

Case Study

Kewill provides AG Thames Holdings with enhanced EDI experience

AG Thames Holdings, a fruit importer and logistics provider, has improved its order and invoicing processes following the implementation of MessageBroker from Kewill.



Background

AG Thames Holdings was set up in 1970 by Leon Aichen, who remains Chairman of the Group. Its group headquarters are in Crayford, Kent while the company has offices in South Africa, New Zealand, Spain and Italy.

The company imports fresh fruit from around the globe for Sainsbury's 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and its minimum service level requirements are 97 per cent. Seven years ago the business formed Solstor, a logistics company which provides a global supply chain network, specialising in products requiring a temperature sensitive environment. As the business continues to develop, technology forms a central part of its strategy for future success.

Challenge

AG Thames Holdings' business had continually developed over time, however it hadn't invested in technology that supported its growth. The business works with major supermarket retailers and requires its EDI (Electronic Data Interchange) system to interact effectively across all areas of the business so all orders and invoices can be dealt with accurately and efficiently.

The company's previous technology was based on an aging EDI system. The business decided to embark on a project with IFS for a new ERP system which required it to rethink its EDI implementation. Bal Bhamra, Head of IT, AG Thames Holdings, says, "We had been doing EDI for several years which integrated with our existing ERP system. However, when we decided to replace our ERP system we wanted to make changes across the organisation to ensure we were meeting our customers' demands. Our existing system was unreliable and put unnecessary pressure on the business."

The business needed an EDI system that could support the company when placing electronic orders, while also supporting the invoicing processes of the business. Bhamra adds, "We needed a supplier that we could trust with a high service level and ideally we wanted an outsourced managed solution."

Solution

AG Thames Holdings looked at a number of different suppliers. Following an in-depth pitch process Kewill's MessageBroker technology was selected.

Kewill MessageBroker is an end-to-end managed B2B integration service, which is designed to be secure, resilient and scalable. The MessageBroker service is hosted from two dedicated data centres located at geographically separated sites in the UK. Data replication between both centres means that if a critical incident occurs at one site, Kewill simply switches operations to the other site to ensure continuity of service to AG Thames Holdings.

Bhamra says, "We were immediately impressed with the technology and we received favourable reports from customers using the solution. Likewise, our new ERP provider had a good working relationship with Kewill. All these factors saw MessageBroker stand out from the competition."

The technology is hosted "Software as a Service" which collects a supplier's files, converts them into a specified format for integration to their application and then passes the converted file into their system.

Bhamra adds, "We chose Kewill because it fitted our needs at an affordable price and was scalable. It's a cost effective solution which can be configured and priced to suit suppliers of all sizes who wish to integrate it into their applications. Also, it provides a fully managed EDI solution with 24/7 monitoring."

Benefits

Kewill manages AG Thames Holdings' EDI requirements with its partners. The MessageBroker technology works directly with IFS and has removed the need for client side EDI software.

Bhamra says, "We are dealing with huge orders of fresh fruit every day so system reliability is central to our business. These orders are received via EDI and then entered into our systems. It's essential that this data is accurate as it needs to be used across the entire business. There are people processing orders,

traders looking at purchasing produce, employees in our logistics division looking at the lorry orders; meanwhile there are people trying to assess whether fruit remains loose or if they are poly bagged and we have to assess whether fruit is kept in the cold store environment. With such a variety of information required across the business – accuracy is all important and MessageBroker provides this.

As EDI evolves the need for a common standard becomes more important so that as a business it spends less time sorting where data needs to be mapped and which sections of orders or invoices are missing. Bhamra says, "As a supplier we are keen to meet our customers' needs but we all face the same cost and staffing restrictions in order to run a cost effective business. Kewill MessageBroker delivers us a reliable service at an affordable price."

In the future, AG Thames Holdings hopes to offer services such as giving web access availability to some of its clients. Bhamra says, "This will allow easy access to the internet for customers/suppliers who can't afford to invest in EDI. At the moment smaller businesses we deal with send through orders via email. However, by providing web access they will be able to view and observe the status of their orders."

The company is looking forward to building an important working relationship with Kewill. Bhamra concludes, "Kewill is a good partner who is playing an important role in helping our business grow in the long term. Not only has the technology helped us save money but the reliability of the solution means we are providing a better service to our customers."

More Information

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