



CASE STUDY

Innovative approach makes Huws Gray and TrueCommerce ideal ebusiness partners



Background and Challenges

In a little over 20 years builders merchants Huws Gray has grown from a single branch on the island of Anglesey to become the largest independent operator in Wales and north west England, employing over 450 people with an annual turnover of almost £80 million.

Trading from more than 40 locations stretching from Aberystwyth on the west Wales coast to Bolton, 150 miles away in Greater Manchester, Huws Gray is committed to delivering excellence in quality, service and value for both the trade and the general public.

Its reputation is built on the expertise of its staff in its branch network and the range and comprehensive coverage of its stock, making it the one-stop shop for customers looking to find every component for the job in a single visit.

“It may sound a simple formula but we think it is vital that we maintain high levels of stock so that customers know that they can rely on us, and that our people are what we call ‘product champions’ who really know what they are talking about and can provide a consistently high level of advice and assistance in all of our branches.” Says Operations Director Elfed Hughes.

“It’s a revelation for us. The repetitive and time consuming daily effort has been replaced by an automated system with management tools that allow us to keep an eye on what’s going on.”

Elfed Hughes
Operations Director
Huws Gray

Huws Gray is constantly looking for innovations and efficiencies, not least in the management of its growing supply chain, now numbering more than 1000 suppliers. These organisations generate more than 10,000 invoices alone each month, historically requiring Huws Gray to maintain a labour and paper intensive administrative system.

Mixed experience

Although it had adopted EDI some years ago, Huws Gray's experience was mixed, with the company feeling that it was left to resolve ongoing data issues between its software supplier and its building materials suppliers.

"We were very optimistic and enthusiastic about what EDI could do for us but, in the end, we were so frustrated that I seriously considered going back to a paper-based system," recalls Elfed Hughes, who joined the company in 1992.

"However, as we receive an average of 500 invoices each day, we know that the daily paper-based routine, which absorbed four members of our purchase ledger team in a slow and wasteful process, is not a viable option."

More Connected

A review of the market for EDI providers led to a meeting with TrueCommerce.

"From these first conversations I felt that we were dealing with like-minded people who understood our issues. It was down to earth, realistic and practical and revived our optimism and enthusiasm for what we could achieve with TrueCommerce's help."

Huws Gray now uses TrueCommerce's fast, secure and reliable message exchange software, automating the exchange of business documents between its systems and those of its trading partners.

TrueCommerce began by focussing on Huws Gray's most significant trading partners, those generating the most invoices, as the first stage of a phased programme that will ultimately automate all exchange of documents between the company and its suppliers.

Currently 25% of all incoming invoices are processed electronically. Those that are accurate are forwarded to the back office system as authorised for payment to terms, whilst suppliers whose invoices do not match orders or have other errors are informed electronically and invited to correct any errors and resubmit.

Managers at Huws Gray can see summary reports showing the status of all incoming invoices and the actions prompted by the system.