



Solution Overview

Company Size: 24

Industries

- Value added reseller

Needs

- Supply chain automation
- Enterprise integration

Technologies

- Microsoft .Net Framework
- Microsoft SQL Server
- Open Catalogue Interface
- Exostar

Benefits

- Reduced administrative costs
- Increased agility
- Drives a competitive edge

American Data & Computer Products (ADCPI)

Case Study

“Consistently exceeds our greatest expectations ... they leave nothing to chance ... head of their class!”

— Robert Castro
President – American Data & Computer Products

American Data & Computer Products, Inc. (ADCPI), a Tampa-based added-value-reseller (VAR), is one of the leading Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) firms in Florida that provides computer parts and products to defense companies such as Raytheon, Lockheed Martin, and Boeing.

Products and services

Microsoft .Net Framework

The .NET Framework is Microsoft's comprehensive and consistent programming model for building applications that have visually stunning user experiences, seamless and secure communications, and the ability to model a range of business processes.

Microsoft SQL Server

Microsoft SQL Server is a comprehensive, integrated data management and analysis software that enables organizations to reliably manage mission-critical information and confidently run today's increasingly complex business applications.

Open Catalogue Interface

The Open Catalog Interface (OCI) is the interface between catalogs and Enterprise Buyer professional edition. SAP's Open Catalog Interface uses standard Internet protocols.

Exostar

Exostar was created to leverage the power of the Internet to improve the ability for companies to work together more efficiently and with lower risk. Exostar was originally created in 2000 to support the complex supply chain and security requirements of the global aerospace and defense industry. Exostar designs, develops, operates, and supports a portfolio of products and services deployed in our Trusted Workspace environment and connected to a secure network of over 40,000 companies worldwide.

Business Situation

As a result of being awarded a number of large contracts with Lockheed Martin and Raytheon, American Data & Computer Products (ADCPI) found themselves needing to re-evaluate the current procurement processes used by these two defense contractors.

Most of the contracts awarded to ADCPI fall under disadvantaged business programs. Under these programs, ADCPI's margins are as low as 1%. This means that ADCPI depends on the large volume of sales these contracts provide. Handling these large volumes has always provided a challenge to ADCPI. In the case of these specific contracts, the challenge was even more daunting since there was a larger risk of even lower profit margins. These contracts provided Lockheed and Raytheon the ability to order single-sell items which increased the administrative costs per order.

Technical Situation

ADCPI was participating in Exostar, a procurement application founded by the Aerospace industry. Exostar is integrated with each of these organizations' back-end SAP system and is one of the primary resources buyers use to place orders. In order to participate in the procurement process using Exostar, ADCPI has to periodically submit a products catalog to the Exostar organization in electronic format.

The data submitted to Exostar had to be in a specific format. This meant that someone, with enough expertise,

would have to sanitize and format the data from whatever data source to the required Exostar format. In the case of ADCPI, this data came from the TechData catalog. TechData is one of the world's largest distributors of technology products. As part of their services, TechData provides a number of tools to help value added resellers including electronic catalogs.

In addition to the costs of sanitizing the data, there are hosting costs associated with Exostar. The ADCPI catalog consisted of over 200,000 parts. Exostar charges a fee on a per item stored on their catalog which was becoming very costly. Additionally, there were administrative costs associated with keeping pricing and product information data up-to-date.

Solution

ADCPI needed to automate the ordering process by allowing Lockheed and Raytheon to access an online catalog hosted by ADCPI and place orders online. The approach to the solution involved creating a web-based catalog application built with Microsoft ASP.Net and Microsoft SQL Server. The catalog database structure and data followed closely the data provided by TechData bypassing the need to sanitize the data in any meaningful way. TechData makes the catalog data available to ADCPI via FTP and the data contained in it is updated nightly. The data would

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be imported into the ADCPI catalog having the added benefit of nearly live pricing and product information available to customers.

It was clear that the ordering process needed to include the continued participation in the Exostar system. Further inquiry revealed that Exostar offers a service named "Round Trip." The service consists of some back-end processes that, upon a buyer's request, launch an outside vendor's catalog via their interface called Enterprise Buyers Desktop (EBD)

The catalog on the vendors' end simply had to implement the Open Catalogue Interface (OCI) standard. Developed by SAP, OCI is a standard whereby a catalog application could embed the order details and supplier information as part of the web application request and response inherent in the http protocol. When the user connects to the catalog from the Exostar system, the Exostar application would pass certain specific variables dictated by the standard. The catalog receives and stores this values to be used for a later checkout. When the user is ready to checkout, the system then sends the contents of their cart to the Exostar system and it automatically processes the order converting it to a purchase order. This purchase order is automatically generated and sent to ADCPI via email which they can then begin to process and fulfill.

Benefits

Reduced administrative costs

By implementing this custom solution, ADCPI was able to substantially reduce the operating costs associated with managing and administering order fulfillment. ADCPI was able to virtually eliminate the costs of employing outside vendors to sanitize and manipulate the data obtained from TechData and make the necessary conversions to supply a catalog hosted by Exostar. Also, they were able to eliminate the hosting costs associated with the Exostar program.

Increased agility

ADCPI can now turn over orders faster and easier, reducing lead time and decreasing the chance of losing orders.

Created a competitive edge

ADCPI competes with a number of other small disadvantaged businesses that do not possess the skills or resources to implement this approach. This solution gave ADCPI a significant advantage over the rest of their competitors.