Bulova

The Situation

Founded in 1875 with headquarters in New York, Bulova Corporation is part of the American-owned and operated Loews Corporation. In addition to its heralded line of Bulova fine watches and clocks, the company offers wristwatch lines from Caravelle, Wittnauer and Accutron.

Bulova risked being charged vendor compliance fees for missing performance benchmarks, such as proper routing of shipments when a retailer's EDI standards are not met. "This is always a painful area to deal with," Doug Campbell, Senior Systems Analyst for Bulova, said. "Our best-case scenario is to avoid ever having situations where our customers think we've delivered outside of their requirements." Bulova believed that its ability to offer its retailers on-time delivery was being threatened. Without redundancy, Bulova's EDI integrity was compromised when it failed. The system itself was clumsy, with software components that had been stitched together over time. In fact, Bulova employed two separate software programs for value-added network (VAN) transactions: one for inbound transactions and one for outbound.

The Business Challenge

The concept of being "on time" is important to Bulova from more than a marketing perspective. In the retail world, on-time delivery is a critical benchmark in the performance standards of suppliers. In conjunction with on-time delivery, Bulova must deliver products according to the exact individual shipping specifications of its major retail customers, including Federated Stores, JC Penney and Sears. These companies, among others, utilize EDI for orders, shipping instructions, invoicing and many other transactions.

The company used a timesharing IBM 3090 from an off-site Loews Corporation location. Bulova elected to utilize three in-house iSeries to mitigate risk and provide better EDI integrity. The company tendered a request for proposal to enterprise resource planning (ERP) providers and, in parallel, to EDI providers.

A Complete Solution

Campbell headed the task of selecting vendors and transitioning EDI from the mainframe to the TrustedLink® iSeries. Campbell used much of the criteria from the ERP request for proposal and highlighted the following success factors in its EDI selection process:

- Integrated functionality

- Ease of implementation

- Flexible inquiry, reporting and data transfer capabilities

- Ease of modification

- Relational database integration/support

During the evaluation phase, Bulova discovered that PeopleSoft and GXS had worked together previously and that GXS had developed a set of compatible and certified interface files for a number of transactions, including purchase orders and invoices.

"That was certainly appealing to us," Campbell commented. "Since we were going to be bringing in new software on both sides of the implementation, it was reassuring that there was some compatibility here. Having the interface files ready to go certainly helped."

Bulova selected PeopleSoft Enterprise One and TrustedLink to ease the company's data transformation friction. "Once we saw the demonstration of the visual mapping, that definitely swayed us in the direction of [GXS]," Campbell said.

Implementing Two New Systems Simultaneously

After six months of planning the requirements for the migration, Bulova began by implementing PeopleSoft Enterprise One on one of the iSeries, while another unit was selected as a PeopleSoft testing environment. On the third iSeries, a Manhattan Associates PkMS shipping system was upgraded and interfaced with translation software from Mercator Software on an NT system. All four systems are addressable on the same network.

GXS installed TrustedLink on one of the iSeries units and Bulova purchased five TrustedLink production licenses for developer terminals.

Simultaneously, Enterprise One was being implemented. Bulova hired an outside consultant familiar with both PeopleSoft Enterprise One and TrustedLink to help integrate the two systems.

To facilitate the seamless migration from mainframe to iSeries, GXS provided a set of interface files for PeopleSoft, such as TrustedLink purchase orders, invoices and others.

"It's a great software solution," Campbell said of TrustedLink. "It's well thought-out in its organization and the components are easy to understand."

After five months of implementation, the system went live, with the original system running in parallel on the mainframe as a backup. According to Campbell, TrustedLink functioned flawlessly. "TrustedLink didn't lose a single transaction," he said.

In Bulova's new environment, PeopleSoft generates orders for picking. Software from Mercator maps and generates a pick ticket file. Mercator transfers the pick ticket file from PeopleSoft Enterprise One to the PkMS shipping system. The Mercator software acts as a translator between the two systems, mapping required fields from both.

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   SENIOR SYSTEMS ANALYST
   BULOVA CORPORATION

At the end of the day, all shipments are confirmed, shipping information is transmitted back through the system and advance ship notices and order confirmations are transmitted to those customers that require them. Items that are shipped reconcile to inventory, the general ledger and accounts receivable.

Because some retailers and shipments have highly specialized customer requirements, a system was developed to address customization. Transactions that require customization—mostly for product labels—are sent to a software solution from Data Systems International running on the Enterprise One iSeries to create custom labels, which print synched with the availability of the selected products.

A OneWorld service and repair component, Customer Service Management System, utilizes a barcode system in each step of product transfer to track exact product status. When products are shipped—new products as well as those in the service cycle—the products are monitored via Symbol Technologies' handheld scanners.

> The drag-and-drop feature of the TrustedLink visual mapper makes it simple to route incoming and outgoing data to your in-house system.

Seamless transition and faster new partner implementation

With the move to TrustedLink, Bulova achieved its primary objective: minimizing vendor compliance charges. "If we have problems with compliance now, it's not related to EDI transactions," Campbell said. "It's most likely a customer, item or order data problem."

A very important advantage of TrustedLink for Bulova is the software's ease of use, as it dovetails into other benefits. Because the software is easy to understand and has strong monitoring capabilities, more people outside of IT now have the ability to address issues such as errors, freeing up IT staff time for more value-added focus on strategic activities. In addition, the transaction-center monitoring ability lets Bulova take a daily snapshot of activity and address errors individually, rather than within groups of transactions. "Our users who are working with the system are getting more information in a more timely manner," Campbell said.

The IT department is enjoying an ease-of-use benefit from mapping as well. Through the point-and-click capabilities of the mapping software, Bulova's IT department is able to deploy new business partners a full 20 percent faster.

The system itself is also much better integrated. With TrustedLink managing the EDI transactions, Bulova was able to eliminate the two software packages it used for incoming and outgoing EDI transactions.

"I'd recommend TrustedLink to companies doing small and large numbers of transactions. The system does what it's supposed to do, and the graphical user interface and mapper make it much easier to work with," Campbell said. "Our management has reacted well," Campbell added. "In their eyes, EDI should be invisible, and with [GXS], it is. [GXS] is helping us to get things done on time—every time."

Next Time: The Internet

As Bulova continues to maintain a customer-focused strategy, it plans to begin performing EDI over the Internet, possibly through XML, in the near future.

GXS understands the solutions that are necessary to eliminate business friction. And for Bulova, when it comes to eliminating friction, it's about time.

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