

The Little Potato Company

Makes Big Strides with TrueCommerce EDI for Microsoft Dynamics NAV

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Doug Howell, The Little Potato Company



OBJECTIVE

- Comply with major retailer mandates for EDI and consolidate multiple web EDI portals to save time and reduce manual effort

SOLUTION

- Leverage TrueCommerce's embedded, integrated EDI solution for Microsoft Dynamics NAV to automate customer communications while ensuring ongoing EDI compliance

BENEFITS

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

- Automated EDI supports 20% business growth without increasing headcount
- Seamless Microsoft integration easily handles hundreds of orders per week from one customer

BACKGROUND

The Little Potato Company was started in 1996 by father-daughter duo Jacob van der Schaaf and Angela Santiago. Specializing in Creamer potatoes perfect for busy families as they come to ready to cook and are simple to prepare. The brand combines deep historical knowledge with innovative techniques to create a creamy, nutritious and delicious experience in every bite. Today, The Little Potato Company potatoes can be found in some of the largest grocery retailers across the U.S. and Canada, including Walmart, Costco and Target.

Before starting with TrueCommerce, The Little Potato Company relied on a variety of web portals to send and receive EDI data. "We had every portal under the sun," explained Doug Howell, Director of Information Technology. "We had all these things that were EDI to our customers but were just web portals. We had all the same pain points we'd have if they were just emailing orders."

When a large retailer required more detailed information like Advance Shipping Notices, The Little Potato Company knew they needed to make a change. "We weren't going to be able to support that with manual effort; it wasn't going to work," said Mr. Howell.

In addition to automated EDI, the company also needed a solution that would integrate with their Microsoft Dynamics NAV system. While many vendors offered EDI, Mr. Howell was afraid that they wouldn't come with adequate support. He commented, "I have a small IT team. I didn't want critical business processes such as order entry and invoicing to suddenly fall on our shoulders."

Mr. Howell and his team zeroed in on TrueCommerce's embedded Microsoft NAV experience. Mr. Howell recalled, "We watched this demo of TrueCommerce's solution that snapped right into NAV, and it just made so much sense because it would fit into and improve our existing processes."

BENEFITS

- Unified solution eliminates the need for multiple web portals
- Digital platform saves 120,000 pieces of paperwork per year
- User-friendly, embedded NAV experience increases efficiencies across Sales, AR and Operations
- Platinum support enables rapid issue resolution, ongoing integrations and business process optimization through the powerful Foundry Platform



A TRUE IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERSHIP

The Little Potato began implementing TrueCommerce EDI in fall of 2018. "There were definitely some early challenges," Mr. Howell recalled, "But our project manager was very knowledgeable. If we hit a challenge, she could speak to how she'd helped another customer tackle the problem. That perspective was extremely helpful."

The company was impressed by TrueCommerce's customer commitment and determination. "Some team members changed throughout the project," recalls Mr. Howell "The result was sometimes we'd meet three times a week and sometimes we'd go two weeks without meeting. Through all that, TrueCommerce stuck with us. That was fantastic."

As their implementation continued, The Little Potato Company was able to quickly streamline customer onboarding. Mr. Howell explained, "Our pace has just been picking up and picking up. In 2020 the number of customers we have live has gone from five or six to over 40. Even since COVID-19 began we've probably onboarded another dozen. We absolutely took off."

The Little Potato Company has no plans to stop now. "We're currently in planning or testing to integrate 22 customers with TrueCommerce," said Mr. Howell. "That will be over 90% of our order volume via EDI."

SEAMLESS INTEGRATION WITH A "SUBSTANTIAL" IMPACT

TrueCommerce's direct integration with Microsoft Dynamics NAV has been crucial to success for The Little Potato Company's sales division. "It's very seamless, very user friendly," noted Tammy Burgardt, Sales Coordinator Supervisor, "The team's been very receptive to it."

With the support of automated EDI, Ms. Burgardt explained, "Our efficiencies have gone way up. Just taking one customer which sends upwards of 225 orders per week. Having TrueCommerce has decreased our time in data entry substantially."

Saving Time, Money, and Paper

Switching to a digital option didn't just save time. It also saved a lot of paper. Before, noted Ms. Burgardt, "Validation was done by paper. We had to print every order out, enter it into our system, validate it, staple, and then we would have our internal teams manage it."

Mr. Howell added, "We get 35-40,000 orders a year right now. If you printed every order, and an order confirmation, that's 80,000 pages a year. We were printing our invoices on the AR side as well, so we had 120,000 pieces of paper per year."

Eliminating those pages has had a significant effect on the business. Mr. Howell told us, "Not only do we not incur the cost of printing, we don't have to store the paper either. And being paperless for these processes has been key to our sales and accounts receivable teams being able to work from home since the pandemic began."

Working Smarter, Not Harder

Prior to integrating TrueCommerce, The Little Potato Company often used manual data entry to move information between systems. "We had to go into the system every day and enter information by hand, which took significant time and effort."

Scaling the business through manual work wouldn't be sustainable, according to Mr. Howell. He reasoned, "We can't throw people at it. We needed to leverage technology that linked to our ERP system."

TrueCommerce's cloud-based EDI for Microsoft offers easy management and flexible scalability have contributed to The Little Potato Company's ongoing growth. "We've probably grown our business 20% since we started with TrueCommerce EDI," noted Mr. Howell. "It's allowed us to scale our business without growing headcount."

In fact, TrueCommerce has helped lighten the load across The Little Potato Company. Mr. Howell explained, "In accounts receivable, we've actually gone from three to two people handling the workload, because we've streamlined that side of the work so much."

SUPPORTIVE TECHNOLOGY AND PEOPLE

A Solid Foundation with TrueCommerce Foundry

TrueCommerce's Foundry Platform offers powerful functionality that's helped The Little Potato Company manage complex product mixes. "We have seasonal transitions in our business, where we move from product that's been grown in Canada to product that's been grown in the US. Sometimes we are even mixing origins. We're able to handle all those things on a seasonal basis and a per-customer basis in the Foundry Platform."

Because Foundry is continually updated and upgraded, The Little Potato Company's experience with the platform keeps getting better. Mr. Howell commented, "With the Foundry 2.0 update, TrueCommerce addressed speed and responsiveness. You have people worrying about driving improvement, so we don't have to."

As a true partner, TrueCommerce listens to our customers' feedback, and uses their comments to continually improve the Foundry Platform. "I made a feature request to the product manager of Foundry, and they actually went and developed it," recalled Mr. Howell, "I'm really excited about that. We're hoping to be the second customer to go live with that feature."

On-Hand Expertise with Platinum Support

For the Little Potato Company, TrueCommerce's Platinum Support feature has played a key role in their success. "Platinum support is fantastic. I can't say enough good things about it," commented Mr. Howell.

Mr. Howell praised the Platinum Support team for their breadth of knowledge and excellent service. He noted, "Our Platinum Support manager has been fantastic. She is so accessible. She's an asset, an advocate, a strategic partner, a relationship manager, and a fixer of all things!"

In addition to accelerating ongoing integrations, Platinum Support has also enabled The Little Potato Company to optimize operations across multiple departments. "We had helped sales be way more efficient," explained Mr. Howell, "But we were causing some extra work at some points of operations. Platinum Support brainstormed a way to leverage the Foundry Platform to take all that away."

When it comes to their Microsoft Dynamics NAV environment, The Little Potato Company can lean on TrueCommerce Platinum Support for expert advice. "There's not a week we don't talk with support and have something come up," said Mr. Howell, "It's a huge help for new integrations, because our Platinum Support person is an expert in Dynamics."

STAYING AHEAD IN EVER-CHANGING MARKETS

As their customers' needs have changed, TrueCommerce has enabled The Little Potato Company to manage orders without putting extra strain on their teams.

Mr. Howell spoke of one customer, saying, "The numbers we had when we went live took about 20 hours a week for a person. They've now changed their ordering cycles, and we have less lead time than we did before."

Despite heightening demands, The Little Potato Company is keeping up better than ever. "With the way we do it now, from the time those orders are received to when they're released into production is always under an hour, and often under half an hour," commented Mr. Howell.

That success translates to other customers and opportunities moving forward. Mr. Howell noted, "We're able to communicate better with our customers, and meet the changing demands of the produce industry. We know TrueCommerce will help us keep up with that, which should help protect the business, and hopefully make us a preferred supplier, too."

Navigating the Effects of COVID-19

Like most businesses, The Little Potato Company was directly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, but not in the same way as fashion and retail companies. "Being in produce our sales went up during those early days when everyone was stockpiling," explained Mr. Howell, "So, we needed orders in quicker and more accurately than ever."

Having integrated, cloud-based EDI in place, along with the processes to manage it, was key to meeting the pandemic challenges. "It was stressful for everybody already," noted Mr. Howell. "Having those processes in place let us react at scale, even under less-than-ideal conditions."

TrueCommerce's cloud-based architecture empowered The Little Potato Company's employees to work successfully from home. "COVID-19 made us jump far forward," commented Ms. Burgardt, "Thank goodness with TrueCommerce we had the tools to do that seamlessly."

Mr. Howell agreed, pointing out that, "When we moved out of our office, I didn't have to worry about managing anything on-premises. TrueCommerce's platform is cloud-based, and integrates into our Dynamics environment, which is also in the cloud, which made it easy to operate remotely."

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Director of Information Technology
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Complying with the Product Traceability Initiative

The Little Potato Company uses TrueCommerce's ASN automation to meet the stringent requirements of the Product Traceability Initiative (PTI). This voluntary program aims to help produce companies better track and trace products, while increasing supply chain efficiencies.

"Each case of product is labelled with the GTIN, lot code and pack date, and every pallet is assigned a unique scannable code," clarified Mr. Howell. "Within minutes of a truck leaving our dock, we send all that information on an ASN to customers."

As a result, pallets can more easily be received by distribution centers. "They don't have to scan every case," said Mr. Howell, "They can scan one code and know everything that is on the pallet. That helps manage freshness and turnaround goods with fewer touchpoints."

Mr. Howell also touched on the importance of the PTI. "Improved whole chain traceability will increase consumer confidence in the produce they eat. This is not only reducing risk to our business, but it should also help grow it."

New Avenues for Growth

As The Little Potato Company continues to expand, they're excited about creating more supply chain efficiencies with TrueCommerce. Mr. Howell mentioned, "We're actively looking at using the OCR solution as an add-on to Foundry, so we can more efficiently enter orders from customers that order by email and don't support EDI."

Another project on the horizon is bringing TrueCommerce's EDI capabilities to the brand's warehouse partners. "With our 3PL network, there are a lot of manual processes right now. Our supply chain team is consuming Excel sheets, PDF's and all combinations of things from our third-party warehouses."

The opportunity to optimize warehouse communications is an exciting one, and not just for The Little Potato Company. "Our 3PL partners are really thrilled as well," said Mr. Howell, "To have all that information flow through the activities happening in those 3PL systems and our system – it's all going to connect together."

Mr. Howell commented that he's been impressed by TrueCommerce's dedication as a partner. "TrueCommerce stuck to their commitments," he said, "They continue to invest in the product and the platform. Everyone I've dealt with is committed to the customer, which isn't something we find with every partner."

He concluded, "We've become a huge fan of TrueCommerce. We look forward to what comes in the future. And to us, that's no small potatoes."



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.

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