

advance despatches

AdvanceFirst Technologies Newsletter

Issue 1

Welcome to our newsletter. Our primary aim is to keep you informed of what has been happening in a number of areas including software development, training, new product introduction, new services and new client applications. As business evolves we plan to keep you abreast of other new announcements regarding alliances, partnerships and associations. It is our objective to keep the newsletter as brief, informative and to-the-point as possible with a view to stimulating interest in certain areas or indeed providing a forum through which we can collect your views on what we can do to assist you to meet your business objectives.

We aim to produce this newsletter approximately twice a year but this may vary depending on what we have to tell you at any point in time. I sincerely hope that you'll find this regular newsletter of use, but I recognise that it's your opinion that matters, so if you have any ideas as to what you might like to see in the future issues, please mail me directly at:

peter.thomas@advancefirst.com

I look forward to receiving your comments.

Peter Thomas

Managing Director

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GENERAL INFORMATION:

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Announcements

Distributors:

Australian Distributor Appointed

AdvanceFirst Technologies is pleased to announce a new Distribution Agreement with "Beyond Commerce" and "Team Computing" in Australia.

The primary focus of this distributor will be to concentrate on providing sales and support in Australasia and some Asia Pacific Territories for both **Intercept-400**, world leading EDI software for IBM AS400's and iSeries, and the Advance Broad Connect (ABC) range of software. The Management Team at AdvanceFirst have worked with Beyond Commerce for a number of years and had no hesitation recommending them to become a full distributor.

The strategic relationship they have developed with Team Computing in Australia should work very well for both companies and will give them a greater commercial as well as stronger technical presence. This makes them a very attractive proposition for the distribution of our range of new generation electronic trading software in Australasia.

All parties are very pleased to make this announcement and believe it will be the start of a very successful, long term, working relationship.

www.beyondcommerce.com.au
www.teamcomputing.com.au

OmPrompt - Voice/Fax and Data to EDI

AdvanceFirst Technologies have a new strategic relationship in place with OmPrompt. OmPrompt are a new company heavily backed by 3i and Benchmark, utilising technology unique to them alone. The technology facilitates automatic "any to any" translation. For example Fax to EDI, Voice to EDI, CSV to HTML, EDI to CSV, without the need for human intervention by ways of writing maps. OmPrompt enables all participants in message-driven trading communities to connect and communicate freely. Released from the constraints of formats and devices, companies can engage faster and more flexibly, to realise value earlier with reduced risk and disruption.

"OmLink" (provided by AdvanceFirst) provides their users with the simple, low cost, secure transportation layer (encryption, audit trails, error checking and digital signatures) that they require between their business, the OmPrompt translation hub and onward to their trading partners.

For more information, please email:

enquiries@advancefirst.com

or go to: www.omprompt.com



Advance Broad Connect

UPDATE

Many of our clients are already aware of the power of the new **Advance Broad Connect software (ABC)**. Indeed as it has been designed to front-end **Intercept-400**, many of you are already users.

Without going into a product pitch here is a list of just some of the functionality and hence benefits, ABC delivers its users:

- ◆ **Intelligent Routing** - When a document either enters or leaves the business, ABC can be instructed to transform it into another format or subset of that data and forward it via multiple routes to other folders, applications or locations before it continues on its way.

- ◆ **AS1/AS2 EDI over the Internet capability** - Cut your EDI costs by up to 90% trading securely and fully auditably at high speed, via the Internet. Have you always wanted to trade electronically with those small to medium sized customers or suppliers? Now the technology is cost effective.

- ◆ **Full data transformation capability** - ABC can accept EDI, CSV, Fixed Field format, XML or Binary files and can output the same. In between ABC transforms everything into XML from which these multiple outputs can be generated.

- ◆ **High-speed VPN connections into Tradanet™** - What speed do you currently achieve when accessing Tradanet? Let us guess 9.6k on a dial-up connection. Have you thought about going in via a high speed Broadband link? Up to 100 times faster. How much time and money could that save your company?

All ABC needs is an Intel server (PC) running windows 2000 or upward. If you'd like to know more about what ABC could do for your business, please e-mail enquiries@advancefirst.com or phone us on 01932 776357.

- **Multi-User Server version now available**

HIGH SPEED VAN CONNECTION

A CLIENT'S EXPERIENCE

Established in 1879, G. Costa & Company Ltd has a reputation for innovation, quality & service. Their portfolio comprises a range of internationally renowned brand names from around the globe such as "Blue Dragon". They source quality food products to meet the ever changing needs of retail, wholesale and food service customers in the UK and internationally:

Glen Boyle, Group IT Manager for G. Costa & Company Ltd:

"As we were using a 64K modem to dial into the VAN we would often get line drops and therefore interchanges in error, especially if large interchanges were being exchanged. It also meant we were spending long periods of time connected to the VAN with the subsequent high phone bills. A direct modem connection also represents a potential security issue.

I spoke to AdvanceFirst about these issues. They told me about their Advance Broad Connect (ABC) product which uses a VPN connection over either a dedicated ADSL line or the corporate Internet connection to access the VAN. It sounded just the thing. Installation of ABC and integration with our back end EDI system took less than a day; staff were professional, courteous and friendly and the pre and post-sales support have been excellent.

The VPN connection is considerably faster than dial-up, allowing us to connect to the VAN more often so we can collect orders and send up invoices much quicker. ABC is very easy to use and enables much easier interaction with the VAN, especially extracting mailbox listings, etc. It is also much cheaper than dial-up since we use our existing corporate Internet connection so there are no associated phone bills. The VPN provides better security than dial-up so there is virtually no chance of data interception."

Intercept-400

Version 6 Now Available

UPDATE

As you may well be aware, the long awaited new full version release of **Intercept-400** (Version 6) is now available on request to all existing or new users. It has been over twelve months in development, but we truly believe that **Intercept-400** is now back where it belongs, at the leading edge of AS400/iSeries EDI enabling software.

New Functionality for Intercept-400 Version 6 includes: -

- ◆ *Fully integrated XML mapper*
- ◆ *New (optional) Graphical User Interface (GUI) Admin Client*
- ◆ *Queue size limitations removed*
- ◆ *SAP™ Module*
- ◆ *New commands to support AS2 (EDI over the Internet) integration via the Integrated File System (IFS)*

B2B OR NOT TO BE!

It was considered not so long ago that the introduction of XML would quickly bring about the demise of EDI. Whilst the rate of assimilation of XML has fallen short of the pundits original predictions its inexorable adoption, within variants of ERP systems and Supply Chain applications together with the emergence of Internet EDI as a secure, low-cost value added network alternative, has meant that companies must be able to support both XML and EDI formats to ensure successful fulfilment of their eCommerce strategy both for Inter-company collaboration as well as intra-company exchanges.

There is compelling evidence that Internet EDI is now growing at an increasing pace with several major Hubs (customers) actively encouraging its adoption by their suppliers. This requires that companies both large and small need a transformation capability that generates B2B output in either format depending upon the nature of their trading partners' business relationship.

In fact, the importance of XML-EDI transformation has even more significance than the exchange of structured information between trading partners; such transformations are critical to providing a coherent integrated solution between legacy and new enterprise applications for back-end connectivity and workflow required to support the complete business process.

“Such transformations are crucial to providing a coherent integrated solution”

Coming closer to home, AdvanceFirst have experienced this change taking place within its clients' base and we've set out 3 client scenarios to illustrate how we're responding positively towards meeting their changing business requirements

COMPANY A: A large multi-national company who are implementing a significant upgrade to their internal systems.

This company, as many other companies have been discovering, recognised the requirement to bridge between the emerging technologies being implemented in their new systems and the technology already implemented in their existing systems, as well as the need to maintain operational stability, compatibility and continued interaction with their trading partners. As their new upgraded systems were using XML as the core means of business communication, many of their trading partners' systems continue to use traditional EDI as the mechanism by which they exchange business documents. Company A needed to find a means to link together all the different systems.

AdvanceFirst's ABC solution provides the vital link between the XML technology used by their internal systems and the EDI message formats required by their trading partners. Using the powerful XSL capabilities based on W3C¹ standards, enhanced with a library of customised functions, we developed the style sheets needed to transform the business data from XML to EDI and from EDI to XML.

Our ABC software with the customised style sheets were loaded on a local in-house server. Using the powerful routing capabilities of the ABC server, each XML document received from the in-house systems are automatically routed to the correct style sheet for transformation into the appropriate EDIFACT standard message. Once transformed, the message is then further routed to an in-house application or placed on the queue for transmission to the Tradanet™ service over the secure VPN broadband capability of the ABC software.

Using this solution, they now have the means to further develop their internal systems using XML with the confidence of knowing that they can pace the transition to their new systems to suit their business requirements. Using ABC to transform the document syntax into the local format of each system, each new system can be developed to an independent schedule which significantly reduces the risk and project complexity.

“pacing the transition to their new systems to suit their business requirements”

This approach also means that trading partners' systems are insulated from the company's internal developments and eliminates the need to request dramatic changes from their business partners and to a specific timetable.

COMPANY B: An existing user of **Intercept-400** eCommerce software tightly integrated with the ABC Link communications module to provide a high speed secure VPN connection to the UK Tradanet™ service.

A new release of their ERP software meant that their ERP system now generated business documents in XML. However, in order to continue working with their existing trading partners and minimise any potential impact on their trading partner's own systems, there was a need to take the XML output from the ERP system and to transform it into the Tradacoms syntax required by their trading partners.

The solution was to extend the use of their ABC software in order to take the XML documents output by the ERP system and using ABC's software XSL style sheet data transformation capability generate Tradacoms documents.

Each document generated by the ERP system is placed in a folder on the ABC server. The ABC software monitors each folder and when a document arrives, automatically detects which style sheet should be used to perform the XML to EDI transformation. Once transformed, the EDI Tradacoms message is put on the queue for transmission over the secure high speed VPN connection to Tradanet™.

All inbound EDI messages from Tradanet™ are automatically processed by ABC to detect which style sheet should be used to transform the received message from EDI Tradacoms syntax to XML as required by their ERP application. Once the transformation is complete, the XML output is placed in a folder ready to be processed.



