

“For years we struggled with the workload and investment required to process our suppliers’ product information...now we can focus on new and exciting ways to use the information.”

Dave Wallace
Director of eBusiness

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BETTER PRODUCT INFORMATION A BETTER WAY

Challenge

xpedx, the country’s largest paper merchant, found itself in a predicament. To win as much business as possible, the company needed to provide up-to-date, complete, and informative product information to its customers. Traditionally, this product information was distributed in paper catalogs with full knowledge that some information was obsolete upon publication. As xpedx.com and other electronic transaction vehicles gained importance, xpedx had an even greater need for rich product information.

To add to the problem, xpedx recognized that the source of this valuable product data rested outside its four walls, with the original product manufacturers. The company struggled to manage the challenges associated with acquiring, processing, and publishing the disparate product information from hundreds of suppliers.

“When we only needed product information a few times a year, getting it was a manageable problem,” said Scott Dickerson, xpedx National eBusiness Manager for Catalogs & Content Services. “With our exploding need for up-to-date electronic product data we knew we needed a better solution.”

Solution

xpedx and Liaison Technologies designed and implemented a managed service solution to the product information problem. Liaison provides services and its Enterprise Content Director technology to continuously acquire, cleanse, categorize, and enhance up-to-date product data from all xpedx suppliers. Liaison manages the end-to-end process for xpedx, maintaining a single database of information for more than 100,000 products and updating it every few days.

Results

“This product information solution fit our needs perfectly,” said Dickerson. “We now enjoy a fast, efficient, and accurate way to maintain item data for our catalogs. Plus, we can use this same data to meet our customers’ wide range of electronic business needs.”

With the single database maintained by xpedx and Liaison, xpedx can now publish product catalogs in less than a week – a process that used to take months – enabling the company to keep up with market changes. This same database is the source of record for the xpedx web site and other electronic business transactions.

xpedx has also managed to streamline its work processes since implementing the new product information solution. Now, the employees who spent most of their time acquiring and manually processing product data from suppliers focus on sales instead.

“We’re glad to put more resources to work directly generating revenue,” Dickerson said.

Finally, xpedx realized a surprising but important benefit after implementing Liaison’s Enterprise Content Director technology. Using the product classification developed for the database in its internal reporting gave xpedx important business insights that were never before possible. “Now that we can look at metrics across various products we can do analysis we just couldn’t do before,” Dickerson said.

Future

Already, xpedx has seen beneficial results from the consistent and updated product information it provides to customers in catalogs and online. Going forward, the company plans to leverage Liaison’s solution by providing richer, more customer-focused data to specific customer groups such as a catalog of products customized for a specific market or industry.

About xpedx

xpedx, an International Paper company, is a customer-driven distributor of printing paper, packaging supplies and equipment, facility supplies and graphic imaging prepress equipment and supplies. The xpedx market focus is retail, commercial printing, on-demand printing, heavy manufacturing, the automotive industry, hi-tech manufacturing, publishing and national accounts. Through xpedx.com, customers receive eBusiness solutions including on-line order capability with real-time inventory accessibility and 24/7 access.

About Liaison Technologies

Liaison Technologies helps companies transform themselves into real-time enterprises. Clients are able to maximize profits through shortened time-to-market, improved supply-chain flow and synchronized product information. More than 2,500 organizations have benefited from Liaison Technologies’ consulting services and its real-time transaction network and product information management solutions. Operating the world’s largest papiNet XML hub, Liaison Technologies-managed services enable more than 2 million XML-based, real-time transactions per month.



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