

Case Study - Liaison's Delta & ECS Data Integration Suite Helps QuiBids.com Move Their Business to the Next Level

After several years of rapid growth, QuiBids.com found themselves needing to re-assess their EDI environment. The standalone EDI translator they were using had been adequate up to that point, but as they geared up to move an ever-expanding vendor base into active electronic trading relationships, it was clear they needed a scalable and flexible solution to move their business to the next level.



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Challenges QuiBids Was Facing

Flexible Mapping - QuiBids.com's translator was X-12 only, but their vendor base ran a wide gamut of formats and communication styles, from very basic CSV to ANSI X-12 to XML to custom flat file. In order to accommodate this range of vendor capabilities they were forced to hand craft a variety of custom solutions depending on file type, and run them in different environments. They were in need of a unified development platform that could accommodate the full spectrum of file types, X-12 or not, and a unified production environment flexible enough to accommodate a wide variety of processing scenarios. Not just for exchanging data with trading partners but also for internal operations.

Event-Driven Processing & File Handling - All their process flows were strictly timed, and dependencies were rather rigidly tied together in ways that would inevitably make for single points of failure in processing chains. They needed a much more interactive relationship between their EDI environment, their proprietary order management systems, and their vendor base.

Advanced Process Monitoring & Notifications - A major pain point that they were experiencing was an absence of clear, straightforward error handling and notification. Their error notification was limited to a much less granular scale, and wasn't capable of customizing error messages and routing those messages to the most relevant responders. Additionally, day to day production monitoring was highly dependent on eyes-on manual monitoring of directory states, with no recourse to anything like a GUI.

Map Management - The design paradigm for their software necessitated individual maps

for each vendor and document type. Controlling versions across their growing vendor base was rapidly becoming unwieldy, and they needed a centralized strategy for creating and maintaining all of their many maps to reduce development overhead.

Comprehensive & Integrated Communications - They were limited to simple FTP communications, in a world that was increasingly shifting to AS2 or other HTTP based protocols. Most communications were handled in a standalone environment with no unified logging strategy or monitoring standard, and no failure recovery.

Solution

QuiBids.com examined all the major players and quickly discovered that Liaison's Delta & ECS package showed a great deal of promise. First and foremost was the sheer mapping flexibility - no format was out of bounds for Delta. Other solutions promised similar capabilities but by comparison they struck them as afterthoughts bolted onto existing traditional EDI paradigms. And then when they had the opportunity to examine the Delta interface itself there was very little by way of comparison. It was hands down the most intuitive mapping interface they had ever seen.

An equally powerful factor in their decision was ECS. For sheer visibility, flexibility, and ease of use, it was impossible to find anything close to anywhere near the price point. It was apparent



that with ECS they really could achieve a truly unified operational environment, and bring a number of disparate processes (FTP comms, AS2, Web Services, XML, flat files) under one roof for the first time. Other packages offered similar claims but again, at much higher cost and with less visual transparency and ease of use.

After a careful assessment of the available options and pricing, Delta/ECS came out as a clear winner for QuiBids.com. The ability to comprehensively integrate a wide variety of trading relationships and internal process flows into a single solution was key.

Another key factor in their decision was Aurora Technologies' and Virtual Logistics' (VL) longstanding pedigrees in the EDI industry. The consultants from both VL and Aurora brought a wealth of experience and insight to the table, and their hands-on approach through the evaluative phase gave QuiBids.com both the objective information and the confidence to know they were choosing the right solution. In the course of due diligence they reached out to a number of independent voices in the field and not only were reassured that Delta/ECS was indeed one of the best tools out there, but also that they were very much in good hands with Aurora Technologies and Virtual Logistics. Their own experiences have borne that out as well. The strong relationships they were able to forge with both Aurora and VL has paid off already and promises much more as they continue to expand and refine their EDI environment.

Results

Once QuiBids.com got their installation of Delta/ECS up and started running production feeds, the benefits were tangible and immediate. With the

Data Administrator they have a comprehensive real-time picture of the state of translation, communications, errors and logging. This is all available in a single interface that is intuitive to read and comprehend. This alone has saved their EDI team countless hours of tedious research. And when issues do arise they have much greater visibility into root causes - whether it's an issue with a communications channel, EDI compliance or data content.

The mapping capabilities of Delta have proven to be unparalleled. Their development times have been greatly reduced with the introduction of a much simpler approach to map management that allows them to unify disparate trading partners under the same easily managed maps. Basing new map work on prior work has never been easier. Creating maps for a variety of formats is much easier, and they are able to accommodate even the most exotic of outliers in their vendor base.

A major player in this implementation has been Virtual Logistics Inc. Their team of highly skilled subject matter experts greatly helped as QuiBids.com worked to re-engineer four years' worth of legacy processes in the space of four months - an all-out effort that paid rewards in efficiency, ease of development, and visibility. QuiBids.com reports that VL has been an invaluable font of knowledge and assistance when they have encountered the occasional complexity that arises from any migration of this magnitude, and have been a personal pleasure to work with besides.

QuiBids can now offer their vendors a wider array of communications methods, and greatly favor the built-in AS2 capabilities of ECS which have given them a much clearer and simpler setup path for communications.

Event driven processing allows them to be far more flexible in their arrangement of translation



processes depending on vendor needs, and internal processes are likewise greatly improved. And the integrated logging of ECS has proven itself invaluable in researching any issues as they come up.

The alert and notifications process has likewise proven to be a great help in proactively identifying EDI issues before they become business issues. The ability to receive customized notifications on success and error based on log parsing is a great boon. They are also working on building out proactive monitoring jobs to notify them when expected files are not received in a specified timeframe. This feature is a distinct advantage.

Another key feature they are now able to take advantage of is the WebECS front end. Access to the Data Administrator functions via the web has greatly simplified day-to-day and after hours production monitoring. They are finally in a position to make information about their EDI process and order states more visible to stakeholders across the company. Management Reporting functions via WebECS are also proving fruitful ground for development.

QuiBids.com reports that Delta/ECS has proven to be a powerful, comprehensive solution with great room to expand along with their growing vendor base. The choice of partners has allowed them to achieve their long-term objectives of partner ecosystem growth.



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We are now in a much better place, and heading to even better. They’ve been an invaluable font of knowledge and assistance when we have encountered the occasional complexity that arises from any migration of this magnitude, and have been a personal pleasure to work with.”

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