

STAPLES USES WEBMETHODS TO SUPPORT MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR SAVINGS INITIATIVE

Challenge

The world's largest supplier of office products pledges to make buying products easy—and that promise includes making customer deliveries the very next day whenever required. When Staples experienced an increase in delivery volume, the company turned to Software AG technology for an integration solution that could be implemented rapidly and scaled easily.

Solution

Innovative thinking, proven webMethods technology and a best-practices approach enabled Staples to roll out its transportation network integration project on time, assuring no disruption to the integration with Corporate Express. The solution can support a sustained volume of 300,000 documents a day. A robust webMethods B2B gateway will make it easy to handle any future surge in transactions.

Benefits

- Staples was able to stay on track and realize millions in cost savings
- Facilitated the fast deployment of multiple transportation networks, with more to be added on schedule
- Downtime costs avoided
- Promise met—Staples retains its competitive advantage of making next-day deliveries



that was easy.sm

Staples Inc. is committed to making it easy for customers to buy a wide range of office products, including supplies, technology, furniture and business services. Headquartered in the U.S., the company serves businesses of all sizes and consumers in 27 countries throughout North and South America, Europe, Asia and Australia. In 2008, Staples had sales of \$23 billion and 91,000 associates worldwide.

Get There Faster.TM

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Jane Lilley | Senior Manager, Electronic Integration | Staples Inc.

The potential to save millions

Since acquiring Corporate Express, Staples has continually sought ways to maximize synergy and reduce costs across the business. The company quickly identified an opportunity to integrate transportation networks for a potential multi-million-dollar cost savings. Staples realized the supply chain platform it had selected couldn't scale to handle a massive transaction volume. The company was committed to finding a solution that did not slow down integration efforts with Corporate Express, said Jane Lilley, senior manager for electronic integration.

“Most importantly, we certainly needed to maintain Staples' promise of next-day delivery and impeccable customer service,” she said. The cost of potential downtime—along with the impact to human resources—was also significant. “It became clear that we needed another solution, which had to be implemented rapidly.”

Fast delivery—no problem with webMethods

Using webMethods, Staples was able to roll out an integrated transportation network without delay. The stability effort of implementing a three-tiered webMethods architecture was implemented in only two weeks. A webMethods user since 2000, the company already had the technology at work across its organization and its offerings.

“Software AG was the obvious choice, both for the power of its webMethods solutions and the expertise of its consultants,” Lilley said. The feat of developing the solution in such a short timeframe and anticipating future load “represents the IT function and innovative vendors like Software AG at their best,” Lilley said. “Working together, we were able to devise a creative solution to a pressing business challenge that could have severely hampered the productivity of our transportation networks and slowed down the company's integration efforts.”

How the solution works

“Our first step was to temporarily designate existing infrastructure,” she said. “We then fashioned a best practices webMethods implementation to support the transportation network integration project.”

From the Staples warehouse management system, orders are fed in hourly from 7 a.m. until 10 p.m. through middleware to a webMethods Integration Server, which is the heart of the solution. From there, the orders are routed to the Staples delivery locations.

Delivery status notifications from these sites move through the webMethods Reverse-Invoke Server to the webMethods Integration Server and then back to the Staples order management system. The solution is underpinned by webMethods Trading Networks atop an Oracle database.

Initially, multiple transportation networks were integrated, meaning the system would need to handle 25,000 documents per day. However, the team architected the system to support a sustained volume of 300,000 documents a day to be generated when all transportation networks are integrated.

Highest standards met at a lower cost

“The ease of developing and deploying a mission-critical, enterprise-class webMethods implementation in a two-week timeframe accelerated the integration efforts associated with Staples' acquisition of Corporate Express,” Lilley explained.

Short term, Staples accelerated with integrating its transportation networks while continuing to build a robust webMethods B2B gateway. Long term, Staples expects to achieve its goal of saving millions.

Above all else, Lilley said Staples can “maintain the highest standards of customer service at lowest sustainable cost and ... deliver on our promise to our customers and competitive advantage of next-day delivery.”

KEY COMPONENTS

webMethods Integration Server is a standards-based Enterprise Service Bus (ESB) that enables diverse systems, applications and Web services to communicate efficiently.

webMethods Broker is a reliable, high-performance backbone for messaging between applications.

webMethods Trading Networks is a scalable, enterprise-class B2B gateway built on the webMethods ESB. The gateway supports any document format and any messaging transport protocol.

Take the next step to get there – faster.

ABOUT SOFTWARE AG

Software AG's 4,000 global customers use our software to improve business processes and drive an agile IT infrastructure. Our customers' goals are to reduce costs and increase flexibility and efficiency. We help them do this by optimizing and governing their operations and aligning IT with the business goals.

Our leading Business Infrastructure Software portfolio is used for data and system integration and modernization. It fosters new levels of IT agility through SOA and allows the rapid creation of new business processes with BPM.

Our forty-year history of success ensures our customers have a reliable platform for driving future business results – faster.

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