



THE CUSTOMER

Travel-book publisher Lonely Planet, whose California warehouse supplies bookstores across North and South America.

THE PROBLEM

Lonely Planet needed SAP to support EDI Orders, Order Acknowledgements, Invoices, and Shipment Notices (856/857), as required by trading partners.

THE SOLUTION

EZConnect EDI/XML translation software from ACOM, with Visual ASN from Edisoft for Warehouse Management System. EZConnect handles messages between buyers, publisher, and warehouse, translating smoothly between EDI, XML, and SAP's iDoc formats.

THE RESULTS

On-time and on-budget integration with SAP. Full support for EDI 850, 855, 810 and 856/857 documents. Faster order processing. A flexible platform for linking further applications to SAP in the future.

SAP integration project on-time and on-budget

ACOM helps travel book publisher streamline warehouse and boost EDI support in SAP

Check out the travel section of any bookstore, and you'll likely spot some colorful titles from Australia-based Lonely Planet.

The journey from printer to bookstore is anything but lonely. Each book is accompanied by paper and electronic forms and shipping labels as it's picked, packed, and shipped numerous times. For example, Lonely Planet's warehouse in Oakland, CA receives a container of books from Singapore several times a month, then uses this stock to fill orders to bookstores across North and South America.

At any point, there are roughly 700 orders waiting to be filled, worth up to half a million dollars. To keep it all organized, Lonely Planet asked the American operation to convert to its standard enterprise system, SAP. There was just one hitch.

Their North American customer base expected Lonely Planet to support EDI Orders (850/PO), Order Acknowledgements (855/POA), Invoices (810/INV), Advance Ship Notices (856/ASN), and the Ship and Bill Notice (857/BSN) documents. All of these documents are required for this publisher to do business with North American customers. But SAP did not have viable support for these documents, leaving Lonely Planet to find a solution that could integrate with SAP while remaining cost-effective.

All-in-one solution for SAP

Thom Dyson, the company's Business Systems Manager for the Americas, sometimes wondered if he would need two new systems linked to SAP, one for EDI and another for the warehouse.

"Happily, I was saved from that pain and suffering," he says, "thanks to the flexible solution from ACOM." This included the Visual ASN warehouse management system (WMS) from Edisoft, along with ACOM's EZConnect EDI/XML translator.

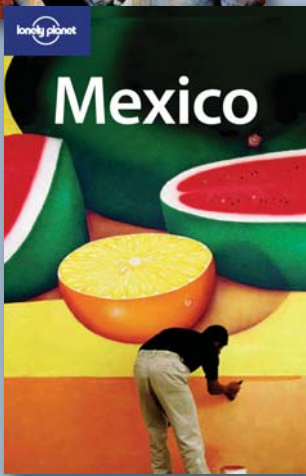
While SAP handles accounting, and Visual ASN handles the warehouse, EZConnect runs in the background to translate messages between both customer and supplier as well as between internal applications using EDI, XML, and SAP's iDocs format. This keeps communications flowing between buyers, warehouse, and the publisher's offices in Australia and California.

The project kicked off in late 2006. And throughout, Dyson appreciated ACOM's approach. "More than any other company, ACOM struck the right balance between 'Yes, we can do that!' and 'You may want to find a better way to approach that.' They came up with some ideas that struck me as elegant."

Streamlining the warehouse

For example, most books in the warehouse are arranged by titles from A to Z, so pick lists were re-designed to print in alphabetical order. This saves steps for pickers every day. For whole boxes simply being re-shipped to customers, the system was tweaked to print barcode shipping labels that do double-duty.

"For EDI order processing, the workload in the sales department has gone down dramatically."



Lonely Planet is the largest independent travel-book publisher in the world, with 600+ titles in print. The Australia-based firm uses SAP to manage its world-wide operations.

"Essentially, the labels that go on those boxes become your picking instructions, with no additional piece of paper, and no scanning required," says Dyson. "That whole process came out of a brainstorming session. That was another place where ACOM was really great to work with."

All told, Dyson figures the new system eliminates nine manual steps in processing orders. Seven sales people no longer have to eyeball every order for accuracy. Today they only handle exceptions, like an order for 2,500 copies where a small rounding error would affect the total price. On their request, an e-mail copy of each order is now routed to the sales staff so they can keep up with the regular buyers: a task that EZConnect readily supported.

"The ability of ACOM's software to adapt to various data formats turned out to be very useful," says Dyson. "The EDI side is a back-end process that doesn't get any glamour, but it works, and adding new trading partners isn't hard at all."

Linking SAP to more apps

Since going live in February, Lonely Planet is happy with how the project has streamlined its order processing.

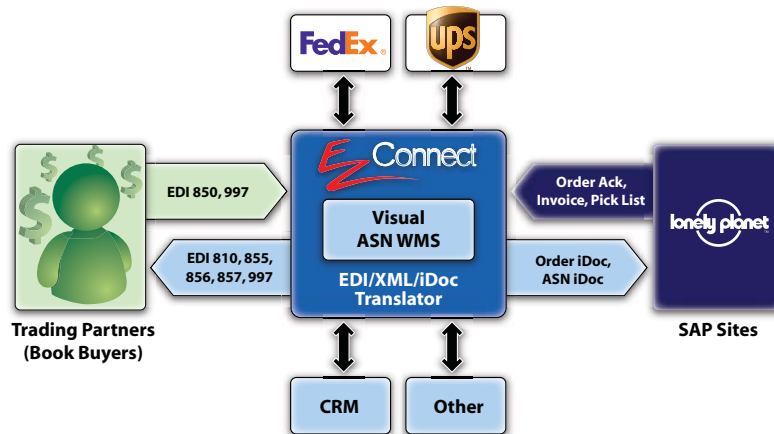
"For EDI order processing, the workload in the sales department has gone down dramatically. The warehouse has a new process, with all kinds of benefits they're happy with," says Dyson. "This project went very, very well."

He estimates the system saves at least 15 person-hours of work a week. The warehouse staff are picking, packing, and shipping faster than ever. And the whole project came in on-time and on-budget.

Dyson's next goal is to link a marketing database to SAP. He plans to use the ACT! CRM to track book reviewers and generate orders for review copies. "I'm confident that if I get ACT! to output a file with order information, I'll be able to use EZConnect to format it in a way that SAP will accept," he says.

The warehouse system already links to software from FedEx and UPS and generates any required shipping documents and labels. The flexibility of EZConnect makes it an effective platform to link SAP with additional applications in the future.

"ACOM has been good to work with," says Dyson, "so this all worked out really well. It's been a great experience."



EZConnect is a flexible EDI/XML eBusiness gateway solution that translates between EDI, XML, and SAP's iDocs format. Electronic orders and reports now flow smoothly around the company and with customers.