



Spotless Punch Case Study



INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Spotless Punch is a company that manufactures various types of consumer products including dyes, pet products and shoe care products.

Its main customers are UK supermarkets like Tesco, Morrisons, Asda etc as well as specialist retailers like Dunelm Mill, Clarks and Pets at Home.

Like most companies in this environment, it is required to support the exchange of EDI documents with its larger customers but was not content with doing the bare minimum simply to keep their largest customers happy.

Instead Spotless Punch makes very extensive use of EDI and its associated techniques to simplify and streamline their business processes. This allows Spotless to better serve its customers, keep its own costs to a minimum and gain an all-important competitive edge.

At the time of writing, Spotless Punch exchanges EDI files, in one form or another, with 68 trading partners with new relationships being established more or less continually.

The purpose of this document is to describe the ways in which its EDI system, Advance Business Collaborator from AdvanceFirst Technologies, is providing tangible business benefits which would not be available to companies using other EDI systems.

TRADITIONAL EDI

As you would expect, traditional EDI is used very extensively by Spotless Punch. They receive orders and send ASNs and invoices in both EDIFACT and Tradacoms format.

Also as you would expect, incoming orders go through a mapping process which generates files of order data that can be imported into the main business systems, which in their case is X3.

In addition to this, incoming orders go through some extra processing to help ensure data integrity and to provide the Sales department with information that assists them in their work. Each order goes through a validation step which is designed to ensure that any delivery location and product codes in the original EDI data are recognisable. If any invalid codes are detected, the Sales department receives an automatic e-mail describing the problem so that they can take whatever corrective actions are required.

The Sales department also receives a human-readable version of each order which they can refer to as the order is processed through their business systems. In effect, this provides them with a "horses-mouth" version of the order that helps to ensure the goods are delivered completely and accurately.



In the early hours of each Sunday morning, Spotless receives a very large batch of orders from Clarks. Each order is for the shoe care products that are required by one Clarks store that week.

In addition to the normal validation, mapping and e-mailing that occurs for every incoming order, these Clarks orders are subjected to some additional processing.

Clarks require Spotless to prioritise the incoming orders according to the relative importance of each store. Some Clarks stores have a very high turnover of goods and must be supplied with stock at all times, other Clarks stores are able to wait for stock if necessary.

As each order is processed, the EDI system determines the priority of the store and files into a "High", "Medium" or "Low" area as appropriate. The orders from the "High" area are imported into the Spotless business systems first, followed by the medium and then the low. In this way, any products that are in short supply will be allocated to the high-priority stores in preference to the medium and low.

The EDI system also generates a spreadsheet summary of all the Clarks orders received and e-mails it to the Sales Manager, again to provide a useful point of reference as the orders are picked and dispatched.

This type of sorting is only possible because of the extreme flexibility of the routing functions that come as standard with Advance Business Collaborator.

Another example of this concerns a common problem that occurs when the customer provides information within their orders which is of no interest to the supplier, but must be referenced on the ASNs and invoices that are sent back.

The "traditional" solution is to modify the import processes so that this "baggage" information can be brought into the business systems, even though it has no value to the supplier. This often involves a considerable amount of reprogramming within the business application which is both costly and time-consuming.

The business rules functionally within Advance Business Collaborator provides a means by which this "baggage" can be recorded on the EDI server to be referenced when the ASNs and invoices come through at a later date. This works very effectively as it avoids the need to make unnecessary modifications to the back-end systems while still providing the customers with all the information they require.

INVOICE PROCESSING

In most EDI trading relationships where a customer sends electronic orders to a supplier, they also expect to receive EDI invoices in return.

When sending EDI invoices using other EDI systems, it is quite common to lose visibility of the invoices as they are sent out. This means the supplier cannot easily prove that all the invoices that should have been sent, have in fact been sent.

At Spotless Punch, this problem is solved by generating an automatic log for every invoice as it is sent. This log, which contains information like the invoice number, invoice date, Net amount, VAT etc. is then presented to the financial department as a spreadsheet. They can then use this to automatically detect any invoices that should have been submitted but were not, well before the payment date on those invoices is reached.

The EDI system at Spotless has been configured to send invoices in a number of different formats and a number of different ways according to the requirements of each customer. For example:

- Sainsburys require Tradacoms INVFIL 9 EDI files sent via the Tradanet service
- So do Tesco
- Asda require Tradacoms INVFIL 9 EDI files but sent via AS2
- Dunelm Mill require EDI invoices but sent via FTP
- Pets at Home require a specific form of XML invoice sent via AS2

- Borovick Fabrics can't accept EDI data so are sent human-readable, HTML, versions of the invoices via e-mail
- Similarly, C&H Fabrics can't accept EDI invoices but prefer to receive readable versions in PDF format rather than HTML.

One of the major strengths of the Advance Business Collaborator system is its ability to manage all the various formats and delivery methods from a single centralised location.

OTHER TYPES OF ELECTRONIC DOCUMENTS

In addition to the usual orders, ASNs and invoices, Spotless also handle various other document types. These include:

- XML orders from Pets at Home. These are handled in the same way as traditional EDI orders.
- Remittance advices from B&Q and Asda. The data from these documents is not needed by the business systems, these files are converted into human-readable form and e-mailed to the administrator who needs to see remittance advice information.
- Price files for Sainsburys. Information about the current prices of each product supplied to Sainsburys is converted into a Tradacoms EDI format before being sent via the Tradanet service.
- Sales reports from John Lewis – the processing of these deserves a more detailed description.

SALES REPORTS

Sales report messages are sent to Spotless by John Lewis every week. They contain information about how many of each Spotless product was sold by each JLP store the previous week.

The EDI system processes this valuable information by first adding it to a master file which stores sales information for each week in the current year, updating it with the latest sales figures.

This master file is then processed to produce an Excel spreadsheet for the Marketing department.

This spreadsheet contains one worksheet for each JLP store, each of which contains the week-by-week sales figures for each group of products. The spreadsheet also shows the average sales of each product per week, and the popularity of each product relative to the other products within the group.

After the store-level worksheets comes a summary worksheet that shows the total sales of each product in each group throughout the whole of the John Lewis Partnership, again with averages and popularity measurements.

Finally the spreadsheet contains a graph of the sales of each product group each week, followed by popularity graphs that show which products within each group are selling most effectively.

The information this spreadsheet contains is extremely valuable to the business and helps the executives of the company make strategic decisions about the marketing of the company's products.

This facility is a relatively recent addition to the EDI system used by Spotless Punch, although the spreadsheet itself has existed in a similar form for some time. Previously, the information was maintained manually which was both time-consuming and error prone.

By automating the production of the spreadsheet, the EDI system delivers totally accurate sales information in a timely manner directly to the people who need to act upon it.

This is another example of how the Advance Business Collaborator system can deliver business benefits that would not be expected from any other EDI system.



If your company has a customer or supplier community it would like to trade with electronically, via a secure and auditable route, gaining all the associated benefits such as: **simplified trading processes, reduced costs and an improved, more responsive supply chain**, then you should be talking to **AdvanceFirst Technologies!**

For further details and pricing, please contact Sales on: +44 (0)1932 230024
or e-mail him at: enquiries@advancefirst.com. Or visit www.advancefirst.com

