

AeroVironment, Inc.

Aircraft Manufacturer Reduces Costs and Improves Service by Integrating Order Processing End-to-End

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Senior Programmer Analyst,
AeroVironment



OBJECTIVE

- Automate manual business processes and reduce errors and time spent rekeying order data by integrating order processing across eCommerce, ERP and EDI systems

SOLUTION

- Implement the TrueCommerce Nexternal eCommerce Platform to rapidly deliver easy-to-use, cost-effective storefronts for consumers and businesses. Add integrated TrueCommerce EDI for Oracle E-Business Suite to automate the exchange of order data between Nexternal and Oracle, and to transact EDI with a major automotive customer

BACKGROUND

Global leader in unmanned aircraft systems and electric vehicle charging and test systems, this technology leader sought to “proceed with certainty” in its eCommerce and B2B order transactions.

Founded in 1971, AeroVironment is a global leader in unmanned aircraft systems, tactical missile systems and electric vehicle charging and test systems, and serves militaries, government agencies, businesses and consumers. They are the top supplier of small drone aircraft to the U.S. military, and the leading provider of EV charging solutions for auto manufacturers, communities, businesses and consumers.

The preferred provider of home charging stations for nine global automakers, AeroVironment has partnered with Volvo and the Chevrolet Bolt EV to develop wall-mounted charging stations for the automakers' growing line of plug-in hybrid vehicles.

AeroVironment has relied on the Nexternal eCommerce Platform for the past four years to handle online orders from consumers and B2B customers, both through its two online storefronts and on the Amazon Marketplace. The company is currently testing a TrueCommerce EDI implementation, which both automates the bi-directional flow of order data between AeroVironment's eCommerce solution and its Oracle E-Business Suite (EBS) system, and also enables EDI transactions with Volvo.



OPTING FOR A SINGLE-VENDOR SOLUTION

According to Anusha Iyengar, Senior Programmer Analyst, as consumer sales of its EV charging systems grew, AeroVironment wanted the automation, flexibility and ease-of-use of an eCommerce platform. The company was also looking for a system that would let them rollout multiple online storefronts quickly and at low cost.

Several options were considered and, finally, AeroVironment zeroed in on Nexternal, a TrueCommerce eCommerce platform. Competitive pricing, flexibility and ease-of-use were the main reasons.

“We were up-and-running on Nexternal within a month and the cost was very affordable,” says Ms. Iyengar. “Another reason we chose Nexternal was that it integrated very well with Amazon Marketplace.”

Orders placed on Amazon.com flow into the Nexternal Order Management System and are processed just as if they were placed on one of AeroVironment's branded eCommerce storefronts.

There was, however, one bottleneck. At first, orders placed through Nexternal were input into Oracle manually. Shipment confirmations sent to customers from the Oracle system were likewise not linked to Nexternal. To optimize order processing and derive more value from its investments, AeroVironment required an automated link between these two systems.

“When we started talking to Nexternal about integrating with Oracle, they told us about their relationship with TrueCommerce,” Ms. Iyengar recalls.

TrueCommerce offered an innovative solution, not available from any other vendor in the world in an integrated package: its EDI product can act as a “bridge” between e-store and AeroVironment's Oracle business system. Essentially, EDI treats the eCommerce app as just another trading partner, automatically feeding transaction data into the backend system.

"TrueCommerce met all our requirements for transacting EDI with Volvo, so we decided to go with a one-partner solution," notes Ms. Iyengar.

MEETING THE EDI REQUIREMENTS OF A GLOBAL AUTO MANUFACTURER

Once the TrueCommerce EDI solution was in place, AeroVironment discovered it could create additional efficiencies. The company is currently using its TrueCommerce EDI solution with Volvo, which is its first EDI partner. Ms. Iyengar points out that the automotive manufacturer's EDI documents are different from the typical 810 Invoice and 850 Purchase Order documents that many suppliers exchange with their customers.

"For example, we need to support the EDI DELFOR Planning Schedule/ Material Release document, as well as the EDI DESADV Advance Shipping Notice," Ms. Iyengar notes. AeroVironment's EDI system also needs to support six different Volvo sites, which function much like different trading partners from an EDI standpoint. They currently receive approximately ten to twenty EDI orders per day from the six Volvo facilities.

AeroVironment has also set up a specific shipping document workflow to meet Volvo's requirements. After orders received through TrueCommerce EDI move into Oracle for processing, AeroVironment sends an EDI 940 Warehouse Shipping Order document to the appropriate third-party logistics (3PL) warehouse in the US or China.

"The 3PL turns the 940 around and sends Volvo an EDI 856 Advance Shipping Notice, which they also use to print their shipping label and delivery note," Ms. Iyengar explains. "When they complete their part of the order, the 3PL sends us an EDI 945 Warehouse Shipping Advice. This is consumed within TrueCommerce EDI and turned around as a DESADV, which we send directly to Volvo."

BENEFITS OF INTEGRATED, INTUITIVE ORDER MANAGEMENT

AeroVironment's eCommerce/EDI/ERP integration has optimized both B2B and B2C order processing across its EV charging station product lines.

"Sales of our EV charging stations are almost completely automated through the integration of TrueCommerce Nexternal and EDI with Oracle," states Ms. Iyengar.

One of the biggest benefits of the comprehensive integration is time and effort saved. Before integrating Nexternal with Oracle via TrueCommerce, two full-time employees were needed to manually rekey order data from Nexternal into Oracle. "Now they can simply monitor the flow of the orders and mainly focus their attention on other work," Ms. Iyengar reports.

Automation also results in fewer errors in customer orders. Ms. Iyengar has observed, "the amount of calls we get concerning errors is much lower than we were getting before integrating Nexternal with Oracle via TrueCommerce."

BENEFITS

More Connected. More Supported. More Prepared for What's Next.

- All eCommerce order transactions are now automated end-to-end between web storefronts and Oracle
- Elimination of data entry errors and the effort and cost required to correct them
- Improved customer service
- Ability to quickly deploy new eCommerce storefronts and integrate them with Oracle
- A single-vendor solution reduces integration effort and offers seamless support
- All-inclusive integration adds value across Oracle, EDI and eCommerce technology investments
- Ease of use for all classes of users, including end-customers, 3PL providers and in-house business staff



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A further benefit of the robust integration between Nexternal and Oracle via TrueCommerce EDI is that AeroVironment is able to add new eCommerce storefronts with minimal effort. “Now we have everything we need to integrate as many online stores as we want with Oracle—that’s been very useful,” emphasizes Ms. Iyengar.

EASE OF USE END-TO-END, IMPROVED CUSTOMER AND PARTNER LOYALTY

The AeroVironment team finds the TrueCommerce integrated order management solution to be user-friendly. “Nexternal was very easy to setup and get our sites up-and-running,” Ms. Iyengar indicates. “It’s quite intuitive and easy for us to use and maintain.” Nexternal also helps maximize retail sales and minimize concerns like shopping cart abandonment and emails to customer service.

TrueCommerce EDI has also been well accepted by in-house staff and 3PL partners. “It’s not very difficult to use TrueCommerce EDI,” shares Ms. Iyengar. “Our warehouses also seem pretty comfortable with it.”

“I would recommend the combination of the TrueCommerce Nexternal eCommerce and EDI integration with Oracle to other suppliers,” summarizes Ms. Iyengar.



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.

TrueCommerce.
Do business in every direction.

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.

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