

Thomas French EDI

electronic procurement system

Lancashire based Thomas French is a leading manufacturer of cushions throws and beanbags to the soft furnishings retail industry. With a large client base featuring a large number of prestigious high street retailers.

“The streamlining of our SOP system and improved integration with the ever changing demands of our retail partners has been greatly enhanced by Solweb’s recent developments. The need for a fast response and just in time service to our retail partners is the core USP for our UK based business”

Peter Owen
General Manger - Thomas French Ltd

The Challenge

In August 2006 Thomas French met with Solweb to discuss the increasing need for a replacement EDI system to integrate directly with their new manufacturing system.

Thomas French had successfully implemented an EDI with their old internal systems, however the advent of 123mrp.NET had rendered this system redundant and forced them back to manual process, receiving orders by e-mail, telephone or fax. The orders then had to be keyed into their manufacturing package 123mrp.NET so a works order could be generated. Replacing this manual order processing system with an electronic one would provide several obvious benefits, increasing productivity and efficiency whilst reducing potential keying errors.

“We were becoming increasingly aware that in order to tighten our trading relationships and increase business with our larger clients, we would have

to find a quicker method for responding to their demands. With orders growing in size the strain on staff and resources was having a detrimental impact on our efficiency”, states Martin Hughes, IT Consultant to Thomas French.

One leading home furnishings retailer and long term customer had implemented a Kewill system to manage their forecasting, inventory, order management and reconciliations. The Kewill system utilises the popular TRADACOM standard for electronic procurement and supply-chain integration, so with this in mind a decision was made to follow suit and invest in an EDI system to integrate with this standard and streamline the sales order process.

The Solution

Having established the format and manner in which the orders would be received, a clear set of rules and processes would need to be defined in



order to prevent spurious data being imported into 123mrp.NET. "Whilst we recognise the need to automate sales order processing with an electronic system, we cannot afford to lose the logical reasoning of its human counterparts", comments Martin.

Liaising closely with Thomas French, Solweb were able to ascertain the areas where manual checks would be required and set about developing the application.

Firstly the TRADACOM file is opened through the EDI interface, reading the order in line by line. The imported file then undergoes a three stage validation process.

Stage one translates the order, matching all of the parts in the order to those in the manufacturing system. Erroneous parts are highlighted and are ignored by the import routine unless amended.

The second stage validates all of the delivery addresses once again if an address isn't matched in 123mrp.NET it is highlighted in the EDI application, giving the user the option to add, amend or ignore in each instance.

The third and final stage runs through all of the default and customer specific price matrixes, utilising the rules set up in 123mrp.NET to set the correct prices against the appropriate parts.

With the validation completed and all of the criteria matched the automatic import routine is initiated, creating a new order for each delivery address and/or order number.

Conclusion

The whole project was completed within the one month time frame set out by Thomas French and the benefits were instantaneous. "We were astounded by the substantial time savings the EDI was able to achieve. The EDI is able to process a fifteen hundred line order

in less than two minutes, increasing the efficiency of the sales department whilst reducing the number of errors made", says Martin. "Even customers were impressed with the way we able to respond to their requests so quickly", he adds.

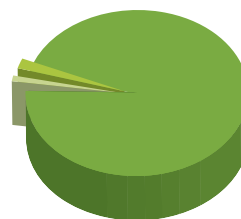
With the benefits proving themselves time and time again, just six months later Thomas French made the decision to further embrace this technology, and contacted Solweb to arrange modifications to the application. With just two days further development they were accepting formatted orders from another two customers. One of whom has eighty five stores, with around fifteen to twenty of these placing orders of approximately one hundred product lines on a daily basis.

"Some days orders would take up to two hours to enter manually, however the EDI can deal with them in as little as five minutes", states Peter Owen, General Manager.

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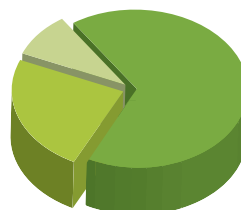
EDI Statistics

Percentage of total order lines



- Entered Using EDI (97%)
- Bulk Orders (1%)
- Manually Entered (2%)

Percentage of total order values



- Entered Using EDI (67%)
- Bulk Orders (24%)
- Manually Entered (7%)

