

CASE STUDY

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EDI as core application



TRINKS GmbH: EDI as core application

Without EDI software to communicate with its approximately 1,800 EDI partners, one can no longer imagine the beverage wholesaler TRINKS today. The company, with headquarters in Goslar, Germany, relies on menten GmbH technology for pure EDIFACT formats as well as for e-mail and occasional fax traffic - and has done so for over twenty years.

Meike Clausing, who works in the IT department of TRINKS and is responsible for EDI, has been with the company since 1998. Since about this time, the company has also been involved with electronic data exchange - from the beginning with i-effect, the solution for electronic data exchange and data integration on IBM Power System from menten. The software is used to process incoming and outgoing EDIFACT messages and to send PDF files as fax or e-mail. The customers receive shipping notifications (DESADV) to announce upcoming deliveries. Invoices are generated in the ERP system, the spool files are converted into PDF format with i-effect and sent by e-mail.

TRINKS also no longer organizes the ordering process to its suppliers in paper form. The beverage manufacturers receive ORDERS (orders), send ORDRSP (order responses) back and receive, if they have sent their invoices, a payment notification (REMADV).

The IT team has integrated almost 1,800 EDI partners into i-effect. Creditors to whom the company sends order faxes are also maintained there, as well as those with whom i-effect handles e-mail traffic. In the meantime, however, hardly any faxes are used, but almost everything that is not EDI runs via e-mail. TRINKS operates classic EDI traffic, i.e. the exchange of EDIFACT formats, with about 180 partners. In a typical week about 5,700 orders, 5,900 shipping notifications and 21,200 invoices are converted and sent with i-effect. On the side received via EDI there are 18,000 orders, 13,300 shipping notifications and 5,200 invoices.



Not once failed in 20 years

The EDI system is installed on the in-house servers. Detlef Waschke, IT manager of TRINKS GmbH: „i-effect is a core application for us. If it were to fail, that would be bad. But this has not even been the case in the last 20 years.“The IT department is extremely satisfied with the support from menten GmbH, they react quickly, the ans-

wers are competent. For example, time and again partners change parameters in the formatting of their EDI files; the support team can provide assistance if necessary. Customer orders via App, as menten has already realized for other customers, are an interesting option for TRINKS regarding the further expansion of the system.



Eight different mappings for individual customer groups

If a company - like TRINKS - communicates with many companies via EDI, the challenge is always that each partner has different peculiarities when it comes to designing its EDI formats. Only very few of them adhere to the genuine EDIFACT standard. Customer or partner-specific deviations are

the rule - these must be stored in the mapping. „With a standard mapping we definitely cannot get there because there are so many deviations. For orders alone we have eight different mappings for individual customer groups,” says Meike Clausing.



TRINKS-IT takes over the creation of mappings in i-effect to a large extent by itself. Meike Clausing: „The mapping GUI was designed in such a way that - once you have studied it - we can essentially build the map-

pings ourselves“. But sometimes there is simply not enough time or the mapping is technically a bit more challenging - then the menten support team will of course help.

No more transmission or communication errors

„The advantage of data exchange via EDI is that we can meet our partners' requirements for prompt delivery announcements, order confirmations, etc. and the error rate due to communication or notification errors is lower," says Meike Clausing. The same applies to incoming customer orders: i-effect transfers them directly into the ERP system, no one has to type in order data from order papers anymore. Even when orders are placed by telephone, transmission or communication errors are common. Not so with EDI traffic. Even if an article number is transmitted incorrectly, this is quickly clarified in the course of the plausibility check.

As communication channel TRINKS uses AS2. There are hardly any transmission costs; all you need is an internet connection. The incoming formats are converted with i-effect into the in-house interfaces and read into the iSeries/DB2 systems. In addition to AS2 as the main communication channel, TRINKS also receives EDIFACT data via SFTP or as e-mail attachment and processes them with i-effect. In the ERP area TRINKS started with

the AS/400 software „Dogas/400" from Copa Systeme GmbH. Around this software the IT team has developed many additional components in the last years, for example in the area of invoicing. This construct is currently being replaced by an industry solution for the beverage industry from SAP.

„In the first step, we will retain the existing in-house files, which will be converted to the SAP IDoc format in the future," explains Meike Clausing. This mapping takes place in i-effect. The FI/CO accounting module of SAP is already productive. Invoicing is currently still done with the old, self-developed software. To transfer their data to SAP accounting, they are converted with i-effect. New mappings were created in the menten solution for this purpose.





The company

TRINKS GmbH with its headquarters in Goslar is one of the leading service providers in Germany in the field of beverage logistics. As a specialist beverage wholesaler (GFGH), TRINKS supplies the food trade and beverage pick-up markets in a wholesale distribution function. The company obtains the products from its suppliers and takes over the supply of full containers as well as the disposal of empties. TRINKS has 17 nationally distributed locations with an area of approx. 700,000 m², 10,000 unloading points including collection customers and approx. 17,000 full product articles and 4,000 service articles. With 1,600 employees, the company generated net sales of 1.6 billion euros in 2018.





Challenges

Due to the large number of messages to be processed within a very short time window, a wide variety of message types must be converted to the EDI standard with individual adjustments and transferred to the ERP system. The prerequisite here is a standardization of the data before transfer to the ERP system so that no manual activities are required after the data transfer. Thus, communication and transmission errors are eliminated even before the data is transferred.



Solution

TRINKS has been using menten's EDI solution since about 1998. Special requirements can be met by partner-specific mappings, since logic can be integrated upstream or downstream. Today, about 1,800 EDI partners are connected. EDI communication as well as the conversion between incoming formats and the internal DB2 is done by i-effect.



Benefits

The main advantages of using EDI are the high processing speed and the error-free communication within the entire process chain from the order to the electronic dispatch of the invoice. By saving paper, TRINKS also makes an important contribution to environmental protection.

Additional Information & Setup

For a free 30-day trial and detailed feature overview
of the modules: **www.i-effect.com**

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menten Software is aimed at medium-sized IBM Power Systems users in all industries. Since 1989, the team has focused on the development of server-based IBM i standard solutions. Service and maintenance, system technology and hardware sales flank the IT services around the server family.