

### THE BACKGROUND

When a major retailer says it will do big business with you if you change your ways, you're likely to listen up – real good. So when J.C. Penney Co. told St. George Crystal Ltd. that it would like to do business with the company directly following the bankruptcy of one of its major crystal products supplier - one of St. George's private label customers - management was all ears.

The condition: Penney needed to handle transactions automatically via electronic data interchange, or EDI. The privately held Jeannette, Pennsylvania crystal glassware manufacturer took immediate steps to become EDI-compliant. Literally truckloads of fine 24% lead crystal products, previously sold under the brand name Toscani (which St. George now owns) were involved. The decision was clear.

### THE SOLUTION

St. George Vice President of Information Services/CIO Richard Service undertook the J.C. Penney EDI project reluctantly, anticipating a great deal of work, high costs and no guarantee of return on such a project for a single customer. Today, however, after a sometimes tortuous journey through the forests of electronic data interchange, St. George has settled on a solution from ACOM, called EZConnect EDI/XML, which has enabled them to successfully implement some 15 trading partners, with several more in work, and upwards of 30 in the wings.

In the initial effort, Service sought to use an EDI module in the company's accounting software in conjunction with a value-added network. Incoming documents would arrive but for some undetermined reason the VAN could not or would not process them. The documents had to be re-keyed, eliminating any advantages that might have been gained from automation.

Service launched a new search for an EDI solution that integrated well with their newly installed Windows-based ERP software. He explored a number of avenues and recalls receiving several promotional documents from ACOM. Intrigued, Service contacted the company, was given an online demo of the product and requested a proposal. The proposal was sound and he purchased the software and professional services for the first customer implementation.

### IMPLEMENTATION

ACOM's EZConnect was installed on a standard PC on St. George's Novell network in January, followed by two days of training, with the first implementation going live in June. Additional support continued via the Internet, using pcAnywhere.

For most of its EDI-enabled trading partners, St. George implements several X12 EDI document forms:

- Purchase order (850)
- Invoice (810)
- Advance ship notice (856)
- Text documents (864)
- Credit memo or charge back form (812) for Wal-Mart

Service is also implementing the UCC 128 document form, which captures bar code labels for transmittal via electronic data interchange.

### THE PROCESS

***“Now, we communicate directly with the Wal-Mart database over the internet or public network, saving the cost of a VAN.”***

“When we began doing business with Wal-Mart in our pre-EDI days, the retailer would accumulate orders and FedEx them to us,” Service says. “Now, we communicate directly with the Wal-Mart database over the internet or public network, saving the cost of a VAN.”

For Wal-Mart Canada, a different solution was devised that uses UCC-standard AS/2 communications, a highly secure, direct real-time link using the Internet as the data transport. Orders come in via the web. EZConnect grabs them, translates them and copies them to a directory in J.D. Edwards OneWorld Xe. There, they can be viewed and edited as necessary and posted for customer service personnel to inspect prior to fulfillment. When orders are ready for shipment, EZConnect polls OneWorld for the response documents, posts them and flags the Wal-Mart site. Delivery is immediate.

Currently, St. George's EZConnect solution is processing 20 or so transactions per day, and rising. Some are bulk truckload orders for repackaging, some huge volume orders of individually packaged and branded items, some relatively modest in size.

## SUCCESS!

### *“We’ve been very satisfied.”*

Service has not attempted to justify his EDI investment in terms of direct cost savings.

“Where the real savings occur,” he says, “is at the retailer level and the efficiencies that EDI introduces for them are critical in maintaining their margins. If you want to do business with these customers, you must comply with their requirements. It is common sense customer service and the indirect benefits can be enormous.”

“We had learned a lot about EDI by the time we went looking two and one-half years ago,” Service says. “Our criteria were that it operate in the PC environment, that it be very flexible, easy to use and affordable, and that we could count on good, reliable support after it was up and running. We’ve been very satisfied. Whenever we have had issues, ACOM has always been there, in one case with a solution in less than an hour.”

In short, he believes EZConnect has crystallized his EDI vision of an open-ended B2B solution that the company can live with and grow with.

## ACOM SOLUTIONS, INC.

ACOM develops solutions that integrate with enterprise applications to enhance back office and B2B processes for electronic, Internet and paper-based commerce. ACOM’s solutions run in all computing environments (host-resident on Windows NT, iSeries and AS/400), and are compatible with all financial management/ERP applications.

ACOM has worked with thousands of companies around the world to help them update and enhance their eBusiness processes. Whether you need an enterprise-wide solution or a solution for a single site, ACOM can help.

Call us today for more information. We look forward to helping you.

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