

Company overview

With over 80 facilities and 10,000 employees throughout North America, a leading provider of graphical design, printing, and publishing services (“Printing Services”) distributes a broad range of business documents, as well as printed office products, to wholesalers, resellers, and direct to customers. Printing Services has built its reputation on high quality service and reliable delivery.

Situation

Printing Services processes a mix of shipments via UPS, FedEx, DHL, LTL, TL and air freight, courier, ocean and multi-modal carriers. Each location used either carrier-provided or various 3rd party-provided parcel shipping systems. Shippers manually prepared carton labels, pallet labels, and bills of lading for LTL shipments (50% of their total volume).

Each 3rd party provided shipping system required a separate interface into Printing Services’ ERP system (Hagen/OA) to access order header information, but were unable to capture line item information. Carrier-provided systems were unable to integrate with Hagen/OA system at all.

Situation Summary

- Disparate shipment processes
- Excessive transportation costs
- Inefficiency, inconsistency
- Poor shipment status visibility
- Lack of transportation cost controls

As described in more detail below, Printing Services assembles finished print jobs in groups of shipments. Because of the limited flexibility of their existing shipping systems, Printing Services fulfillment personnel were forced to adapt their work flows to accommodate the operational characteristics of each system. This made shipment processing a tedious and time consuming task. Manual LTL processing often resulted in errors and delivery delays. For international shipments, operators had to manually select which international documents they wanted to print with each order. There was no carrier code mapping between their ERP system and their shipping system, so operators had to learn how to translate codes from one system to the other.

In addition to these inefficiencies, Printing Services’ finance department lacked centralized control over transportation costs. They were unable to validate the accuracy of rates, or associate costs with specific orders, bills of lading, or general ledger accounts. As a result they had a difficult time reconciling LTL carrier invoices. Printing Services is a public company and this lack of financial control raised Sarbanes Oxley compliance risks.

Lastly, customer service representatives (CSRs) were unable to respond efficiently to order and shipment status queries because they lacked a unified view of all shipments processed from their various locations and disparate shipping systems. CSRs manually researched order status within their ERP system and then called the shipping department to help correlate orders against shipments. This was difficult because multiple orders were often consolidated within a single shipment, or multiple shipments processed within an order. When the tracking number was finally located, they re-keyed the number into the carrier web site and then forwarded the response to the customer. This process frustrated CSRs, shipping department personnel and customers. Accounts receivable had similar problems with Proofs of Delivery (PODs) for disputed orders.

To maintain their high level of service and support, Printing Services realized it was time to implement a single platform that could unify transportation information, processes, and people. They turned to Agile-Network for help. Agile-Network delivered.

Capabilities Required

Agile-Network identified the following key system requirements:

1. One enterprise solution to automate and simplify shipment processing across multiple facilities
2. Automate generation of all carrier documentation and forms (labels, bills of lading, etc.)
3. Centralized server to store all shipping transactions and carrier charges for improved accountability
4. Ability to exchange shipping information with Printing Services’ Hagen/OA ERP system
5. Ability to handle multiple order shipments, and multiple shipment orders, easily and consistently
6. Ability to track and “drill down” on customer -> jobs -> shipments -> line item status from any location

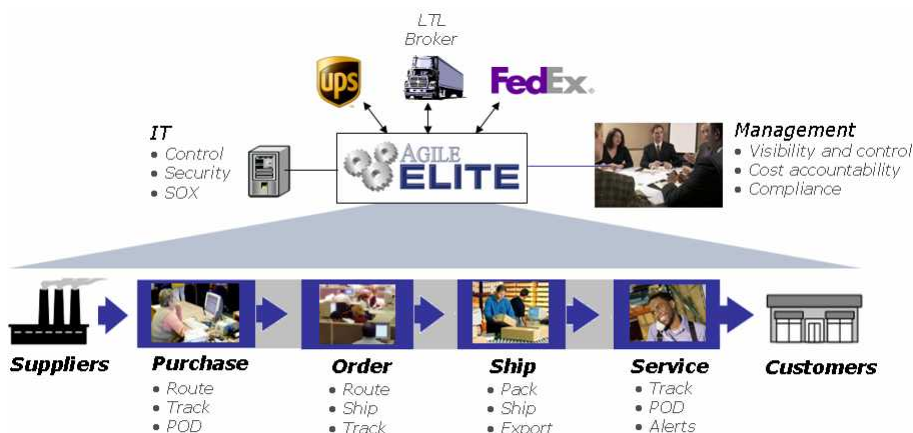
Solution

Agile-Network, Inc. ("Agile") implemented AgileElite, a suite of supply chain visibility and control solutions that met all of Printing Services' requirements. Agile installed AgileElite server in the data center of Printing Services' corporate headquarters. A single connector integrates exchanges information with Printing Services' Hagen/OA system. Using "AgileBrowser", authorized operators from any facility have quick and controlled access to AgileElite solutions from across Printing Services' secure corporate network.

Using AgileComposer, AgileElite's rapid application development tool, Agile collaborated with Printing Service personnel to design a job entry application that adapts and aligns fulfillment process to Printing Services' specific work flows. Each job may have multiple production runs, or "sub jobs", associated with it. Each sub-job is split into its various shipments or "groups", which in turn contain a quantity of a particular item or "class". Descriptions for classes are unique and their relationship to shipping groups is maintained in AgileElite. The job entry solution composed by Agile and Printing Services enables order entry users to enter and verify jobs, sub-jobs, groups and classes. This information is stored in a "pending" status for access during the fulfillment process.

In the warehouse, operators use AgileShip to assemble shipments by accessing "groups" previously defined during the job entry process. In most cases the fulfillment process occurs across many days and weeks. AgileElite tracks these shipments and updates the item quantities accordingly so that users always know whether or not there are more printing runs left to process. Upon completion of a shipment, AgileShip automatically generates bills of lading, pallet labels and packing slips, thereby reducing the data entry errors associated with their previous manual process. AgileShip automates UPS and FedEx compliant labeling and billing processes, and selects the correct group of international shipping documents, thereby eliminating operator guesswork.

CSRs use AgileView to "drill down" from customer, to job, to shipment and item detail. Bills of Lading are stored in electronic form in the AgileElite database. Accounts receivable can quickly resolve disputed accounts with online POD access. Accounts payable have a consolidated view of all transportation costs.



One platform provides enterprise control over transportation and fulfillment.

Results

Printing Service IT Director observed, "Our previous fulfillment systems were bringing us to our knees. It took us 20 minutes to process a Bill of Lading, now it takes us one minute. We account for transportation costs down to the penny. This has helped us comply with Sarbanes Oxley requirements for data and financial reporting integrity. Even though ours is a very complex IT environment, Agile's project staff addressed every technical challenge faced with confidence and positive results."

For more information:

Agile-Network

Offices Nationwide

Call toll-free: 866-686-AGILE

Visit our website at:

www.agile-network.com

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Key Benefits

- Multiple locations, one platform
- Processing time reduced 80%
- Improved customer service
- Reduced errors
- Carrier cost visibility & control