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— KERRY SHIPMAN,
DIRECTOR OF ENGINEERING AT
G.H. MEISER & CO.

 ACCU-GAGE®

G.H. Meiser & Co.— Responding to the Market, Keeping Control

Tire Gauge Maker Turns to GXS to Keep its Customers Coming Back

Corporate Profile

World’s Premier Maker of Precision Tire Gauges

Based in Posen, Illinois, G.H. Meiser & Co. makes and distributes high-quality tire gauges globally under the Accu-Gage brand. While G.H. Meiser remains a small company, its US customers include Pep Boys, Sears USA and Advance Auto. Its product portfolio includes traditional bourdon tube dial gauges, pencil, digital and talking gauges, tire maintenance kits and deflators.

The Business Challenge

Flexible Electronic Trading

Like other smaller companies, G.H. Meiser found its customers increasingly interested in receiving documents via EDI. Yet each customer had unique requirements that presented its own challenges. Kerry Shipman, the company’s Director of Engineering, explains: “More customers are demanding that we trade electronically with them. The extent to which we are required to deliver documents electronically varies, but at the minimum, all want order and invoice.”

Sears USA is one such company that mandated its suppliers trade electronically. If a supplier is not able to provide a suitable EDI connection within a specified period of time, Sears expects the supplier to use an alternative system that is operated by a third party. Sears’ requirements include the submission of an advanced ship notice (ASN). Because the ASN contains information about the purchase order, invoice, quantities and bills of lading, it is regarded as critical to Sears’ delivery and payment processes. What’s more, the ASN has to be dispatched within two hours of the goods leaving G.H. Meiser’s depot.

In order to operate electronically with Sears, G.H. Meiser must have its EDI systems approved and certified through Sears’ third party Value Added Network (VAN) provider. This presents challenges because G.H. Meiser’s experience suggests the VAN provider shares little interest in servicing smaller suppliers.

“It takes time to get approval and, like other companies, Sears insists on ensuring the EDI document template has been thoroughly tested and matches their rigorous criteria. GXS and Edisoft have been very helpful in getting the required approval for the new in-

BUSINESS CHALLENGE:

- Customers expect even small suppliers to trade electronically
- G.H. Meiser had experienced little interest from its existing EDI supplier in servicing its needs
- G.H. Meiser wanted internal control over its EDI program

house system” says Shipman. “We currently use a fax-based system provided by the Sears recommended third party VAN. It’s a tough situation.” Shipman explains, “If the third party is tardy in processing the documents, it puts our business at risk because we’ll face substantial charge backs from Sears. GXS and Edisoft will allow us to bring the EDI document creation and electronic transmission in-house eliminating the need for third party processing.”

Other customers are less demanding but require uniquely different document templates, thus creating complexity in the creation and management of many EDI templates. G.H. Meiser had past experience using desktop-based EDI but found the process so complex that only one person in the company could use it. “If I wanted to take a vacation, I had to make sure I could be reached to explain the 80 odd steps needed to complete an EDI document,” says Shipman.

G.H. Meiser then tried a Web-based solution. This offered some advantages, but Shipman was interested in service reliability and maintaining internal control over the company’s EDI program. “Our Web-based provider had server/system problems and we had no access to the system for over three weeks. At this point we felt that with the expansion of EDI and the proliferation of documents and templates, it was important for us to have control over our own destiny,” Shipman said, “I wanted to know who we were trading with, understand what documents were being sent, and insure we would not be held hostage by another provider’s servers. You have better control with desktop software, so I made a judgment call based on our needs.”

The Solution

Edisoft Merchant eXpress™ from GXS

G.H. Meiser’s past experiences left it skeptical as to whether it would find a software provider capable of delivering to its urgent needs. Shipman approached GXS and found a supplier prepared to not only take G.H. Meiser’s requirements seriously, but to respond promptly. “When evaluating potential software suppliers, one thing you must do is check out their service track record. In GXS’s case, I was and have been thoroughly satisfied,” comments Shipman.

GXS was able to offer G.H. Meiser a range of solutions, including both Web-based and desktop software. The company decided to use Edisoft’s Merchant eXpress, a desktop EDI product, because it matched the company’s need to maintain control. In addition, GXS was able to offer G.H. Meiser a range of easy to use EDI templates. “I managed to set up Pep Boys for invoice and in-bound purchase order myself after observing Edisoft’s technical support setup for Advance Auto. It was much easier than the first software system we had used,” says Shipman. The complexity of Sears’ document specifications, however, required assistance from GXS. “They were incredibly responsive to our needs and turned the template around very quickly,” Shipman continues.

Edisoft uses GXS’s hub as the transmission mechanism for EDI documents to third parties. This effectively means that it serves as the network for G.H. Meiser’s EDI document distribution, regardless of the customer with which it is dealing. The solution allows G.H. Meiser to

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G.H. MEISER'S RESULTS:

- A cost effective solution
- Time saving
- Error reduction
- Platform to easily implement EDI with new customers
- Edisoft provides a framework to integrate EDI with back-office applications

easily expand the number of customers and document types it transmits. “At present we are only handling 40 documents a week,” Shipman said, “but that will double once we have all our major customers on board.”

The Results**Increased Efficiency Through Simple and Error-Free EDI**

G.H. Meiser believes it has solved all of its EDI issues with an extremely cost effective solution. The creation of EDI documents can now be passed to someone with no knowledge of EDI and only basic IT skills. This translates into a dramatic reduction in the time taken to complete EDI documents. New documents are easily created, and when the company has encountered problems, the customer support has been prompt. “Without good technical support, you just spin your wheels. GXS and Edisoft have delivered the support I need in spades,” says Shipman.

Shipman believes that time savings and reduced error rates from the traditionally manual transmission of information has allowed G.H. Meiser to concentrate on running the business and not the EDI process: “There are definite dollar values to be had from Edisoft. It provides us with the means to not only reach out to new customers in the way they prefer, but we can now cost-effectively add EDI for our smaller customers that may only buy \$6,000 of product a year from us.”

What’s more, the company now has a platform on which it can build efficient, integrated systems. “As a small company, we lack the financial resources required to buy complex systems. But that doesn’t mean we have to be inefficient,” Shipman explains. “As we start using the full functionality of Edisoft’s Merchant eXpress, we will use its integration capabilities to tie the EDI data into our back-office accounting systems. We can start driving EDI to achieve data integration that, in turn, will lead to business efficiencies.”

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**About GXS**

GXS is a leading provider of B2B e-commerce solutions that simplify and enhance business process integration and collaboration. Organizations worldwide, including 75 percent of the Fortune 500, leverage GXS' GS1 certified global interoperability and supply chain execution solutions. Active in the global standards arena, GXS offers solutions, powered by the Trading Grid™, that enable customers both large and small, to connect with global partners, synchronize product information and optimize the execution of supply chains. Headquartered in Gaithersburg, MD., GXS provides sales and support to businesses and their partners worldwide. For more information about GXS visit www.gxs.com.