



Delivering customer excellence through process automation

Overview

The need

Gist's disjointed IT environment required excessive manual effort and hindered responsiveness. It couldn't scale rapidly to deliver custom solutions and meet demand spikes, prohibiting revenue growth.

The solution

A cloud-based solution simplified Gist's IT architecture, increasing scalability and reliability. With automated transformation and exchange of business documents, Gist can focus on its customers.

The benefit

The standardized, simplified B2B integration framework gave Gist real-time visibility into transaction data. The automation improved responsiveness to customers and enabled innovative processes.

Customer background

Third-party logistics company and member of The Linde Group, Gist Limited (www.gistworld.com) develops flexible logistics and supply chain solutions to enable its suppliers, distributors, retailers and transport companies to best meet the challenges involved in the distribution of a wide range of ambient, chilled and frozen products.

Specializing in chilled distribution, Gist employs more than 5,000 employees across 35 sites and has 1,200 vehicles dedicated to collection and delivery. Gist prides itself on putting customers at the forefront of its business.

Business challenge

Supporting a wide range of internal business functions, Gist's IT landscape consisted of diverse applications, services and functionality. To enable communications between systems, Gist relied on customized, hard-coded, point-to-point solutions requiring excessive manual effort to update when adding new applications.

Gist caters to partners of all sizes with business-to-business (B2B) capabilities ranging in levels of sophistication. As more trading partners joined the community, the inability to scale and slow implementation cycles hindered revenue growth. This was further exacerbated by the demands of seasonal peaks, in particular around Christmas, Easter, Valentine's Day and Mother's Day, when the number of documents processed increases substantially.

A key driver of Gist's B2B requirements was the need to customize for many different types of business messages from many different customers, including the introduction of an electronic dispatch note by one of its customers for all of its suppliers. Because the food suppliers delivered goods to Gist depots, it became an imperative to be able to receive the dispatch notes electronically from the suppliers, eliminating the need for manual processing of paper formats.



“It was crucial to Gist’s strategy that our B2B integration was simplified into a single solution able to eliminate manual processes and provide scalability with a range of trading partners. Not only did this create real-time visibility into our supply chain, but with Sterling Commerce as our B2B integration partner, we can continue to focus on delivering outstanding customer service.”

—Susannah Teixeira, application architect,
Gist Limited

Solution

Gist acknowledged the need for a strategic review of its IT architecture that would enhance visibility into its systems and provide an accurate view of trading partner information. In defining the approach to a flexible and future-proof integration solution, Gist identified the requirement to first consolidate to a single, simplified and standardized solution and then buy rather than build the solution.

Gist decided that an “as a service” model using a multitenant platform would provide the scalability and reliability it needed and enable it to leverage the economies of scale available from a cloud-based solution. The “managed” element of the service includes a dedicated services manager whose role is to develop a partnering relationship aimed at understanding how Gist can get the most from the service to meet its changing business requirements.

Future proofing of the architecture was carried out through a trading partner assessment conducted by IBM Sterling Community Development Services with current and future requirements in mind. The service was rolled out to Gist’s customer base over a 12-month period through a joint Gist and IBM Sterling Commerce project team.

Through a single, security-rich connection to the Sterling integration “as a service” platform, Gist is able to automate the transformation of business documents into virtually any required data format or protocol and exchange them in a security-rich manner to and from practically any trading partner in just about any location. Visibility of the documents being exchanged enables Gist to better manage the associated B2B processes and support the trading partner community. This allows Gist to focus its in-house integration expertise and improve business processes that are critical to customer satisfaction.

Solution components

Software

- IBM Sterling Business Integration Suite
 - IBM Sterling B2B Integration Services Plus
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Key benefits

IBM Sterling B2B Integration Services Plus has enabled Gist to automate the exchange of business-critical data and has provided real-time visibility and traffic light status alerting of transaction data. Consequently, the company has moved from a complex, error-prone and labor-intensive architecture to a standardized and simplified B2B integration framework.

A key perceived benefit to Gist was the ability to automate processes within the warehouse and reduce errors associated with manual data entry into its systems. As a result of automated interfacing to the warehouse management system, a quicker turnaround and new, innovative processes—such as fast tracking suppliers' deliveries within the warehouse—were achieved.

Gist is also making use of the Sterling Commerce ability to offer multiple communication types and process multiple message types. This means that the company is able to respond more quickly and with confidence to new customer requirements, even if they are not part of Gist's standard offering.

In summary, the company can more easily accommodate a rapidly changing customer landscape and the shifting requirements of its customers. Gist continues to add new services, new document types and new trading partners to its B2B offering.

For more information

To learn more about IBM Sterling Commerce offerings, contact your IBM sales representative or IBM Business Partner, or visit:

ibm.com/software/commerce/sterling-commerce



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Produced in the United States of America
February 2012

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