

How Managed Services Can Enhance Customer-Centric Supply Chains

B2B Managed Services provides the necessary technical and people related resources to address some of the complexities that exist in today's customer-centric supply chains. B2B Managed Services can address these complexities in the following ways.

Supporting Your Customer's B2B Communication Requirements

Many suppliers today work with a diverse range of customers, each requiring different way of connecting with them. Today there are numerous options for B2B integration including EDI VANs, direct Internet connections, portals and SaaS applications in the cloud. Most large corporations allow 2-3 standard technology interfaces for suppliers. For example in the automotive industry in Europe most companies will require their suppliers to connect with them via OFTP or the newer standard OFTP2. Additionally, a supplier may be asked to send information to various plants around the world using specialized networks such as ENX, ANX and JNX. However, what if an automotive supplier is also working across different industries such as healthcare, consumer electronics, and automotive? The automotive supplier may have customers in three different industries with three different connectivity methods. How will a supplier manage this complexity?

GXS Managed Services can help suppliers to address their customer's connectivity requirements through a process called protocol mediation. GXS Managed Services can effectively mediate between any communication method. If the supplier connects to GXS via FTP the platform will then ensure that the customer receives that information via their preferred connectivity method such as OFTP. In addition, as GXS Managed Services has interconnectivity to many different third party networks around the world. GXS Trading Grid platform ensures that documents are routed via the correct network to the customer.

Supporting Your Customer's Messaging Standard Requirements

Many large companies today use a variety of different messaging standards. Preferences often depend upon where the company is based. Historical development of standards at a country or regional level has driven local preferences for the type of EDI documents that are exchanged in Europe, North America and Asia. Whether the message standard is ANSI X12, EDIFACT or RosettaNet documents, suppliers must have a clear understanding of standards in order to map their format to the customer's preferred messaging standard. Mapping is a highly specialized skill. Many smaller companies simply do not have the resources to be able to undertake such a task.

GXS Managed Services offers an any-to-any mapping and network-based translation service. Irrespective of the format that the document is sent to GXS, our mappers will transpose the document to the appropriate target format required by the customer. GXS has experience of creating document maps across different industries and different regions.

Improving the Quality and Compliance of Information Sent to Your Customer

One of the key B2B integration challenges facing companies today is ensuring that information from external trading partners does not contain errors. Inaccurate data leads to exceptions which will have to be reworked before the information can be processed by a back office ERP system. In fact, a recent study by AMR Research found that 2.9% of externally sourced transactions entering an ERP system required exception processing or error handling. A simple error in a document such as an incorrect part number, shipping address or pricing figure can impact downstream business systems if not corrected. Suppliers which send accurate, up-to-date, complete information to customers will have fewer exceptions and therefore higher rankings on performance scorecards.

GXS Managed Services can provide a way to check data quality in B2B transactions. Using predefined business rules all documents sent via GXS can be scanned for incorrect data then an alert would be quarantined or reported. If errors can be detected and corrected before a customer receives the document then faster processing will occur.

Improving Community On-boarding to Win New Customer Contracts

Large suppliers need to be able to offer a competitive difference when competing for business from their customers. One of the challenges facing a suppliers is ensuring that they can get their own supply chain ready for doing business with a new customer anywhere in the world. If a supplier can perform on-boarding of customers for electronic ordering, invoicing and logistics processes they will have a competitive advantage over their peers.

GXS Managed Services offers a comprehensive community management and customer on-boarding service. Irrespective of where customer may be located in the world, GXS can ensure that large or small customers are on-boarded using the customer's preferred connectivity method and messaging standard. GXS offers web forms, desktop EDI software and Microsoft Excel based forms, for small customers that may lack the budget, resources or expertise to exchange EDI or XML transactions.

Communicating with Your Customer via a Highly Available B2B Infrastructure

As outsourcing of strategic functions such as manufacturing, logistics and service grows, suppliers are playing an increasingly critical role in the supply chain's of their customers. Suppliers performing Vendor Managed Inventory, for example, must ensure that production critical information reaches their customer's plants delivery of parts. If parts do not reach a production line in time and all buffer stocks are depleted, the customer may have to suspend production until materials are replenished. Advanced Ship Notices (ASNs) are normally used to co-ordinate delivery of parts to a production line. ASN's are critical to supporting advanced processes such as Just-in-Time and Supply-in-Line-Sequence which rely on the smooth, efficient and co-ordinated replenishment of parts. Many larger corporations have instituted sup-

plier performance rating systems which include penalties for delayed materials or late ASNs.

GXS Managed Services operates across a highly available B2B infrastructure comprising of two data centers connected via a high speed OC12 network connection. Redundancy is built into each data centre which contain best in class servers, storage devices and network routing equipment from leading providers. With an availability of 99.95%, GXS can ensure that production critical documents, such as ASNs, can be exchanged between suppliers and customers without delay.

Proactive Monitoring of Customer Related B2B Transactions

To ensure delivery of B2B transactions to customers suppliers need to have end to end visibility of document flows. Suppliers must ensure that documents are successfully converted into SAP IDOC format before being transmitted to a customer's ERP system. Additionally, suppliers must tracking the progress of time-critical transactions such as the ASN. The ability to proactively monitor B2B transactions enable suppliers to offer improved customer service.

GXS Managed Services offers a proactive monitoring service which identifies exceptions or errors in B2B transactions in real-time. Quite often the problem can be detected and sometimes resolved before the supplier is even aware that there may be a problem. Proactive monitoring of B2B transactions can provide a valuable service and can contribute to increased satisfaction levels between suppliers and their customers.

Supporting Your Customer Anywhere in the World

The globalization of today's manufacturing industry has created international expansion challenges for supply chain organizations. Whether a manufacturer is looking to establish a new plant in an emerging market such as China or seeking lower cost labor in Mexico, logistics, technology and customer service functions need to be available to support supply chain operations. For B2B e-commerce groups, the challenge is to ensure that EDI and XML transactions can be transmitted to customer plants anywhere in the world.

GXS has experience of working in most of the industrialized regions around the world providing support in local language, local time zone and local business conventions. GXS can therefore make consultative recommendations on how to expand B2B services into a particular region. In many cases, suppliers can accelerate their time to market for B2B e-commerce services in new geographies.

Summary

So in summary, GXS Managed Services helps a supplier to reduce the complexities of working with their customers by:

- Ensuring that suppliers can connect to their customers anywhere in the world, via any communications protocol or across any industry/regional specific network
 - Allowing customers to receive B2B information in exactly the format they require via extensive any-to-any mapping capabilities
 - Improving the quality and accuracy of B2B information exchanged with customers
- Ensuring that a supplier's own supply chain is ready to work on a new customer contract and exchange B2B information as soon as possible
 - Being able to support a customer's manufacturing process by ensuring that production critical documents such as Advanced Shipping Notices can be delivered within a specific production window
 - Proactively monitoring B2B transactions so that if any problems occur they can be resolved as quickly as possible, with minimal or no disruption to a customer
 - Offering a best in class, scalable and flexible B2B platform so as the needs of a customer change, any new B2B requirements can be supported as soon as possible



About GXS

GXS is a leading provider of B2B e-commerce solutions and operates the world's largest and most expansive network of integrated business communities. The company's software and services simplify and enhance businesses process integration and collaboration among networks of trading partners. Organizations worldwide, including more than 75 percent of the Fortune 500, use GXS solutions to extend their supply chain networks, optimize product launches, automate warehouse receiving, manage electronic payments and gain supply chain visibility. Based in Gaithersburg, Maryland, GXS has operations and offices around the world. For more information, see <http://www.gxs.com>, <http://blogs.gxs.com> and <http://twitter.com/gxs>.

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