

Automating transactions
in logistics processes:
**Beyond electronic
data interchange
(EDI)**

CASE STUDY

VOSS Automotive collects information about delivery requests automatically from web portals of its customers, and processes it directly in its internal SAP system



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Beyond electronic data interchange (EDI)

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VOSS Automotive, manufacturer of line and connection technology for the international automotive industry, has automated its electronic business transactions that use its customers' web portals and integrated them into its corporate IT processes and systems. With the help of Lixto's web process integration solution, VOSS can now automatically gather and prepare logistics data from customer portals and seamlessly process this information as required in its proprietary SAP system.

Experience and ideas – that's the basis for success at VOSS Automotive. As a development partner for the automotive industry, VOSS Automotive has established a number of market standards for the line and connection technology for commercial vehicles and cars. For example, about half the commercial vehicles in Europe use VOSS air brake systems and almost all European cars with air suspension contain components made by VOSS.

Companies like VOSS must be able to react to customer demands quickly and cost-effectively if they want to maintain their market position. But what is the best way of doing this when, in certain areas, the processing of electronic transactions with EDI solutions is simply too expensive and their manual processing has become far too complex and time-consuming? That was the challenge VOSS Automotive faced when looking for a solution to provide enhanced logistics support for its order transaction processes.

A growing part of the communication between customer and manufacturer in the automotive industry is carried out via web portals, in particular for core processes such as quality

management, distribution, engineering and logistics. However, Web portals vary greatly. And their number is increasing.

The growing use of such portals results in additional input and expense for suppliers such as VOSS. Employees

need to log on to every portal to collect or enter data. This is time-consuming and expensive, and has a high potential for errors. In addition, there is the risk of loss of reputation when information published on customer web portals is not responded to in a timely manner.



Web process integration: Automated extraction of delivery data from customer portals

VOSS Automotive aimed to gather delivery requests from smaller customers automatically and process them directly in its internal logistics applications.



Walter Funke, Director Application Management

“We wanted to reduce the required expenses and make the collection of delivery requests more efficient by replacing manual tasks with an automated solution,” explains Walter Funke, Director of Application Management, VOSS Automotive. Since March 2007, VOSS Automotive has used a web process integration solution from Lixto to integrate the portals of commercial vehicle customers and automotive suppliers. This solution automatically accesses the web portals of VOSS customers, extracts delivery request data and prepares and transfers the relevant information directly to the company’s internal SAP system.

VOSS Automotive uses Lixto’s solution in the form of standard web services. This takes advantage of Lixto’s web intelligence technology for the automatic, regular collection of

order information from the customer portals and for sending notification of changes to the logistics center of VOSS Automotive. Currently, delivery request data from eight plants of two VOSS customers are being retrieved this way. In total, 16 processes between eight customer plants and the two VOSS plants in Germany have been automated.

Time savings

“Thanks to Lixto’s solution, VOSS logistics has been able to further automate the processing of customer orders, in addition to standard EDI processing,” says Joachim Förster, SAP Customizer Logistics, VOSS Automotive GmbH.



Joachim Förster, SAP Application Engineer

Förster points out that the elimination of manual tasks has resulted in valuable time savings. According to internal estimates, another part-time employee would have been necessary to take care of these tasks. This represents the savings made because employees no longer have to spend time accessing customers’ web portals themselves, in order to collect and process delivery requests.

A reliable, efficient and flexible standardized work environment

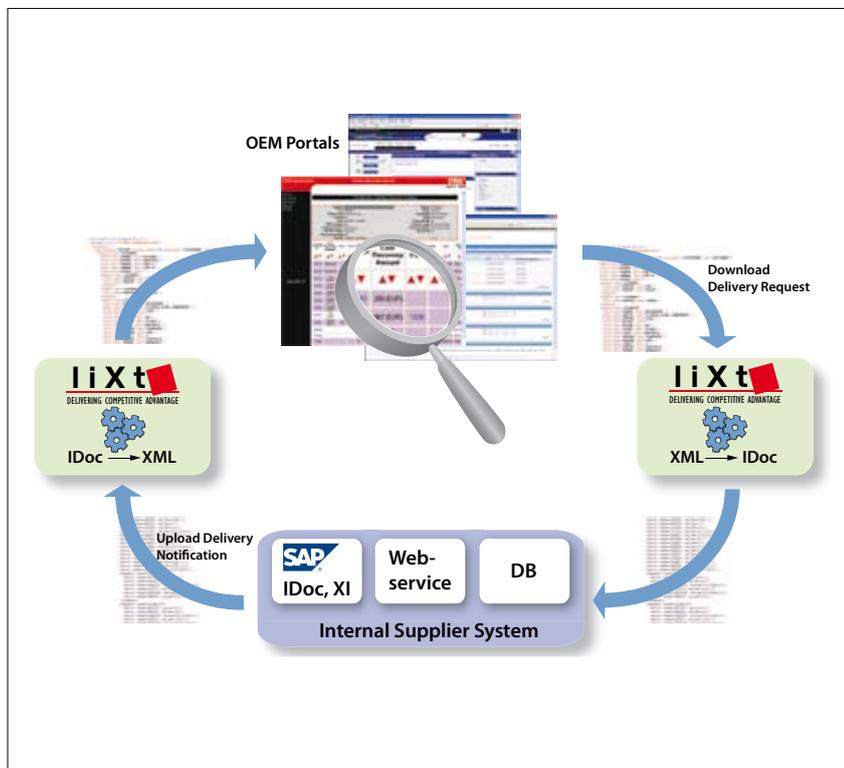
“With Lixto, VOSS Automotive was able to standardize the work environment of its employees and eliminate the complexity caused by the previous working conditions. Seen from an internal perspective of order processing, there is no difference between the delivery requests from the customers integrated by Lixto and the ones from our EDI customers,” says Walter Funke. All collected data are transferred into the regular work environment, so orders look similar.

The solution that has been in use since August 2007 took only two months to develop and implement. Since its implementation, Lixto’s solution has been running smoothly in the background - without requiring any maintenance from VOSS. Logistics staff generally do not know anything about a delivery request or a change until they have to initiate the logistics processes related to a specific delivery, or to review the status in a report. The Lixto solution usually makes relevant changes on the customer portals so quickly that the notification sent to VOSS Automotive also contains information on the job’s status.

VOSS Automotive chose Lixto not only because of the solution’s good price-performance ratio, but also for reasons such as its flexibility and reliability. Lixto uses a modern and powerful technology to prepare companies for future challenges posed by B2B Internet applications. Its solution therefore offers a high degree of flexibility. By means of this technology, Lixto can process and integrate data from highly dynamic Web 2.0 web pages. The visual development environment it provides enables easy and quick configuring of the web processes to be automated.

Easily extending the solution's scope

Funke regards the options to extend Lixto's solution as another significant advantage, because VOSS has already established a platform for the integration of web-based data for additional applications and functional areas. For example, the company is well prepared if it needs to set up a similar solution for quality management requirements.



About VOSS Automotive

VOSS Automotive is a medium-sized company serving as a system partner for the international car industry. VOSS Automotive develops and produces line and connection technology for all fluids, i.e. air, fuel, hydraulic oil and other liquid material used in vehicles.

Among the customers of VOSS are almost all international commercial vehicle manufacturers, such as Daimler, MAN, DAF (Netherlands), Iveco (Italy), as well as Volvo (US), Sinotruck (China) or Hino (Japan) and many car manufacturers. VOSS has established its own subsidiaries and/or international companies in the most important markets in Europe, North and South America and Asia to distribute VOSS products. It also manufactures its own products.

More at www.voss.de

About Lixto Software

Lixto extracts specific and precise data from the web to drive operational performance and real-time competitive price visibility for travel & transport, consumer products and automotive supply chain clients.

Lixto Software was founded in 2001 as a spin-off of the Vienna Technical University. Its customers are international companies in the automotive supply chain, travel & transport, consumer products and IT industry, such as Fujitsu and SAP.

www.lixt.com

Summary

Company

- VOSS Automotive GmbH, Wipperfürth, Germany

Industry

- Automotive

Use

- Logistics: Delivery requests, order processing
- Integration of web-based logistics data

Existing situation, business requirements and aims

- High expenditure and error rate due to manual queries of delivery requests on customer portals
- Differences between customer portals requiring diverse solutions
- Standard EDI solutions for non-core processes too expensive
- Digital processing of B2B business transactions
- Integration of customers without (or bypassing) EDI

Solution

- Web process integration software
- Automated collection of delivery data from customer portals and direct integration into company-specific processes
- Integration of orders from a total of eight plants of two VOSS customers

Benefits

- Continuous, end-to-end integrated process from the customers' web portal to Voss Automotive's SAP system
- Time savings in order processing through the elimination of manual tasks (accessing portals, entering data, etc.)
- Better 'Time to Information': improved reaction capacities thanks to a quicker access to information
- Increased process security (by eliminating incorrect data entry)
- Standardization of the internal work environment

Future plans and developments

- Creation of an flexible integration platform to enable the integration of additional web-based applications, for example in the area of quality management

Technical infrastructure

- SAP JACO Connector
- Web Process Integration Services based on Lixto Visual Developer and Transformation Server (Version 4.8.6)



Lixto Software

A-1040 Wien, Favoritenstrasse 16

Tel.: +43-1 205 12 24-0

www.liXto.com

