



CASE STUDY: OFFICE PRODUCTS DEPOT

Background

Office Products Depot is New Zealand's largest locally owned business to business supplier of office products with 40 licensed dealers nationally. The dealer network is supported by a National Office providing shared services such as national marketing and management of strategic supplier relationships. Most Office Products Depot dealers were independent suppliers of stationery and office products in their respective regions prior to joining the network, which has formed an extremely strong tradition of high quality service to the business market over many years.

The challenge for Office Products Depot with its independent dealer network has been to establish centralised systems for communication within the group and provision of online services to customers for internet procurement and related activities. In 1998 Office Products Depot launched a successful online service to customers that provided product catalogue and online ordering.

In 2001 Office Products Depot identified its requirements for the next phase of its centralised technology investment. The critical factor was firstly to expand its online services to customers, including personalised business information such as historical order records and private catalogues and to enable a seamless service for those national organisations which operated regional branches and relationships with a number of different Office Products Depot dealers. Secondly Office Products Depot wanted to establish centralised reporting and communication around the network, and improve the flow of communication between the national office and dealers of information such as new product availability and release information, and price changes.

Based on their requirements, Office Products Depot identified Conduit as being in the best position to meet their needs in the initial stages and into the future utilising Conduit's hosted online applications and electronic document exchange services.

How was it done?

In December 2002 Office Products Depot relaunched their online services, now deployed on Conduit's hosted online service. The new service provides customers with full product catalogue and search including private catalogues and customised pricing per customer. Online specials and promotions,

Business records such as previous orders and online customer surveys and feedback are all additional functionality now provided to customers.

All content is administered by the Office Products Depot national office and/or dealers and includes catalogue and price management, centralised reporting at a national office and dealer level, and promotion management and reporting. In addition each dealer has the ability to administer the content and communication seen by their customers specifically, further enhancing the close relationship between the customer and their local Office Products Depot dealer.

The group's strategic suppliers also have the option to be fully integrated into Office Products Depot's trading community, thereby automating their product catalogue information and pricing. Previously difficult processes such as establishing product pricing are minimised as price changes by the supplier can be undertaken online and notifications to the group automated. These activities occur by way of Conduit's hosted electronic document exchange service, Decode, and include any-to-any file transport and translation and web interfaces for those organisations that do not have in-house file extract automation capability.

Where as processes to manage price changes and new products were previously handled by email and manual distribution of the information and catalogue update, Office Products Depot now receive notification online and can manage the update of their catalogue automatically. The reduction of manual handling of these critical processes will provide both Office Products Depot dealers and customers a significantly improved flow of communication and ensure the timely distribution of information – a critical success factor in the highly competitive market of business office supplies.

Where to from here?

In the coming months of 2003, Offices Products Depot will be moving to utilise the same online and electronic exchange framework to commence electronic procurement from suppliers. This will further streamline the procurement process and reduce the time to fulfill, providing a faster and more accurate stock supply process for the customer. In addition the dealer network will be launching National Account management services facilitated online. This will allow national organisations to source products from dealers throughout the country with centralised processing, billing and reporting.

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