

Automotive and Aeronautics Supplier Boosts Business Agility

Hutchinson adapts to shifting B2B needs with OpenText™ Trading Grid™ Messaging Service

Hutchinson, founded in 1853, is a global tier-one automotive and aeronautics supplier. The company specializes in the manufacture and supply of rubber-based products to major industrial OEM customers and is established across the world with development and production centers spanning Europe, the Americas, and Asia. Hutchinson employs more than 35,000 people at close to 95 sites across 25 countries.

Fast-Moving, Far-Reaching Changes

Hutchinson supplies its products to industrial customers in sectors such as automotive, aeronautics, and shipbuilding. In recent years, these different sectors have experienced enormous changes as a result of economic fluctuations.

These changes in Hutchinson's customer base have taken many forms—changes of ownership, changes of location, the development of radically different business models by customers, and the adoption of innovative business processes. One common characteristic has been the speed at which these changes have taken place, putting pressure on IT systems that have to adapt quickly to far-reaching change.

A significant challenge for Hutchinson has been how best to align its systems with the business needs of its global customers and remain in step with changing business models. From an IT perspective, the specific challenge has been to develop applications and infrastructure that can respond nimbly to the new plans of customers. Central to Hutchinson's sustained success has been its ability as an active business to comprehend global demand and manage tradeoffs in regional preferences.

As Hutchinson IT Corporate Director Didier Carn explains, "The business environment is moving and changing very quickly. We have to build IT systems that can respond to this, even as we make sure that we are firmly controlling the costs of our IT investment. There is an important balance between giving systems the flexibility to cope with change and managing the costs of such flexibility."

INDUSTRY

Manufacturing

CUSTOMER

Hutchinson

CHALLENGES

- *Aligning systems with changing customer needs*
- *Enhancing IT solutions while controlling costs*

SOLUTION

- *OpenText™ Trading Grid™ Messaging Service*

BENEFITS

- *Enhanced agility for adapting to emerging requirements*
- *Increased productivity by smoothing flow of information*
- *Improved data quality and integrity*
- *Maintained quality service with reasonable expense*

“We set out to achieve a globally efficient solution. Our aim was to provide a consistent and high-quality service to our customers anywhere in the world, and to do so at the lowest possible costs.”

DIDIER CARN, IT CORPORATE DIRECTOR, HUTCHINSON

A Globally Efficient Solution

Hutchinson is an example of a company that has intelligently harnessed its IT resources to help adapt to a fast-moving business landscape. Hutchinson's priority was to implement the systems that can quickly adapt to changes in customer needs and respond swiftly to macroeconomic changes in the global business environment.

In B2B terms, the company required an infrastructure that could be changed quickly—for example, so it could add new partners in different parts of the world as the company opened up new plants in locations such as Brazil, China, Romania, and Tunisia. The B2B infrastructure also had to deal seamlessly with technical challenges, such as new standards and different network protocols.

“We set out to achieve a globally efficient solution,” explains Carn. “Our aim was to provide a consistent and high-quality service to our customers anywhere in the world, and to do so at the lowest possible costs.”

Global capability is axiomatic to the company's IT strategy. Underlying the selection of OpenText was the vendor's footprint as a global supplier that is able, in the words of Carn, “to manage connections and messages anywhere on the planet.”

Drawing on the services of OpenText™ Trading Grid™ Messaging Service enables Hutchinson to enjoy near real-time data exchange of its standard business documents such as purchase orders, invoices, and advance ship notices with suppliers and customers

around the world. Hutchinson can communicate using any chosen EDI or XML document format. Hutchinson can rely on OpenText to mediate the differences between its own preferred document format and the formats chosen by its trading partners. Likewise, OpenText masks the complexities of diverse Internet communication standards.

Dashboard Tracks Key Metrics

In formal terms, the performance of B2B is tracked via a dashboard that measures key metrics—including the number of messages handled by the trading hub and the cost of those messages. The simplest evidence of the company's success with B2B is that while the number of partner connections have increased, the cost of managing those B2B transactions has remained static.

Carn identifies clear benefits that B2B brings to the business. The first benefit is productivity since B2B enhances the movement and flow of information between Hutchinson and its partners. The company exchanges 3,000 messages each day.

Secondly, Carn explains, B2B has converted what was formerly a largely manual process into an IT one and thereby brought with it improvements in the quality of data, reducing manual errors, and improving data integrity.

Another vitally important benefit is speed. Business agility has been key to Hutchinson's continued success, and B2B has allowed the company to adapt swiftly and efficiently to emerging requirements.

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