI transaction types.

Woodstream uses distribution centers strategically located throughout the United States and one in Canada. Woodstream outsources their trucking. When an order comes in from the website, from an EDI-enabled partner, or on a spreadsheet attached to an email, it automatically flows through PRMS, which sends data to a warehouse management system in the distribution centers.

“Our EDI orders aren’t touched by human hands until it’s time for pick and pack in the distribution centers,” said Mowrer. “We’ve got the system so finely tuned that most orders ship within 1 to 3 days, go into transit and reach their final destination 3 or 4 days after that.”

The Next Frontier: Spreadsheets, XML, Flat Files and More

EDI is just one component of a B2B strategy. Another big challenge for Woodstream is handling orders from customers using non-EDI formats — generally smaller customers submitting orders on spreadsheets or flat files.

Prior to using EXTOL, these orders were handled through “Swivel Chair Integration” (manually rekeying data from one system to another), and were cumbersome to say the least. But now, using EXTOL, Woodstream has begun the process of automating the integration of non-EDI formats. They map the fields in a spreadsheet or flat file directly into their order entry system.

“EXTOL is helping us a lot,” said Griffin. “It has given us the flexibility to accommodate all of the requirements of our different customers.”

Is There Really a Better Mouse Trap?

There’s always a better mouse trap – just look at the Woodstream product line. And as technology continues to progress, there will always be more efficient ways to run a company.

“EXTOL is such an exciting tool!” says Schumacher. “Simply put, it’s a tool that we can use to move data from one place to another.”

Woodstream has found more uses for this tool than they originally anticipated. Now, IT projects that once seemed daunting are immediately considered manageable because of EXTOL. Whatever request comes along next — whether from a customer or from an internal department — Woodstream’s IT department can handle it because of the agility afforded by EXTOL.

**FIND OUT HOW EXTOL CAN HELP YOU.
CALL (201) 847-1200 OR VISIT
WWW.EXTOL.COM/CONTACTUS**