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SEVEN ITEMS TO HELP DETERMINE IF EDI IS RIGHT FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Whitepaper

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If you are considering implementing EDI in your manufacturing facility, now might be a good time to open up your EDI toolbox and start exploring the possibilities and benefits of using EDI to streamline your business capabilities. As with any enterprise level application, there is preparation required to get the most of out the system. Below are several questions to consider when evaluating whether to add EDI to your business:

1. Do your trading partners have EDI capabilities and are there enough trading partners to justify the project?
2. What types of transactions will your trading partners be using?
3. Do I have the necessary EDI contact information for each trading partner?
4. What are your trading partners' expectations after enabling EDI? For example, response times for transactions, last minute changes to orders, special order situations, etc.
5. Who on my staff will I assign to be trained to understand the ins and outs of the module and who understands the business requirements of the trading partners?
6. Do I have a clear understanding of how we process data for the trading partner through the ERP system. This will serve as your roadmap for processing your customers' data using EDI.
7. Have I explored other markets that might open up because I am enabling EDI within the system?

The EDI module within the IQMS manufacturing ERP suite is a powerful and versatile tool that includes integrated inbound/ outbound EDI processing, standard and customizable business logic, messaging and, ultimately, automation of the supply chain. The power of the module comes from the fact it is embedded into a comprehensive ERP solution, meaning that every aspect, from sales orders to production, scheduling, inventory, shipping and much more have all been programmed on the same database for business-wide visibility.



Rather than just transmitting and printing or parking the EDI data, for a person to manually parse later, embedded EDI gives you the ability to electronically consume data automatically, so you can read and react immediately. What happens in your plant if a change order comes in overnight? Does it just sit there until a person can process it in the morning? With embedded EDI, the document is passed through the whole system the minute it arrives. By the time you turn on your computer in the morning, that overnight order has been digested, your MRP, production and scheduling modules have been automatically updated and your suppliers downstream have already been notified of the changes in quantities or delivery dates.

One of the largest advantages of embedded EDI versus a bolted-on option is related to the data management side of the process. With embedded EDI, all necessary data is consistently available across the system and managed in one place only. There is no need to enter shipping locations, customer numbers, item numbers, etc. into multiple systems or provide some form of translation between the data in multiple systems. In addition, the ability to apply specific business logic to the data becomes more uniform in usage and flexible in terms of overall system function.

With an embedded EDI system, since the integrated parser has access to all the data within the system, it is possible to make more meaningful decisions on how data is handled. A good example of this can be seen in the use of the IQMS AfterParse script. This script is executed after the parser has brought the raw EDI data into the system and populated the necessary EDI tables. The script contains logic to evaluate and manipulate the base data as need for specific requirements. This can include evaluating item pricing, validity of customer information, recording of notes/warnings/errors, the update of shipping requirements and modifying item and order matching rules (just to name a few possible uses of the script).

Outbound data also benefits from embedded EDI's ability to directly access within the database. The most obvious benefit is that when certain actions occur within the system, such as shipments or invoicing, the EDI module has complete access to the data and can generate outbound documents without any other input required. In addition, if there is need to apply any specific business logic to the data, it is easily handled within the transaction template without affecting the data in the database.

Another powerful extension that is available within the IQMS embedded EDI suite is the eServer monitor application. This tool allows for scheduling of specific actions to occur in an automated fashion. These actions can occur on a regular timed interval, on a daily or monthly basis or at the end of a GL period. There are a number of available events that can be processed through eServer, ranging from processing of data to monitoring of files on the file system. Some of the most commonly used events are processing reports, error alerts, automation of inbound and outbound EDI data and scheduling of scripted tasks. When fully configured, the eServer application can create a completely hands-off environment for processing EDI transactions within the corporate environment.

The IQMS EDI team has provided implementation services and support for hundreds of clients, allowing them to connect with almost 500 different trading partners (including new trading partners added regularly). If you are evaluating whether to add EDI functionality to your manufacturing plant, be sure to investigate the ERP vendors who offer native, embedded EDI (rather than a disparate, third-party option) in order to gain the greatest benefits for your organization.

For more information, please visit www.iqms.com or call 1.866.367.3772

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