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Access EDI in the Cloud: The Value of a True Microsoft Dynamics Integration

A TrueCommerce EDI eBrief for SMB Decision-Makers

INTRODUCTION

As cloud computing has matured and grown in popularity, its scalability, security, and connectivity benefits have now surpassed the on-premises software predecessors. As a result, more and more small- to mid-sized organizations (SMBs) are turning to cloud infrastructure — particularly for accounting and ERP.

There are several compelling benefits for businesses to consider when moving their ERP solution to a cloud solution like Microsoft Dynamics:

➢ **Improved productivity and communication.** The Internet has created a level of flexibility in how SMBs can access data within their ERP and has dramatically simplified connectivity for mobile workers. Anytime, anywhere access to data by authorized partners and customers, as well as employees, can reduce delays and lead times, ultimately accelerating the order-to-cash cycle from weeks to days. For example, instead of waiting to be physically present at the office in the morning, an employee can post new orders at home in the evening, reducing wait time at the warehouse.

➢ **Reduced IT complexity and overhead.** Hosting your ERP in the cloud eliminates maintenance, backup, and upgrade responsibilities, significantly reducing demands on limited IT resources. Likewise, because cloud Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) solutions like Microsoft Dynamics are always up-to-date, there's no danger of being "trapped" with an outdated system due to customizations, budget, or other challenges with upgrading.

➢ **Improved system availability and performance.** Support for cloud-based solutions is frequently provided by a combination of the software publisher directly and certified reseller partners or other service providers. Due to the standardization in platform infrastructure, and accessibility, vendors can often provide exceptional service levels for cloud ERPs that improve on what most SMBs can resource internally.

➢ **Faster time-to-value.** Many SMBs upgrading their ERP systems are choosing cloud-based platforms over staying with or migrating to other on-premise deployments. Cloud-based deployments generally offer reduced upfront expenses compared with on-premises solutions, even if they're an upgrade of an existing solution, as there is no need to purchase software and provision servers. SMBs also gain a financial advantage by viewing cloud-based services as an operating expense rather than a capital expense. In addition, cloud-based ERP solutions like Microsoft Dynamics come with different feature sets and user interfaces that offer greater ease of use than traditional client/server systems. This can further accelerate time-to-value by reducing training requirements and improving productivity and user satisfaction.

The high reliability, ubiquitous accessibility, and user-friendliness of Microsoft Dynamics' cloud ERP can add up to a competitive edge in the form of improved business process efficiency, enhanced business agility, stronger customer service and lower operating costs. Companies that choose an on-premises ERP solution often do so because they require complete control of their data, backups, and maintenance for regulatory or corporate policy reasons.

HOW EDI WORKS WITH YOUR ERP

Growing numbers of SMBs, especially in the supply chain for wholesalers and retailers, are moving to implement electronic data interchange (EDI). While your ERP helps to coordinate supply chain management, EDI facilitates automated, timely communication between suppliers and retailers. EDI is a critical gateway through which growing organizations transact business with some of their largest customers.

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EDI aligns with your ERP to streamline order fulfillment and other supply chain processes, improve visibility into everyday customer transactions, reduce operating costs associated with order management and ultimately shorten the order-to-cash cycle. These details help enhance customer service levels and enable SMBs to derive more value from their ERP investment. At the same time, you may be thinking of implementing EDI to conform to the purchasing requirements of major retailers or your customers. Web-based EDI solutions can assist with purchasing transactions as easily as sales order transactions.

WHY INTEGRATE EDI WITH YOUR MICROSOFT DYNAMICS ERP IN THE CLOUD?

Many SMBs are looking to implement EDI to conform to the compliance requirements of major retailers or other customers. In this context, a critical step in the due diligence process is to evaluate cloud-based EDI solutions that integrate with the organization's cloud-based Microsoft Dynamics ERP system.

An organization that integrates EDI with its Microsoft Dynamics ERP solution will eliminate much of the manual data entry that would otherwise need to move data back and forth between the two systems—saving time and labor, maximizing order accuracy, reducing paperwork and making it far easier to onboard and serve new EDI trading partners or customers. The more EDI trading partners a company has, the more operational costs it can save through EDI and Microsoft Dynamics ERP integration.

Choosing integrated EDI "in the cloud" likewise compounds the advantages of Microsoft Dynamics as a cloud ERP by supporting ubiquitous data access and reducing IT complexity while minimizing firewall, security and connectivity issues.

CHOOSING AN INTEGRATED, CLOUD-BASED EDI SOLUTION

EDI integration with your Microsoft Dynamics cloud ERP solution is a strategic investment decision that should be based on criteria beyond upfront cost and a checklist of basic features. Here are some other factors organizations should consider:

➢ **Proven Microsoft Dynamics integration**
Some EDI vendors claim integration with a range of ERP solutions, but not every integration is equally robust or supports a full complement of documents. Validate references from multiple customers that have used the integration with Microsoft Dynamics specifically. Also, ask whether prospective EDI vendors have strategic development partnerships with Microsoft. This is relevant because both Microsoft Dynamics and EDI offerings will evolve and will not necessarily remain compatible without a strong partnership and shared customers between the two vendors.

➢ **Single-vendor product support**
Is the cloud-based EDI solution and the Microsoft Dynamics integration component developed, maintained, and supported end-to-end by the vendor? Or are one or more third parties involved? Many EDI vendors own only the EDI translator software and rely on systems integrators for their ERP integrations. This can result in support problems and an increased risk of product obsolescence.

➢ **Total cost of ownership**
A low initial cost for EDI does not mean that the total cost of ownership will also be low. Evaluate factors like the cost of software upgrades and the cost of ongoing support and professional services. For example, many EDI vendors charge for updating trading partner mapping specifications. If you print labels, you might incur monthly fees for the ability to print them. These costs can add up rapidly as a business grows.

MAKING CLOUD-BASED EDI PAINLESS

TrueCommerce EDI Solutions are Microsoft certified and offer an EDI platform that is affordable, easy to use, and scales seamlessly as your needs grow. TrueCommerce makes EDI painless by providing everything a business needs for EDI compliance under one roof, including unsurpassed customer support, software updates at no charge, and annual maintenance fees.

TrueCommerce EDI is easy to maintain, offers robust performance and is powerful and flexible enough to meet the demands of any customer. This hosted solution integrates seamlessly with Microsoft Dynamics so you can stay focused on growing your business.

ABOUT TRUECOMMERCE
TrueCommerce is the most complete way to integrate your business across the supply chain, integrating everything from EDI to inventory management, to fulfillment, to digital storefronts and marketplaces, to your business system and to whatever comes next. That's why thousands of companies across various industries rely on us.

THE TRUECOMMERCE TEAM IS HERE TO HELP!
If you have any questions regarding TrueCommerce, or how our solutions apply to your business, our passionate, customer focused team is here for you.

Call us today at 888.430.4489

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