

NICGlobal

Manufacturing Solutions

Xenos terminalOne Enables National Industrial Concepts to Remain Competitive in the Dynamic Metal-components Industry

The Challenge

Sheet-metal fabricator National Industrial Concepts (NIC) of Woodinville, Washington supplies metal components to a variety of customers—from truck manufacturer Paccar and exercise equipment-maker Precor to computer giant Dell. NIC conducts business with its customers using electronic data interchange (EDI). Each day for many years, four NIC employees would complete thousands of EDI transactions by manually re-keying the EDI data into their ERP system. According to Tom Bailey, NIC's IT director, all the manually entered data would have to be reviewed if something went wrong with even a single transaction. "It was very time consuming and expensive to go back in, cancel and fix what may have been one bad part number in the batch," he adds. Not only was making the changes costly, but the inflexibility of this manual process made it difficult—if not impossible—to accommodate specific customer requests for specialized messages.

The Solution: Xenos terminalOne

NIC found the answer to its EDI transaction woes in Xenos terminalOne, an end-to-end transaction gateway solution that expedites business transactions over the Internet and across disparate platforms. The Xenos terminalOne solution is comprised of three independent but seamlessly integrated software components: a secure data transport, a data transformation engine, and intelligent routing and filtering tools. Each of these components can be implemented easily by end-users in a stand-alone mode to meet specific requirements. Their true synergy, however, becomes immediately apparent when they are integrated into an end-to-end STP/IP solution.

Over the last 18 months, NIC has developed direct, XML-based integrations using Xenos terminalOne. With this advanced data-interchange solution, specific data-entry errors can be spotted and corrected—simply and immediately. Client requests for customized message formats can be accommodated in hours. And NIC can secure new customers by tailoring its data-interchange system to satisfy specialized needs.

"We looked at various point solutions, but Xenos terminalOne lets us do anything we can imagine," says Mr. Bailey. "It supports HTTP, SMTP and FTP, and it can call purchasing and scheduling tasks from our ERP system."

Business Challenges

- Keep supply-chain information flowing smoothly
- Manage business-to-business electronic data interchange of purchase orders, advanced shipping notices, cancellations, invoices and other essential documents
- Automate manual processes

Business Benefits

- Accelerate and enhance accuracy of transaction processing
- Win new customers and react quickly to customers' unique needs
- Sharply reduce labor costs

Xenos and Document Sciences provide us with a strategic platform that is a key part of our document generation strategy and aids in the development of exciting new client services. We are able to accurately and creatively communicate with our clients and partners to provide more detailed and useable information whilst reducing associated print and fulfilment costs.

— Chief Architect
St. James's Place

The Result

Here's how it works. NIC employees and customers interact with the company's system via a value-added network. Customers drop their orders—in EDI or other formats—into a folder in the system. The orders are then automatically detected, translated into NIC's preferred formats, and routed and loaded into the company's ERP system. If a problem arises, the system sends alerts to appropriate users and a workflow engine kicks off an exception-handling process, extracting the transaction in question along with required contextual information.

“Now we can catch these exceptions up front and automatically route them without holding up the rest of the batch,” says Mr. Bailey. “PDF reports and forecasts are also generated and emailed to appropriate contacts, including inside sales reps, so they know the status of their orders.”

Thousands of parsed transactions, PDF reports, forecasts and exceptions can be processed and routed within eight to 12 seconds. The amount of labor devoted to managing transactions has also been sharply reduced. Four employees used to spend a full day on order processing and exception handling. Now, one person spends half a day using Xenos terminalOne. In addition to significant savings in transaction and labor costs, the new system has improved the company's ability to win new business by adapting to each customer's unique requirements.

But perhaps the purest expression of the value of the new system comes from the company's IT director: “Simply put, we couldn't run our business without Xenos terminalOne software,” says Mr. Bailey.